

# Talking To Your Child About Race

Another incident has fanned the flame of racial tension and inequity...

...Your child sees the images on television, reads angry comments on social media or simply hears friends talking about the fallout.

...Or perhaps your child repeats a racial slur heard at school and asks you what it means.

...Maybe you've adopted a child from a different racial background, prompting questioning stares from strangers or insensitive remarks from friends.

...Even worse, your child may have experienced the ugly reality of racism in a personal, hurtful way.

## How do you talk to a young child about matters that should not exist, but very much do?

Christian parents have a responsibility to help their children understand race, human dignity and reconciliation from a biblical perspective. Rather than a one-time discussion, make it an ongoing conversation in light of five foundational realities.

### REALITY #1: Everyone Has Equal Worth and Dignity

Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. This is what gives each person worth. Not their appearance, abilities or accomplishments. The value system of our world is unlike God's value system. As the Bible says in Genesis 1:27: "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*" This is why we insist on treating every person with respect and dignity.

### REALITY #2: We Have Sin in Our Hearts

The Bible tells us about a universal "disease" when it says, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (See Romans 3:23) This includes kids at school, political leaders, entertainers, police officers, pastors and parents. One way we "fall short" is by accepting or participating in the sin of racism. Children need to hear their parents, for example, overtly condemn rather than ignore or excuse racial slurs and racially motivated hatred.

It can be a mistake to passively dismiss racism by claiming to be "colorblind" when the goal is to help your child celebrate the beauty of all colors and the rich diversity within our shared human race. Viewing any person as less valuable than yourself is wrong. We should worship God for His amazing creativity rather than mistrust, fear or disrespect someone just because they have a different skin color.

### REALITY #3: Hate Happens

One sad reality of living in a fallen world is that no matter how much progress is made or time passes, there will always be a segment of the population who act out hatred. Some hate due to feelings of racial superiority. Others hate out of anger for past injustices or offense. Neither is fitting for a follower of Jesus Christ.

### REALITY #4: History Matters

Sin has been spoiling our world for many generations, something clearly evident in history as one group enslaved, intimidated or killed another. Starting at a young age, children encounter the dark side of human history which includes an African slave trade, colonial exploitation, the Holocaust and Jim Crow laws. We need to give them a way to reconcile such evils with belief in a good God.

Parents should avoid the temptation to "ignore the past and move on" for two reasons. First, those who ignore the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them. Second, humility demands that we recognize that some of us experience economic and other advantages that we didn't earn while others face obstacles that they didn't create due to the long-term impact of racial inequality and injustice.

Giving children a biblical perspective can help them avoid being disillusioned when they encounter such dreadful historical realities in school, books, films or other places. They can process what they see and hear in light of Christian theology that tells us we live in a fallen world and that there are serious, multi-generational consequences of sin that are not part of God's original plan.

### REALITY #5: Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Our Lord brought about forgiveness for sin and reconciliation with God by willingly humbling Himself. (See Philippians 2:1-8) This allows us to become agents of forgiveness and reconciliation with others. But for that to happen we, like Jesus, must adopt a posture of humility.

Humility to listen and learn how the sin of racism has hurt others.

Humility to ask and give forgiveness for every form of hatred.

Humility that recognizes that those who are not actively part of the solution are, by default, part of the problem. More than "not being racist" we are called to mend the wounds of past wrongs through forgiveness and reconciliation.

Talk to your children about race. Give them a vision for the wonderful *new* reality God has for His people as *described in Galatians 3:26-28*, "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

## **GOING FURTHER – Books Available in First EPC Library**

*The Bible Project* provides a short, free video explaining God's heart for justice.

### **Books to help parents prepare...**

- *Be The Bridge* by Latasha Morrison
- *Dear White Christian* by Aaron J. Layton

### **Kid books to help parents of younger children...**

- *We're Different, We're the Same* by Sesame Street
- *Skin Like Mine* by Latashia Perry
- *One Blood for Kids* by Ken Ham

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## **GOING FURTHER – First EPC Support**

### **Family Time and Holiday Resources**

Available for free at the HomePointe Center or visit [firststepc.com/homepointe](http://firststepc.com/homepointe)

### **Faith Path**

Free age-appropriate kits are available for parents to guide a child's spiritual journey one step at a time. Stop by the HomePointe Center or visit [firststepc.com/homepointe](http://firststepc.com/homepointe) to get your next kit for your child.