

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Racial Reconciliation: A Theological Approach to Building Relationships

A Thesis Project Submitted to
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in Candidacy for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Racism within the Christian community in America has resulted in social unrest and has plagued the Christian church in a way that mandates urgent solutions to this untamed malady. This research focus is centered on learning a practicable methodology based on biblical principles that address racial reconciliation (building God-approved relationships) that will combat racial disunity among Christians. The study method used BBR (Building Better Relationships) consisted of interviewing and teaching a focus group representing a Black pastor and five church participants on racial relations issues within the church context. From the recommendations of the senior pastor, a focus group from the Black church received teaching on biblical racial reconciliation directives through a six-session curriculum. Five individuals, five Black Christians made up the focus group. The objective of the study is to describe the reality of historical racism in the Christian church and to motivate multicultural change that will enhance building theologically, healthy, and loving relationships among all races.

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Abbreviations

BBR	<i>Building Better Relationships</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
GDP	<i>Greater Detroit Partnership</i>
HCA	<i>His Church Anglican</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
LOLCC	<i>Lord of Lords Christian Church</i>
MU	<i>Ministers United</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Since the origin of civilization, humanity's identity and imagery have been challenged, distorted, and debated. Authentic conversations concerning racial reconciliation, race status, and race relations are still topics that are among the most curious, misunderstood, and researched subjects of modern academia. As the Christian church faces the many struggles of modernity, the fight for true racial unity and harmony in society challenges the research project's pure motives and desire to implement biblical truths. An optimistic finding is that the battle for racial reconciliation among the Black church and a noticeable number of White Christians is in alignment with Jesus's prayer for Christian unity (John 17:20-21). Many other scriptures in the Bible encourages multiethnic oneness and promote human efforts towards real church/social fellowship. The research process is to examine racial reconciliation from a historical and theological perspective with a core focus to bring collaboration and methodology to the Christian community that will help all races to live with divine truth and harmonious affirmations.

Christians possess a moral compass that, if used, effectively establishes a model of ethical goals and behaviors to improve race relations in the world. A public profession of faith in Christ Jesus advances Christ's agenda and purpose on the earth. The conceivability of such a Christian worldview focus on the proper functioning of the Christian, who has accepted the call to become Christ's ambassador for the reconciliation ministry. Establishing the trust factor among races that will set standards for unselfish norms and practices resulting in respect and care for each other can lead to a refreshed look at a complicated transforming ministry. Traditional values and unbiblical privileges require a new level of investigation and attention that can lead to a bolder

initiative that challenges a code of conduct and recommends a serious call for training and modeling.

The solution to racial disparities within the Christian church must propose key disciplines that remedy knowledge/biblical-based mobilization of truth. The charge of scriptures on racial relations and the move of the Holy Spirit within the church are the ingredients for connectional fellowship, unconditional love, and freedom from many forms of bondage. The results of racial reconciliation teaching will bring about a high level of expectancy for change among the participants and a study for individual needs, to create an environment where mistakes are not fatal, where collaboration is encouraged, recognized, and applauded. The removal of negative racial manipulation will help the church to persuade other congregants to do something that may be uncomfortable and not popular but worth the time and efforts invested. This high-morale partnership calls for contagious enthusiasm and theological hope is the foundational tool for achieved unity and prescribed accomplishment. The challenge to serve God, support a worthy cause, and at the same time, honor all races is the proper Christian agenda for multiethnic success.

Ministry Context

Lord of Lords Christian Church (LOLCC) in Detroit, MI, began January 16, 1990, as a church plant under the leadership of Pastor Clyde Glass Sr. and the King of Kings Missionary Baptist Church. This church plant began and still is a predominantly all-black congregation. The location is on the east side of the inner-city, where low-income families reside. This area contends with a weak educational system, high unemployment, prisoner reentry concerns, and single parenting homes. It is considered one of the top crimes, gang-related, disadvantaged environments in the United States. The church is outreach-oriented, in that it provides groceries

and clothes weekly to close to fifty families. The church is known for its neighborhood cleanup efforts, for meeting the needs of seniors, distributing turkeys for Thanksgiving Day, and bikes and toys for the Christmas season. These programs are essential programs that engage the church community to address social needs and the collaboration of community stakeholders. The educational level of the average congregant is under a four-year college degree level. Thus, limiting the benefits of professionalism that many of the suburban Christian churches enjoy. The heartbeat of the congregational life points towards discipleship orientation and implementation for diversified socialization. The discipleship program teaches the pupils to represent a moral and loving Creator God on the earth. This is the biblical approach to racial reconciliation called the Great Commission (Matt. 28:17-20, Acts 1:8); it is the core ingredient and roadmap to cross-culture communication and methodology for racial harmony but is limited as a congregational model. Another key component of the investigation reveals the importance of leader/follower bonding as the solution to path-goal deliveries, meaning that with a high need for achievement, key individuals must have personal stimulation before forward progress is assured.¹ Each active church member is encouraged biblically through church leadership engagement to pursue and develop a Christian character through a spiritual formation that leads to a Christ-like identity and lifestyle. This lifestyle is to be duplicated.

The prioritization of leadership values and concerns in the Black church context determines, in no small part, the reactionary climax in the pews for social change and moral correctness. Two critical elements to this concept are that individuals who support the church leaders look to be

¹Sikandar Hayyat Malik, "A Study of Relationship Between Leader-Behaviors and Subordinate Job Expectancies: A Path-Goal Approach," *Society for Personal Research* vol. 6 no. 2 (2012):361.

formally rewarded and emotionally supported.² Secondly, the overall church impact goes hand in hand with the successful discipleship and modeling of the church members, this model (right or wrong) results from the culturally-driven religious teaching of the lead pastor. The call to follow Christ in the community is crucial for the Black church, the focus is God's plan, and purpose carried out for the world to see His glory and power manifested within the community.³ The urban church, historically, has sought to connect with other diverse cultural experiences in the hope that pluralism becomes some form of beauty and diversity in some kind of stimulation. Moreover, the pursuit of racial unity among Christians in the past hindered forward progress. There is the missing ingredient that emphasized an accurate assessment and mutual agreement of historical truths concerning race identities by past church leaders is the research assumption. Furthermore, any plan for capacity building is known to fail if it does not incorporate the needs and strengths of all parties.⁴ Lord of Lords Christian Church believes that leadership in the pulpit and the followership in the pews demonstrating the loving heart and mind of Christ has a unique opportunity to further develop racial reconciliation principles not only within the walls but also within the diverse Christian community.

