A Personal Challenge to Black & White Americans from Tony Evans
A PERSONAL CHALLENGE TO WHITE AND BLACK AMERICANS

AS A WHITE AMERICAN, HOW CAN I DO BETTER?

Historically, white evangelicalism believed and taught many of the right things concerning unity in the body of Christ, but throughout time it did not consistently apply this belief system in either the church or the culture. While there have always been individuals—a remnant such as the Quakers, the abolitionists, and the white freedom marchers, among others—in white culture who sought to apply the right practice of this belief, they did not always have a paradigm through which to express it, nor do they always have that today.

There has existed a dichotomy, making it difficult to implement the applicational truth of not only racial unity, but also biblical justice. As Dr. Warren Wiersbe, renowned white Bible teacher and father to many in the ministry, acknowledged, this roadblock often led to an ignoring of these and like issues in the white church. He wrote,

_We are handicapped in the white church. If I preached Jesus’ first sermon (Luke 4:14–30) and gave it the social emphasis that He gave, our church has no vehicle for doing anything about the problem. People would respond in one of two ways: 1) “This preacher is off-base, so let’s get rid of him,” or 2) “I’ve never seen it quite that way, but what do_
I do next?” For the most part, our white churches don’t have the instruments, the organizational structure, to get involved in social action. Our usual solution is to put some inner-city organization into the budget or maybe to collect and distribute used clothing. . . . When it comes to racial issues, many white churches will participate in any number of symbolic activities, but they’re hesitant when you ask them to get involved in sacrificial services in the trenches.

Although difficulties and challenges exist, their presence should never be the criteria for whether we give up or keep trying. Views of theology formulated through the lens of any culture will not only produce a myopic view, but also the resultant effects of an inability to carry out the true teaching in Scripture.

This inability not only affects those who would be the recipients of the ministry outreaches, but it also affects those doing the ministry because it limits God’s involvement in what is being done. Only when truth is the absolute standard by which thoughts and actions are aligned will we experience the full manifestation of God’s glory, purposes, and plans in the body of Christ. Maintaining an informational view of theology while neglecting a holistic view of God’s kingdom aborts any real opportunity for application.
Learning how to submit one’s cultural traditions to the authority of God’s Word will play a key part in dismantling the racial mythology that is a dominant theme in many people’s worldview.

In addition, the Anglo community must seek to hold their own community accountable for justice – for equal treatment under the law. A cursory glance at many of the statistics indicate that there still exists a dual standard.

Because of this limited and often distorted world-view, white people are sometimes hindered from seeing beyond skin to discover the qualitative benefits that would come their way through using and learning from the skills, intellect, and creativity of their African-American brothers and sisters.

In the same way that the realm of athletics was enhanced by African-American participation when it was finally recognized as valuable and included, the kingdom of God would be much more holistically advanced if there were a recognition and use of the gifts, talents, and unique qualities of Christian blacks. But in order for that to take place, there must be a willingness on the part of Christian whites to not only give access to but also intentionally pursue,
or respond to an invitation for, ongoing relationships and ministry partnerships with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yet, that said, some of you reading this book may not have the opportunity to reach across racial lines to form partnerships of reconciliation simply due to the demographics of your local town. I realize that. You may live in an area that is comprised of a single cultural group. I would like to still encourage you to bring the National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative to your area because all communities are experiencing corrosion and hopelessness, resulting in decadent behavior and negative community norms.

For larger suburban churches who have the means, I encourage you to support urban churches who might reside in the same town, or a nearby town, that want to establish adopt-a-school programs. Over the years, we have received the gracious support of two prominent Anglo churches in the North Dallas area, and it is my prayer that they have not only blessed us, but that we have blessed them as well in the relationship.

Keep in mind that many urban churches may not have access to the resources necessary to carry out the adopt-a-school plan at the level that they desire. Larger churches may be able to provide
potential board members; access to funding sources (many corporate and foundation leaders attend large churches in suburban communities); leadership training; staff development; in-kind donations of furniture, equipment, and supplies; mission support; volunteers; a system of fiscal controls; facility acquisition and more.

Although there might be a physical distance between you and your partnership with an urban church, you still have the opportunity to make a real and lasting impact in the lives of those in need.

For those churches that may not want to adopt this specific ministry model, I want to encourage you to implement some form of good works in your community that benefits the broader society and gives an opportunity to share the gospel. Intentionally serving across racial lines will give a greater opportunity to experience real unity while accomplishing good in the lives of others.

And for those individuals who want to take steps toward practicing biblical oneness in the body of Christ but are unable to implement such a comprehensive plan, consider volunteering your time at a school or church across racial lines, if possible, to provide some of the services outlined in our training materials.

Whatever you choose to do, it will make a difference in the lives of others.
As a Black American, How Can I Do Better?

The mentality of reconciliation is as important for African-Americans as it is for whites. If African-Americans wish to be viewed as equals then we must function as equals. That means we must view ourselves as having something to offer, not just there to receive. It means we come to the table of reconciliation not for others to do for us, but for them to join with us. It means we come to the table not as victims, but as equals. It also means that there cannot be double standards in race relations.

In a recent survey, it was found that more Americans view African-Americans as more racist than either whites or Hispanics. 37% of the cross-racial polled group said that African-Americans are racist, and 31% of the African-American polled group said the same thing. If we are going to set about to create any meaningful improvement in our cultures and communities, we are going to need to see each other, across racial boundaries, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In addition, we need to hold each other accountable, as well as those who influence us such as actors, entertainers, musicians and leaders to a high standard of respect toward one another and decency in dress, language and manners. When we don’t, we are only hurting ourselves.

After all, nowhere is the demise of the family more obvious than in urban America in general and the
black community in particular. The crisis in the culture at large has become a catastrophe among African-American people.

