

True Justice in Race & Sexuality

By Pastor Andrew Franklin, Living Waters leader and author of 'Created for Love: Reclaiming Jesus' Vision for Sexuality, Gender, and Relationships.'

Jesus created every tribe, tongue, and nation to express His glory in unique but equally meaningful ways. That means standing in colorful ethnic diversity and in the unique glory of our bodies made male and female in His image.

Through racism, the inherent dignity of the human person is compromised. Racism, whether overt (violence, discrimination) or covert ("I don't see color") distorts God's image in us. Rather than defending the weak and vulnerable and loving justice, we defend our own compromise and love our own view of ourselves.

That brings us to our generation's other social justice debate. Whenever awareness dawns on our duty toward black brothers and sisters, many Christians turn the focus away from them (too painful to stay there?) and begin to champion other causes, specifically LGBT+ ones, that have a similar "feel" of justice while serving a radically different ideology.

For many of my conservative friends, their hesitation at embracing social justice for African Americans may be rooted in the fear that the rainbow flag will follow the cause of black dignity. At the same time, I know many friends who begin to internalize the pain of the black experience then begin to question their sexual morality. "Am I blind, intolerant, and hateful toward homosexuality, just as my ancestors were blind, intolerant and hateful toward black people?"

We must give Holy Spirit room to search our hearts and expose pride, feelings of superiority, and unbiblical assumptions. Then, as we repent, we must re-define our anthropology and morality around the Word and ways of God. Repentance means returning to God's vision for our humanity, His design for our unique ethnicities and our common call to sexual integrity as men and women choosing to dignify one another.

Through sexual immorality as with racism, the inherent dignity of the human person is compromised. Perversion, whether overt (sexual abuse, molestation) or covert ("love is love") distorts God's image in us. We again defend our own compromise and love our own view of ourselves.

Our enemy has insidious plots to de-rail us, to pervert us so we embody lust more than whole-hearted love. Over our history, and particularly in the last few decades, Christian leaders have used a distorted interpretation of God's Word to defend sexual sin. As with any sin, the underlying thought is that I, the mere human being, have the definitive grip and grasp on what's best for the human person (over the years, what has been "best" for the human person has included divorce, abortion, and LGBT ideology).

Although the LGBT movement positions itself to be the natural successor to black rights, it is more aligned with racism, for both positions base their view of dignity and destiny on 'feelings' rather than on God's glory in creation. The LGBT advocate believes that 'gay' marriage or gender reassignment is what most dignifies a gender-insecure person, because it 'feels' just. A racist may 'feel' that subservience or silencing most dignifies a black person.

Our advocacy in social justice must come from the Word and ways of God.

Regarding racism, the New Testament is clear. The book of Acts describes racial compassion toward Gentiles as the source of early church persecution. Paul regularly reminds the church that Jesus has torn down the dividing walls between ethnic groups and has called for unity in the spirit and familial love for one another regardless of race (Ephesians 2:11-22). He reinforces that different ethnic groups are supposed to shine in their unique ways (Romans 3:1-2).

Regarding sexual morality, the New Testament is clear. In Acts 15, the apostles must decide on realistic expectations for new ethnic groups who are learning to follow Jesus without knowing Jewish ways. They encourage the new church leaders not to worry about making the Gentiles conform to Jewish culture but instead create a short list of essentials, such as rejecting sexual immorality. They challenge each person to express their own ethnic heritage while calling them to a Jewish high standard of sexual integrity. Paul takes up this theme when he specifically charges the Gentiles to not act in accordance with their ethnic group's values of sexual immorality, but rather clarifies that God's will for each of them is to overcome lust and walk in a sanctified vision of sexual love (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

Paul commands us to renounce ethnic superiority and lust and perversion. That can liberate us to champion racial justice and sexual integrity. The early church did just that: these two values turned the whole world upside down by a love superior to the emptiness of racism and perversion. Let it be so in our generation!