The researcher holds the title of Senior Pastor of the congregation. Several past challenges of the researcher, the church members, and other social and cultural concerns validate the need for further pursuit and research of racial reconciliation among all Christians. The researcher,

²Jiixin Huang, Lin Wang, and Jun Xie, "Leader-Member Exchange and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Roles of Identification with Leader and Leader's Reputation" *Social Behavior and Personality* 42 no.10 (2014):1703.

³Paul Cannings, *Making Your Vision A Reality: Proven Steps to Develop and Implement Your Church Vision Plan* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2013), 77.

⁴Victoria C. Scott and Susan M. Wolfe, *Community Psychology: Foundations for Practice* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015), 193.

also, is one of the chartered members of the Greater Detroit Partnership (GDP). This organization focuses on training Black and White pastors to develop meaningful and productive relationships with each other. The Senior Pastor in the group helps to encourage a practical and workable approach to racial reconciliation for leadership in the churches, congregations, and the Christian community. Minister's United (MU), an organization established by the Senior Pastor (researcher), in 2000, is a platform for lay leaders and pastors to get training to do outreach by connecting the church leaders with other Christian leaders or community stakeholders who have access to resources for economic and moral enhancements. GDP meets monthly for training, prayer, and the fellowship of Black and White pastors. This organization also encourages deepening cross-culture relationships outside of the monthly meetings. MU meets quarterly to focus on individual and community needs and to have presentations that will help connect ministers who have the same purpose of developing positive culture transformation, moral collaboration, and economic justice. Thrivent action teams, Meijer, Henry Ford Health Systems, Convoy of Hope, Faith Works, and Bikes4Kids, are organizations that have been active partners with MU outreach programs.

Problem Presented

Racial reconciliation is a controversial subject that needs additional research, more study, and discussion. It has a biblical foundation that complements diversity and unity among humans. The Christian church can play a vital role in improving race relations and how it affects socialization issues such as racism, poor education, single parenting, police brutality, mass incarceration, and high unemployment. The failure to understand and appropriate God's plan of

righteousness and justice for all peoples is the church's challenge.⁵ Undertaking this road of investigating race relations within the Christian community is a road that has been and still is critically examined and now sensitively managed by various cultural and doctrinal positions that seems to hurt more than helping the goal of racial unity.

Some inclinations from the research overshadow positive attitudes toward antiracism. For example, a gesture of biblical and historical correction has traditionally lost out to criticism and unsympathetic attitudes towards minorities and others who seek a change in churchism. Past humiliation and systemic injustices play an important role in America's Christianity. Politics that plague or punish the Christian church for wanting to and knowing how to transform into a multiracial community for positive modeling has become a modern malady. Moreover, a challenge to eliminate racism among Christians is not a new vision but a renewed Christological hope for real and lasting oneness, making Christian unity activists the stakeholders that carry the baton for true racial reconciliation. With the Bible as the guidebook and compass for genuine change, a revolutionary evolution emerges as a divine strategy. The research findings suggest that the history of nonbiblical visions and thoughts that promises racial reconciliation success has fallen short with noticeable limitations.

The good thing to grasp is that the discussion about improving racial relations within the Christian church and the world is escalating daily at an alarming rate. The debate for remedies has center stage in the news and media outlets. This urgent godly priority demands moral empathy, righteous indignation, and the most effective course of action that can implement an effective plan for racial unity and reconciliation. It is this moral high ground, this biblical-based plan of God that has been lost or rejected that now demands immediate consideration. The

⁵Psalm 89:14.

problem is that the congregation at Lord of Lords Christian Church in Detroit, MI may not understand the theological basis for racial reconciliation.

Purpose Statement

There are many scriptures and narratives in the Bible that address racial reconciliation and its many fundamental elements. Jonah struggled with the calling and the command of God to be a blessing to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-3). Instead of obeying God's instructions to go and preach to Nineveh, Jonah fled to Tarshish in disobedience to God's desire to be a blessing to a non-Jewish nation. Jonah was thrown overboard out of the boat by the boat officials. Jonah ended up in the belly of a large fish where much prayer and repentance went up to God. God gave Jonah another chance to bless the Ninevites (chapters 2-3). This time Jonah ministered to Nineveh, repentance followed, and God blessed the land of the Ninevites. Still, Jonah became more hateful and delusional because God's blessings were for a non-Jewish nation. Jonah showed an attitude and mindset of racial superiority that did not have God's endorsement.

Jesus astonished the Jewish followers (disciples) while showing compassion for another ethnic group by ministering to a Samaritan woman (Jn. 4). He had mentioned the need to go through Samaria (v. 4) even though Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (v.9). Jesus's conversation with this racially mixed Jewish woman confused the disciples because ethnic tensions and disunity were a way of life between the Jews and the Samaritans. Another biblical narrative that reflects ethnic division is when Simon, a Cyrenian, carried Jesus's cross (Matt. 27:32). This Cyrenian helped to carry Jesus's cross because of the orders of "the soldiers of the governor" (v. 29), non-Jewish soldiers. These examples of ethnic/racial disunity (and there are many others) in the Bible validates the premise that it is the will of God that racial oneness becomes of paramount importance in the heart of every believer. The purpose of this research

project is to teach the congregation at Lord of Lords Christian Church in Detroit, MI, the theological basis and need for racial reconciliation among the Christian community.