At one time, our community provided one of the best illustrations of biblical family life that our world has ever seen. Taking their cue from the Old Testament, black neighborhoods operated like extended families. Almost everyone you knew was like an aunt, uncle or cousin. The elderly were treated with utmost respect, and everyone held everyone else accountable for proper behavior.

Most amazingly, all this took place in some terribly inhumane environments. Yet in spite of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and discrimination, the African-American family was held together by an unshakable faith in God and a tenacious spirit rooted in hope. The church was the center of community life, bolstering the family. And the role models children needed lived next door or at worst a block away.
But times have changed. Today, the number one cause of death for black young men is homicide, more than car accidents, suicides and diseases combined. Over 70% of all black children are born to unwed mothers, and nearly 40% of all black children are being raised in poverty. We now have a generation of women with not enough men to marry.

In days gone by, if the parents couldn’t or wouldn’t take care of their children, the grand-parents would take them in. The children would thus receive the love and wisdom of their elderly grandparents. Today, however, Grandma is often between thirty-five and forty years old and single herself, struggling to survive and without the time or experience to provide the wisdom her grandchildren need. That reality has left us with a generation that in many ways must raise itself.

The price to our communities can be measured in loss of life, hope, property and family stability. We are contributing to our own demise. The entertainment industry is assisting in our implosion by raising up the wrong heroes in rap music and movies – that which gets the limelight is leading our younger generations down the path of destruction.

Our challenge is to stop giving excuses for why we can’t change things and start determining how we will change things. We don’t have a resource problem. Nor are we deficient in the necessary intellect or skills. The solutions to our problems are sitting in our pews, and within ourselves.
If the black community is to be rebuilt, we must start with a change of attitude. Rather than spending so much time talking about how bad things are, we must begin to look for and operate out of our own strengths. That means we must stop depending on government to do for us what we are responsible to do for ourselves.

Racism is real and evil. It must be resisted and ultimately defeated. But racism has absolutely nothing to do with some of the things that it gets blamed for. Racism is not responsible for producing babies out of wedlock; illegitimate sex is. Nor is racism responsible for aborting those babies once they’ve been conceived. Racism isn’t responsible for black-on-black crime; it doesn’t pull the trigger. Racism doesn’t keep our kids in front of the Internet, television or computer games instead of in a textbook. Neither does racism make a man leave his family.

Admittedly, racism may create a climate where some of those evils flourish more easily, but we must never succumb to its influence. While it ought to be addressed and fought, it cannot be allowed to keep us from doing what needs to be done for ourselves.

We should determine what our families would look like if racism didn’t exist, and then go about building such families.

My parents didn’t have access to a lot of family seminars and the newest Christian literature while my siblings and I were growing up; in those years, blacks were rarely included in major Christian outreaches at all.
But they did have a Bible and a passionate love for Jesus Christ, each other and their children — and somehow that was enough. Economic, racial and class limitations need not be the last word in how children turn out.

The objective truth from Scripture must place limits on our cultural experiences. As African-Americans continue to seek cultural freedom, we must examine every strategy offered to promote social justice and policy under the magnifying glass of Scripture. Every bit of advice given by our leaders and all definitions proposing to tell us what it means to be black must be commensurate with divine revelation. If what we are given as cultural is not biblically acceptable, it cannot be accepted as authoritative.

The mission of every black church (as well as any ethnicity), then, should be to mobilize its members to use their skills for ministry to their community. The problem is that many church members don’t understand it’s their job to do the work of ministering. Doctors are supposed to doctor for the kingdom. Teachers are teachers for the kingdom. Administrators are to administrate for the kingdom. Like no other group in America, we have both the ability and the historical experience to demonstrate to the culture at large how to save a generation.

We are too great a people with too great a God and too rich a heritage to have the kind of family and community disintegration we’re now experiencing. It will take every ounce of our energy to reclaim our families and communities. But if not now, when? And if not us, who?
In a response to today’s racially charged climate, Dr. Tony Evans speaks from a spiritual perspective and discusses the need for racial healing in our nation and in our churches. He proposes that at the core of racial disunity lies the failure to understand and execute righteousness and justice from God’s perspective. In this timely book, which concludes with a personal challenge to all believers, Dr. Evans calls readers to be intentional about embracing God’s desire for oneness.

“That they may be one even as we are one” - Jesus the Messiah
Fully encompassing areas of unity, history, culture, the church and social justice, Dr. Evans looks to the scriptures for the balance between righteousness and justice that is crucial for applying truth in this generation, and in training the next. A full section on black church history provides a background and understanding that has often been neglected. Recalling experiences in his own evangelical journey, Dr. Evans shares kingdom-minded approaches for biblical justice and social restoration. To better glorify God and help heal the persistent racial divide, all church members would do well to read and learn from Oneness Embraced.

**HERE’S HOW**

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The Urban Alternative (TUA) is a Christian broadcast ministry founded over 30 years ago by Dr. Tony Evans. At TUA, we seek to promote a kingdom agenda philosophy designed to enable people to live all of life underneath the comprehensive rule of God. This is accomplished through a variety of means, including media, resources, clergy ministries and community impact training.

The Urban Alternative’s daily radio broadcast airs on over 1,000 radio outlets in America and in over 100 countries worldwide. Find us online at TonyEvans.org.

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry dedicated to restoring hope and transforming lives through the proclamation and application of God’s Word. For over three decades, Dr. Evans has also served as senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas. He is a prolific author of numerous books, including the best-selling Kingdom Man. His radio program, “The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans,” is heard daily on over 1,000 radio outlets. Dr. Evans is also the chaplain for the Dallas Mavericks and former chaplain for the Dallas Cowboys.