



WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT RACE

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Canadian Bible Society
The Word. For Life.



The Bible reveals the Living God. In it we learn about who God is – His character, love and all the wonderful things God desires for us – and how this has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. And the Bible also reveals what God expects from us.

What type of people does God want us to be?

What does the Bible say about racism and how we, as followers of Christ, are to treat others who are different from us?

OBJECTIVE OF THIS SHORT BIBLE STUDY:

To understand how God sees the human beings He created and know how He expects us to treat others, especially those who are ‘different’ or outside our social circles.

Read the following verses and reflect on what the Spirit of God is saying through His written Word, the Bible.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When determining the meaning behind each verse, there are a number of rules for Bible interpretation:

Christ is the rule – All Scripture speaks of Christ, so seeing Him is the key to understanding the passage.

Don’t read too much into it – If the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.

Definitions – Carefully uncover the meaning of words as used in their context.

Application – The entire Bible is written for us. It is inspired and profitable, and we’re supposed to read all of it, listen to it, and apply it in our lives. However, not all of the Bible was written directly to us.

Context – A text without context is a pretext. Sometimes we presume the meaning. How does the text fit within the verses preceding and following?

HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Write down any thoughts, insights, or questions that you may want to think about and study further.



1. A DIVINE PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN BEINGS

GENESIS 1:26-27 (NCV)

“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the tame animals, over all the earth, and over all the small crawling animals on the earth.’ So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.”

I SAMUEL 16:7 (NIV)

“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”

[Context: The prophet Samuel is looking at various individuals to discern who could be the next king.]

ROMANS 2:11 (NIV)

“God shows no favoritism.”

ACTS 10:34-35 (NIV)

“Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.’”

2. WHEN GOD LOOKS AT HIS PEOPLE, THE CHURCH, HOW DOES HE SEE THEM?

GALATIANS 3:28 (NIV)

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

ROMANS 10:12 (NIV)

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.”

[Note: When the Bible says ‘no difference’ it is referring to the fact that in the eyes of God and with regards to salvation, there is no difference between different people groups. In reality, there was racism and discrimination in the times of the Old and New Testaments. Further to this, there were class differences, wealth differences, and favoritism that often stemmed from race/culture. Look up James 2:1-13.]

I CORINTHIANS 12:13 (NIV)

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

REVELATION 7:9 (NIV)

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”

[Context: The writer of Revelation, the Apostle John, describes what he sees in a vision, the throne room of God.]

REVELATION 14:6 (NIV)

“...he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.”

[Context: Another vision that the Apostle John described in Revelation.]





3. BASED ON HOW GOD SEES HUMAN BEINGS, HOW DOES HE EXPECT US TO BEHAVE AND ACT?

I JOHN 2:11 (NIV)

“But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.”

I JOHN 3:15-16 (NIV)

“Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

I JOHN 4:19-21 (NIV)

“We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

[Note: When the Bible says ‘brother and sister’ it doesn’t mean your flesh and blood but your fellow human being.]

JOHN 13:34 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

MARK 12:31 (NIV)

“The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

COLOSSIANS 3:13 (NIV)

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

EPHESIANS 4:32 (NIV)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

EXODUS 22:21 (NIV)

“Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

[Context: Command to ancient Israel to remember their own slavery in Egypt and not mistreat or oppress the foreigners who lived among them.]

LEVITICUS 19:33-34 (NIV)

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

JAMES 2:1 (NIV)

“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.”

JAMES 2:8-9 (NIV)

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.”

PROVERBS 24:23 (NIV)

“These also are sayings of the wise: To show partiality in judging is not good.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4 (NIV)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

[Note: If not properly interpreted, the Bible can be used to justify any position or action. Over the past few centuries, certain passages of Scripture have been used to justify slavery, and racial and ethnic discrimination. Horrors have been perpetuated based on these verses and in the name of God. These passages were taken out of the context of the overall biblical narrative, the work of God through history, and His moral values described in the Bible.]





4. REFLECTION

- a. Why do you think people discriminate against those who are ethnically, religiously, or culturally different from them?
- b. How is racism or the mistreatment of those who are different evident in society?
- c. Are there barriers that prevent the poor and those who are ethnically or religiously different from mainstream society from improving the quality of their lives? If so, what do you think they may be?
- d. In what ways do you think you can address the issues of racism and discrimination, and make a difference?

For millennia, the Word of God has spoken to the issue of racism. The Bible provides a perspective on humankind that is necessary to know and understand today.

The study **What the Bible Says About Race** opens the Bible and helps one hear its truth, and challenges the reader to live more justly towards all people.

We invite you to check the video series **What the Bible Says About Race**, where Canadians share their thoughts on the verses you have encountered in this Bible study. Watch at **biblesociety.ca/Race**.

The Canadian Bible Society's mission is to help the world hear God speak through His Unchanging Word. Where people are at risk, when faith is under siege, to millions craving hope and a generation seeking purpose, God speaks. We help them hear.