Basic Assumptions

The investigation from several scriptures in the Bible concludes that every believer of God ought to be committed to the process of racial reconciliation. For example, an angel of the Lord sent Philip to a desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza where he met and ministered to an Ethiopian eunuch.⁶ That conversation led to a correct interpretation of scripture, a deeper understanding of the Messiah's mission, and the Christian conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Church history concurs that there have been many past attempts to disassemble systemic racial inequalities in the world and American Christianity with little to no real progress. Furthermore, America's nonwhite population (mainly the Black community) remains victims of various forms of institutional racism.⁷ With the understanding of scripture as it relates to racial reconciliation and the duplication of Christ's passion for expanding God's kingdom on the earth, Lord of Lords Christian Church represents a resurgence of biblical principles containing outreach and love for all people.

The fundamental challenge facing the American Christian church today, a concern that there has not been a lasting adequate and effective method to eliminate racial disparity within the Christian ranks have come to fruition. The many thriving past agendas that were labeled help contributed to an increase in the division, disharmony, and racial tensions in the church world. A growing statistic reveals that nonreligious organizations are more willing to assist the Black

⁶Acts 8:26-40.

⁷Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church* 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 453.

church's leadership with appropriate teaching and training for unity in diversity than other Christians.⁸ One organization is the National Council which helps with mental health issues that stem from identity abuse and breakdown. The mindset that surrounds the Christian church and communities in America is a significant outcry and growing compelling voice that affirms and demands that racial reconciliation is not only wanted but needed. As a misunderstood issue, racial reconciliation breeds enormous racial tension and contention in the larger Christian community today. With unmovable optimism, the solvability of the race problem lies in the hands of the most victimized, the Black church.

The Black church must take ownership of the solution, mastery of specific knowledge, and affirmation of moral intelligence. Combating the negative trend of racial supremacy will result in the new knowledge gained and interpreted to represent a new set of attitudes and skills embraced by nonblack Christians. Moreover, it is this trend that articulates biblical truth, characterizes ethnic traditions, and destroys theological errors. Nothing encourages the racial reconciliation facilitator more than real change towards real progress that embraces and realizes racial unity. Spiritual change agents are the ones who see Christian households, communities, and churches as the central hubs for moral redemption. The passion for social change calls for strategic intentionality, verbal instructions, and skills that focus on reformation and transformation involving all races. Eliminating racial dysfunction and understanding the reasons why it exists sets the agenda in society for the elimination of violence, drugs, and criminal activities, it challenges systems that harbor poverty, unemployment, and injustices in the world. The spiritual and historical worlds not only connect but seem reachable for all informed Christians to embrace and apply as core ingredients to the true environment for the Spirit of love and unity to prevail.

⁸<http://www.theNationalcouncil.org>.

The Bible is multiracial and multicultural exposing a loving God whose aim is not to condemn the world but through Christ Jesus deliver the world from the bondage of all sin and its destructive results (Jn. 3:16-17, Matt, 1:21). Certain narratives in the Bible have been taken out of textual meaning to justify pretentious racial epithets which was never the mindset of God or the Bible writer. For example, When Jesus called the woman of Canaan a dog there was no sign of racial disrespect but there was a focus of ethnic preference and divine priority, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ... It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs” (Matt. 15:24-26 KJV). The symbolism of “dog” in the English language can mean “a worthless person.” Nowhere in the text did Jesus deemed this woman worthless, instead there was great respect given to this woman, “O woman, great is your faith” said Jesus (v. 28). Racial tension can and has been developed through the misrepresentation of Jesus’ words and misinterpretation of actual biblical narratives. According to Lee June, a slave mentality, psychologically damaging academia, false spirituality, and strained race relationships are some of the results due to historical inaccuracies.⁹ The goal of the research is to affirm that the biblical text that endorses congregational race relations represents the accuracy of God’s loving mind and heart to bring unity among believers.

The researcher assumes that false historical and biblical thinking has led to racial tensions and racist sinful behavior among Christians. The evidence is based on the misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and wrongful application of certain scriptures. Another example of the distorted scriptural teaching that can shed light out of prescribed racial darkness is the biblical account of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, John chapter 4. Jesus focused on cultural tensions and contrasting beliefs that were prevalent between the Jews and the Samaritans at that time. The

⁹June, 24.

history of the Jews and Samaritans began after King Solomon's death. God's people were divided into two kingdoms, the northern part was called Israel, the southern part was called Judah. Solomon's sons Jeroboam ruled Israel and Rehoboam ruled Judah. Samaria was Israel's capital and Jerusalem was Judah's capital. After the evasion of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians, the remnant that was left behind intermarried with Gentiles and worshiped foreign gods. A strong rivalry and hatred existed between the two ethnic groups.¹⁰ This religious and political breakdown is what Jesus addressed in the conversation with the Samaritan woman. Jesus said, "Jews have no dealing with Samaritans" (v. 4), "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews" (v. 22). The disciples asked Jesus "Why are you talking to her" (v. 27)? The ethnic tension that existed among the Jews and the Samaritans was based on different styles of worship, cultural bias, and beliefs. Bobby Griffith explained how the theology of race emerged, he wrote, "We may think that theology adapts to practice, but it is not that simple. Sometimes, the complex interaction between culture, belief, economics, and social practices works in such a way that incorrect ideologies are promoted by even the most pious Christians."¹¹ Therefore, the concept for biblical racial segregation theology must once and for all be destroyed based on knowledge of the truth and proper investigation and interpretation of racial reconciliation scripture.

Definitions

Within the scope of this study, the words "race" and "racial" denotes ethnic identity and cultural distinctiveness. The word "racism" suggests that one race is deemed superior to other nationalities in attitude and actions and that different nationalities are inferior and of lesser

¹⁰Tenney, 54.

¹¹Serven, 146.

quality. The word "reconciliation" is a biblical term and concept that describes a restoration or renewal of relationships. It implies an intensive mutual change, i.e., from one person towards another. It explains how God is reconciling the world to himself,¹² resulting in the church to establish in the earth "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). Reconciliation is defined as objective or provisional (before one is saved) and subjective or experimental (when one believes in God).¹³ Christian "unity" is a word that explains the goal of the researcher's understanding of racial reconciliation. The exhortations to a Christ-like humility are core to this word. A foundational scripture found in Philippians 2:1-2 says, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and purpose." Christian harmony has four fundamental principles that can relate to accomplishing racial reconciliation: 1. There is a certain consolation in Christ, 2. There is a certain comfort of love; 3. There is a specific fellowship of the Spirit, and 4. There are particular bowels and mercies.¹⁴ The fundamental foundation of the research rest on the researcher's interpretation and the participant's understanding of these terms.

Limitations

When individuals cannot rightly interpret environmental values and belief systems, an alternative understanding of reality emerges. This research seeks to locate the underlying causes that affect change in understanding divine intelligence and impart new avenues of learning to better the Christian community in race relations. A sample survey (questionnaire) addressing the

¹²2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

¹³ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 336.

¹⁴Kenneth Wuest. *Wuest's Word Studies: From the Greek New Testament*. Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 109-112.

level of biblical knowledge of the selected congregational focus groups on racial relations and reconciliation will suffice. The focus group participants are selected from the Wednesday Bible Study small group that makes up 60 % of the entire congregation at Lord of Lord's church, and the small focus group of a local White church will be selected by the participating pastor. A questionnaire for the focus groups of White and Black Christians concerning the need for the development and implementation of relationship building within the Christian community will produce the needed brainstorming for the healing from and the destruction of racial reconciliation demoralization. The number of participants in this questionnaire is limited to adult individuals (at least 18 years of age) who volunteer and accept the research qualifications and process. A minimum of ten project participants is needed.

Sampling all Christians are beyond the scope of this research. The findings reflect the thoughts and attitudes of a diversity of Christians within the region of the Lord of Lords Christian church. This approach will dictate the aspirations of a select group of people that reside in a convenient geographic location, therefore, limiting but validating attitudes and actions of Christians concerning racial relations in America. This research assumes that the Christian community needs and wants to identify culturally relevant approaches, historical truths, and theological relevancy to correct or expose false or misunderstood doctrine. The researcher suggests that it is essential for the Christian church to make aware of the complexities that accompany the attempts to advance racial reconciliation in a world that prizes division and disunity among races. Rejection of racial reconciliation, which has historical documentation and proof of its reality, accompanies this research, proving with accuracy the deception of a counter assumption that racial reconciliation is a myth, and that the Christian church cannot accomplish its goal of racial unity and harmony among each other.

Delimitations

The qualified assumption points towards a social stratification system that rejects all forms of racial equality. It is this hidden agenda that reproduce racial disharmony and defeat meaningful attempts generation after generation. Historical events prove that Christian behavior leads to underdiagnosed, unrecognized, and undertreated racial problems.¹⁵ The select group for this study is the congregation at Lord of Lords Christian Church in Detroit, MI, with an active membership of one hundred individuals, considered black or of African American descent. The ages of the participants are from 18 to 94 years old. The success of the study depends on the collective attitude and collaboration of both Black and White Christians. The researcher contends that traditional Christian attitudes towards racial reconciliation are not only socially challenging, theologically weak but these different convictions of the truth drive the present social conflicts, confusion, and complaints.

Black/White relations suffer not only in the church but also in the non-Christian world. Getting race relations biblically right in the American church while tension among races is at an all-time high seems to be nonexistent. As mentioned earlier, the attitude emerged as the Christian church failed to address and appropriate biblically motivated solutions to the dilemma adequately. Biblical principles of racial reconciliation promote the application of unity and ethnic uniqueness as offensive to the status quo. The old complaints of racial division cater to a lack of accountability on one end and victimology on the opposite end.¹⁶ These are limiting and defeating mindsets that paint a compiling census, which undermines actual progress towards

¹⁵Lee N. June and Sabrina D. Black. *Counseling for Seemingly Impossible Problems: A Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 145.

¹⁶Tony Evans. *Oneness Embraced: A Fresh Look at Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and Justice* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011), 21.

biblical racial deepness. The proper plan of surrender among the oppressor and ego-driven institutions and forgiveness from victimization among abused races is the dual detachment (agenda) needed for racial reconciliation success. This challenging approach calls for corporate Christian permission that allows old ways, old behavior patterns, and faulty thinking to die from Black as well as White Christians.

Thesis Statement

The desire for universal acceptance among all races comes with an enormous price tag that the totality of the Christian church may not be willing to pay. The upside of this challenge is that the Christian church can and should lead the way to a higher level of racial unity not only within the church community but also in the non-Christian world. The restructuring of stratified programs that indirectly caters to institutionalized and systemic racism becomes the seed for the dismantling and destruction of all forms of racism within the Christian church and the non-Christian world. Furthermore, Christ is the world-changer that now has millions of followers that accept the ministry to "release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18b NIV) from bondage. Oppression comes in many forms that can result in economic imbalance, political manipulation, and social deism. Racial injustice and abuse are not suitable for anyone (Prov. 14:31, 28:3, 15-16, 30:14) and should become of no effect among Christianity.

Racial reconciliation is an uncomfortable and demanding task for the Christian community to address and implement. It is a godly plan that requires a biblical-based, righteous approach that can lead to a lasting eternal solution. The need for a church-oriented remedy blesses the character of a global loving God. The daily news, social media platforms, and modern theological debates dictate to the Christian world a universal cry for divine and permanent change. There has been much outstanding research thus far on this topic, which has resulted in many racial barriers

destroyed and cross-culture relationships explored, renewed, and repaired. There are also examples of past events that are tension-packed and confusion-driven that paralyzes sincere attempts to right the wrongs of racism in American Christianity. If the Lord of Lords church receives accurate teaching and instruction regarding the historical and theological basis for racial reconciliation, then there will be the potential for effective outreach and meaningful relationship-building with all races within the Christian community and the world.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Chapter two includes a literature review that expands on the data gathered and discussed in the thesis project proposal. It reinforces the thematic information found in the selected literature using paraphrases and footnotes. The theological context and theoretical foundation expand the subject and application for building relationships to meet a racial reconciliation demand a theme that originated in the thesis project proposal.

Literature Review

Black Christian History

The theology and history of racial reconciliation is a result of the compilation of historical reports steaming from a variety of historians, scholars, and theologians. There are several startling facts on race relations streaming from research data. According to Carter G. Woodson, every individual has at least two educations, one that has inherited consequences, and one that comes with personal education.¹⁷ The implication is that the latter is the most rewarding. The origin of Black people finds its roots in the tenth chapter of Genesis, recorded in the Table of Nations. Scholars agree that this is the oldest ethnographic, historical document found.¹⁸ This biblical text validates the origins of nations and ethnic groups, it also corresponds with the genealogical, geographical, and political data needed to trace the historical roots of ancient Black/African peoples.¹⁹ The Black presence throughout other biblical texts can be validated as well, according to most biblical scholars. There may be different perceptions of skin color among

¹⁷Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro* (Lexington: Tribeca Books, 2016), 86.

¹⁸Walter Arthur McCray, *The Black Presence in the Bible, and the Table of Nations: Genesis 10:1-32* (Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1992), 14.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

researchers/scholars when investigating the participants identified in the Table of Nations; however, the ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Roman writers mainly agree that ancient Egyptians and Ethiopians were Black and Negroid.²⁰ A multi-ethnic background is a highly suggestive conclusion of biblical characters also. According to J. Daniel Hayes, a non-Caucasian culture context dominated Old and New Testament narratives.²¹ Lee June's finding supported a broader rationale and distinction explaining the facts between the origin of Black Christianity and the Black church.²² Blacks are said to be the main characters in the creation narrative and more like supportive characters in the establishment of the Black church. The validation is that Blacks are the traceable source of human creation and Christianity; It is understood that no scholar can honestly separate these two from each other.²³ Moreover, accepting a multi-ethnic biblical foundation paves the way for a sound foundation for racial reconciliation theology.

The biblical Adam and Eve are conjectured to be of African descent, possibly. Scholars such as Walter Arthur McCray and Cain Hope Felder support this history. Lee June concludes, "then Blacks were involved directly with God from the beginning."²⁴ The implication is that Blacks are the first originators of God's image, likeness, and history. The kingdom of Cush or "Cushite" a term representing African people is mentioned 54 times in the Hebrew text of the Old

²⁰Cain Hope Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 152.

²¹J. Daniel Hayes, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 45, 141.

²²Lee June, *Yet with a Steady Beat: The Black Church Through a Psychological and Biblical Lens* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 21.

²³June 21.

²⁴Ibid.

Testament.²⁵ These Africans lived along the Nile River south of Egypt.²⁶ When the church falsifies or distorts the truth, the result is a creation of what June referred to as "a toxic faith system."²⁷ Black and other non-Caucasian presence also are recorded in the New Testament, according to June.

Jesus lived in Egypt for some time as a child (Matt. 2:13-15). Simon of Cyrene helps bear Jesus's cross (Matt. 27:32); on the day of Pentecost, many African countries represented Christian unity (Acts 2:5-6), and Philip preached Christ to a person of Ethiopian descent (Acts 8:26-39).²⁸ Some scholars and historians conceptualize a different history connected to Blacks. George Fredrickson, a Stanford historian, interpreted the Black image in the White mind as that of "ape imagery,"²⁹ and not God imagery. This false imagery contributes to the notion that Blacks are not fully human and that they are considered permanently inferior to the White race.³⁰ The cost to systematically preserved these layers of deception has cost the Christian church historical shame and enormous embarrassment.

Historical Christianity in America reports racial inequalities through imbalanced educational systems, mass incarceration, segregation, and color-blind politics. Past attempts to correct the wrongs have resulted in deeper damaged race relations.³¹ Furthermore, history is somewhat

²⁵Hayes, 26.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷June, 144.

²⁸June 22.

²⁹Jennifer L. Eberhard, *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice that Shapes What We See, Think, and Do* (New York: Viking, 2019), 140.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Curtist L. Ivery and Joshua A. Bassett, *America's Urban Crisis, and the Advent of Color-Blind Politics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 27.

silent, suggesting that there has never been true racial reconciliation between Black and White Christians. That authentic racial reconciliation among Blacks and Whites in American Christianity is more of an unrealistic expectation than a reachable phenomenon. And that today's race relations are full of disunity, separation, hatred, and hostility that yet remain among Blacks and Whites. Clarence Shuler's research shows that analytical Blacks do not get enthused about returning to the devastation and degradation that they have experienced, which makes any effort or desire for racial reconciliation undesirable and unwanted.³² The divisions and prejudices that define the American Christian church today are real and no longer can afford to be ignored or denied. These injustices await theological correctness, strategic intentionality, and practical creativeness. These historical findings of the origin of Blacks, the deviation of their true identity and legacy, and the various conditions surrounding race relations within the Christian church and community are consistent and validated through old and more recent studies identified in this research.

Theology

Theology can be a friend or foe based on the bias and assumption of the leading theologian. Christian theology is a result of a constantly evolving system that recognizes, reorganizes, and recapitalizes the truth concerning God and his Word. Individual scientists suggest that racial inferiority is a product of creation-this theory promotes confusion and conflict in understanding the biblical account of creation.³³ The subject, racial reconciliation, seems trapped in segments of the Christian culture, language, and literature that result in daily prescribed behavior and

³²Clarence Shuler, *Winning the Race to Unity: Is Racial Reconciliation Really Working?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2003), 141.

³³Eberhardt, 137.

practices of Christian people.³⁴ As a modern Yale theologian, Willie James Jennings concludes that a more in-depth investigation of the soil of contemporary theology has grown out of cultural and social clumsiness that is bound by (in the words of Pierre Bourdieu) "the scholastic disposition."³⁵ Jennings later realized that this deception goes deeper than levels of clumsiness. Still, it is, in his words, "a highly refined process of socialization," that reinforces a complicated system of disassociation and dislocation of information that connects certain prescribed behaviors and attitudes, which enhances scholarly theological work.³⁶ A need for more research on religious bias related to racial reconciliation is apparent. Perception derived from years of destructive theology will continue to plague the racial reconciliation process until corrective theology prevails.

The overall theological premises that cultivate evangelical Christian theology from a historical perspective do point to a process of colonial dominance. Jennings sees these commanding heights of colonial dominance as a painfully superficial reality of the Western Christian church. The results in the form of religion have destroyed the deep desire for real intimacy.³⁷ Jennings prefers a more biblical way forward, a process that explores the Christian capacity to demonstrate affection through the redemptive work of God's Son to the world.³⁸ God's gift to the world is reconciliation, but this reconciliation theology cannot be fully grasped or understood until, as Jennings put it, "the deformities of Christian intimacy and identity in

³⁴Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Ann Arbor: Sheridan Books, 2010), 232.

³⁵Jennings., 7.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 9.

³⁸Ibid.

modernity" is devalued; when this happens, Christians are now ready to imagine and embrace scriptural reconciliation.³⁹ On the contrary, some Christian leaders are preaching from the biblical text that racial reconciliation is here and is moving with progressive determination to solve the racial divide among American Christians.

At the 2017 Truth in Conference, hosted by Founders Baptist Church in Spring, Texas, a series of messages was given on the topic of racial unity. The theological insights that provided answers to racial reconciliation and unity within the Christian church and the world validated the assumption that biblical ignorance is the great enemy of racial reconciliation. In one message, H. B. Charles Jr. contended that Jesus destroyed the walls that separated the Jews and the Gentiles through Christ's death on the cross.⁴⁰ The authoritative biblical reference is Ephesians 2:14-18, which explained that Christ destroyed the barrier the dividing wall of hostility and have made Jews and Gentile Christians one Body in Christ Jesus. Juan Sanchez's message explained that the world desires unity and that the miracle of the gospel is not diversity, but a unified diversity.⁴¹ Racial integration means that Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ (Jew or Gentile) and must function as God's family. Sanchez says the book of Ephesians is God's roadmap to Christian unity, particularly in chapters 4-6, how Paul teaches that individuals of different cultures, languages, tribes, and nations are to glorify God with togetherness as Christ's church.⁴² The prognosis is that the church in the world should look like the church in the Bible (Acts 2:42-

³⁹Jennings, 10.

⁴⁰H. B. Charles Jr., Danny Akins, Juan Sanchez, Richard Caldwell, Jim Hamilton, Owen Strachan, Carl Hargrove, and Christian George, *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity* (Woodlands: Kress Biblical Resources, 2017), 38.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 57.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 58.

47), manifesting God's living Spirit dwelling among believers indefatigably.⁴³ Fulfilling this biblical vision is an ironic causative gesture of hope promised in these messages.

Danny Akin's message focus on critical principles on what it takes to achieve racial reconciliation and a unified diversity with Philippians 2 as the guiding scripture. There are four elements to consider: 1. Of the same mind, 2. Having the same love, 3. Being in full accord-literally of one soul, and 4. Of one mind.⁴⁴ The summation of the message is that the path to racial unity and reconciliation is to have the humble mindset of Christ.⁴⁵ Carl A. Hargrove's presentation reiterates Jennings's preference that a new way must emerge that cultivates genuine racial unity and reconciliation. He reports that from a historical perspective, every continent has demonstrated some form of horrors related to genocide, prejudice, injustice, and systematic oppression.⁴⁶ Hargrove's radical solution points to three elements that make up Christian unity. The believers must together believe in a common redemption, a common Redeemer, and a common faith in the one who demonstrated love based on forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴⁷ He made it clear that Christians operating out of compassionate love shall effectively connect, and that this, loving unity and hope are inevitable and biblical. Furthermore, most biblical scholars believe that scriptures are full of pages promoting believers to love each other.⁴⁸ The conclusion

⁴³Lloyd John Oglivie, *Drumbeat of Love: The Unlimited Power of the Spirit as Revealed in the Book of Acts* (Waco: Word Books, 1980), 31.

⁴⁴Charles et al., 68.

⁴⁵Ibid., 76.

⁴⁶Charles et al., 79.

⁴⁷Ibid., 80.

⁴⁸Russel D. Moore and Andrew T. Walker, *The Gospel and Racial Reconciliation* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 47.

behind the messages carries a theological mandate for racial reconciliation that seems to be redemptive-based love for God and all of creation.

Reconciliation

Wellington Boone denounces the historical sin of slavery in America that was mainly instituted by White Christians. Boone contends that this form of slavery is wrong from a biblical perspective, nor is it God's will. When God's will appears on earth, it must have divine blessedness, with a heavenly promise to validate it. Boone explained that heaven represents all races, kindred, and tongues who worship the King, singing worthy is the Lamb.⁴⁹ Therefore, biblical reconciliation starts with God's perfect relationship with humanity. Adam and Eve failed by sinning against God, then God provided the perfect atonement through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now humanity's fellowship with God is restored. This is an explanation for 2 Cor. 5:17-21 which reveals a spiritual and dynamic union with Christ that is empowered by Christ to establish a ministry of reconciliation within the believer's life.⁵⁰ This is similar to how Clarence Shuler sees this text (and Eph. 2:16) as an explanation of spiritual reconciliation but not racial reconciliation.⁵¹

In contrast, Moore and Walker understand that what Jesus did on the cross is the religious motivating factor for Christian unity. This demonstration of love that God showed humanity by giving his Son as a ransom for all (1 Jn. 1:9) is the loving code for the Christian to pursue racial reconciliation within the church context.⁵² To reiterate this sentiment, Juan Sanchez believes that

⁴⁹Wellington Boone, *Breaking Through: Taking the Kingdom into the Culture by Out-Serving Others* (Nashville: B & H Publishers, 1996), 53.

⁵⁰Fred Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Waco: Word Books, 1977), 343.

⁵¹Shuler, 131.

⁵²Moore and Walker, 41.

the only real genuine agreement is the gospel in action.⁵³ Evangelical Christian churches, circles, and organizations prize their ministries on this principle.

Jim Cymbala writes from a pastoral experience of how racial (spiritual) reconciliation can work when God spearheads the process. Coming to Christ (or salvation) at Brooklyn Tabernacle church is offered to and received by all kinds of individuals, such as individuals with addictions, social outcasts, lawyers, businessmen and businesswomen, and bus drivers. Some of the converts are Latinos, African Americans, Caribbean Americans, and Whites. Cymbala sees this as an example of a very diverse church community that the Spirit of God energized and unified supernaturally.⁵⁴ Through the worship experiences and the converted individual's testimonies, God's divine love invaded the onlooker's hearts, which resulted in an invitation and acceptance not only to accept Christ but each other as one family.⁵⁵ Andrea Smith's research collaborates with Brooklyn Tabernacle's findings that legislative change is not always needed to mobilize the fight for racial justice, the need stem down to the fact that a change of heart is at the core of solving the race problem in America.⁵⁶ The Christian community seems to be the only exact vehicle that God has ordained to establish unity and intimacy among races. One concept called "decolonization" emerged among Native peoples in 2007, which is a process to undo the process of colonization or to remove any impure colonial thoughts.⁵⁷ Smith discredits decolonization as

⁵³Charles et al., 47.

⁵⁴Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's spirit Invades the Hearts of His People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 33.

⁵⁵Cymbala, 40.

⁵⁶Andrea Smith, *Unreconciled: From Racial Reconciliation to Racial Justice in Christian Evangelicalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 57.

⁵⁷Smith., 197.

an impossibility. This position is that global oppression should disappear as leaders build adequate political power that can destroy White supremacist and colonialist privileges within Christian evangelicalism.⁵⁸ The political machine in America today has proven to be very limited when it comes to healing racial wounds. The desired outcome of multiethnic integration must depend on the Christian church since politics and educational endeavors have fallen short of real restoration and equal co-existence of all races. The importance of building godly relationships within the church context is the greatest hope to pursue and the inevitable task to accomplish lasting racial harmony.

Building Relationships

A new identity emerges when salvation occurs, and Christian fellowship arises within the believer's life. Biblical texts promote this positive Christological new identity that includes a person's racial identity. This position is what the Bible calls being "In Christ."⁵⁹ A believer does not eliminate physical realities when adopted into the family of God. It is the new heart that characterizes the new identity (Heb. 8:10). To understand positive race identity, Anneliese A. Singh suggests that a positive race identity is needed when one is confronting an unjust system where one race is inferior to another.⁶⁰ A positive race identity means that the individual is secure and accepts personal identity, racial history, and stereotyping.⁶¹ Effective racial relationship building has a lot to do with Black responses to microaggressions. Singh explains

⁵⁸Smith, 198.

⁵⁹Read Genesis 1:31 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

⁶⁰Anneliese A. Singh, *The Racial Healing Handbook* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2019), 11.

⁶¹Ibid.

that microaggressions appear as negative messages from a racialized society daily.⁶² These external messages become internal negative stimuli that influence thinking and behavior. Shuler maintains that racial relations are not getting better between Blacks and Whites on a larger scale because there is little to no trust among the races.⁶³ Emerson and Smith surveyed Christians by asking the question, "Do you think that racism is a top priority that Christians should be working to overcome, or not?"⁶⁴ Eighty percent of the participants said yes, it should be a top priority. The next question was, "How should racism be addressed?" The result was four key recommendations to be applied: 1. Try to get to know people of another race. 2. Work against discrimination in the job market and the legal system. 3. Work to integrate congregations racially. 4. Work to incorporate residential neighborhoods racially.⁶⁵ These recommendations represent the burden of embracing theological changes that command cross-culture communication; this work is hard and rare.

Craig Garriott believes that Christians must encourage, contextual theology, but to do this, Christians must have the power and discipline to apply the truths that are affirmed. Therefore, the Christian agents for racial unity must understand and accept the facts, mine them, confirm them, and know how to apply them to everyday life.⁶⁶ The job of establishing racial justice in a broken world is a hard task that cannot depend on one or two individuals or one or two churches to accomplish this ministry. The world is too broken and divided to put this task on a few faithful

⁶²Singh, 105.

⁶³Shuler, 176.

⁶⁴Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120.

⁶⁵Emerson and Smith, 120.

⁶⁶Doug Serven, *Heal Us Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church* (Oklahoma City: White Blackbird Books, 2016), 184.

Christians, explained Clark and Powell, they believe that every believer can reach out to the least, the last, and the lost to bring divine love and commitment to the entire world.⁶⁷ What is understood in this study is that it is within the motivational and intentional premises of two diverse churches and a small focus group to develop a strategy that will eventually revolutionize the racial relationships within the Christian community. The battleground is within traditional Christian life where attitudes of separateness remain intact and scripturally unchallenged. DeYmaz and Okuwobi give two core commitments that multiethnic churches and individuals need to incorporate for establishing racial harmony. The church needs to welcome people of diverse makeup into significant leadership roles, and critical leadership voices need to intentionally encourage the church and community to collaborate towards unity for kingdom impact.⁶⁸ The assumption is that the relationship-building church revolution has many available benefits for now and the future.

The informed Black Christian can bring true Christian heritage and identity into an environment, and everyone in that environment benefits from this Black spiritual presence. Molefi Kete Asante recommends that an affirmation of Afrocentricity is needed for Blacks to renew cultural reality.⁶⁹ This African identity promotes excellent, provocative, organized, educated, and dependable individuals.⁷⁰ Asante believes that the American Black church needs a regeneration that will drive the church leadership towards revolutionary social and political

⁶⁷Chap Clark and Kara E. Powell, *Deep Justice in a Broken World: Helping Your Kids Serve Others and Right the Wrongs Around Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 242.

⁶⁸Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi, *Multiethnic Conversations: An Eight-Week Journey Toward Unity in Your Church* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016), 183.

⁶⁹Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991), 41.

⁷⁰Ibid.

consciousness.⁷¹ This change in racial reconciliation directives, for the Christian church in America, is further explained by Haman Cross Jr., of what is called, "Cross Colors."⁷² Haman Cross Jr. challenges the Christian church in America to give a fresh look at racial reconciliation from a different and non-traditional perspective.

This author argues that America's highly racialized society is guilty of an evil that is called "partiality" these aggressions under the umbrella of racism hinder racial unity and harmony in the Christian church. The hope is that Christians take on this painful and unpopular route of crossing colors by being "reckless," meaning taking on serious risks to create opportunities for transparent and honest communications with other cultures.⁷³ The second challenge for the enlightened Christian is to become "relentless" or having a mindset representing persistent efforts to cross colors.⁷⁴ The racial problem, therefore, cannot be approached as a social, philosophical, or secular issue, but a spiritual one.⁷⁵ These research findings are to reveal the historical and theological foundation for implementing racial unity and harmonious relationships within the Christian community.

Theological Foundations

The Triune Christian God is a relational being. The composite of the divine existence represents God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ These three Persons of the

⁷¹Asante, 75.

⁷²Haman Cross Jr., *Cross Colors: American Christianity in Black and White* (Detroit: Cross Colors with Me, 2015), 138.

⁷³Cross, 139.

⁷⁴Ibid., 146.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Matthew 28:19.

Godhead share attributes that are preexistent and coequal in quality and essence. The Father, the Word (Logos), and the Spirit work together to create and develop the world as it is known today.⁷⁷ John's text communicates that the Trinity enjoys equality and distinction of identity and unity of nature.⁷⁸ In the sacred book, everything that the Triune God does and enjoys proves a level of comprehensive cooperation among each divine person. In the creation narrative, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."⁷⁹ Isaiah 6:8 also suggests distinction and unity within the Trinity, when the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" This permanent oneness that the Trinity enjoys is always found in Christ.⁸⁰ This bonding influence among the Trinity carried over into the relationship that the Creator God developed in the created Adam and Eve and within the Body of Christ. God expected Adam and Eve not only to enjoy fellowship with the presence of Deity but also with each other. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (NIV).⁸¹ A united, intimate relationship with the Creator God and with creation describes humanity's foundation for oneness and the Christian Church's role to be one in society.

The command to the first dwellers of the earth to expand and prosper as synergistic partners is reflective of God's strategy and plan for relational progression, "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number."⁸² This foundational principle identifies God's passion

⁷⁷Genesis 1:1-2, John 1:1-2.

⁷⁸Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John*, Vol. 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 28.

⁷⁹Genesis 1:26a KJV).

⁸⁰John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 30.

⁸¹Genesis 2:18, 24, 3:8.

⁸²Genesis 1:28a NIV.

for the duplication of real unity and harmony among his created first family. Misguided solidarity began to replace God's relational agreement after the fall of humanity. Humans continued to increase in number, and at that time, the entire world communicated with a high level of harmony and togetherness. "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech."⁸³ With this misguided unity that rejected God, an attempt to build a tower to heaven explained a fallen sinful rebellious mindset that sought to make a name that was independent of God. Keil and Delitzsch explained the tower builder's failure to follow God's plan. "For, according to the divine purpose, men were to fill the earth, *i.e.*, to spread over the whole earth, not indeed to separate, but to maintain their inward unity notwithstanding their dispersion."⁸⁴ Therefore, God confused the language. "The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language, they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."⁸⁵ This swift execution of the Trinitarian decree resolved into differences of ethnic groups, families, and languages according to Candlish.⁸⁶ God's long-term focus, after the Tower of Babel's intervention, was to build a better intimate relationship with all of humanity. Abram was that promised link that would result in the expansion of divine friendships, diverse relationships, and global blessings with God and all families of the earth.

⁸³Genesis 11:1 NIV.

⁸⁴C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 173.

⁸⁵Genesis 11:7 NIV.

⁸⁶Robert S. Candlish, *Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979), 176.

According to James, “the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s friend” (NIV).⁸⁷ The full manifestation of the restored relationship of God with humanity came through believing and receiving the incarnate Christ and obtaining the right to be a member of the family of God. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”⁸⁸ Barnes suggests that people who receive Christ are united to the Lord Jesus and are regarded as children of the Highest.⁸⁹ This divine election complements the relational position that nothing should separate the believer from the loving nature of Christ,⁹⁰ and complements a particular attitude of obedience and reverence for God and the Word of God.⁹¹ God expects the believer to be the recipient and representation of redemptive love, and the Christian church is to communicate that love to all nations.

The core of racial reconciliation theology comes with enhancing a methodology of interactions with the Creator and creation that overcomes hate and evilness in a way that brings glory to God and oneness to all creation. Paul explained the process this way: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"⁹² Individuals from every nation

⁸⁷See Genesis 12:1-3, James 2:23.

⁸⁸John 1:10-12 NIV.

⁸⁹Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical, Luke and John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 179.

⁹⁰Romans 8:35.

⁹¹Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 207.

⁹²2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV.

have an invitation to be reconciled first to God and second to God's creation through Jesus Christ. Being "in Christ" produces a radical change in the believer's life, actions, and behavior patterns.⁹³ A putting off the old sinful nature and replacing it with Christ's life, the new nature depowers sin and empowers righteousness within the believer's life. God's new creative work in the believer is described as a new life of devotion to Christ with new attitudes and actions.⁹⁴ The weakening of the sinful nature determines the effectiveness of the life of Christ that is needed to build relationships that complement racial reconciliation.

Divine relationship building is accomplished through principles and examples that can be taken directly from God's word. Biblical research suggests that six principles are needed for racial reconciliation theology to accomplish its fullest desire. The first principle in the relationship-building process is an acknowledgment of faith in the Triune God and the word of God. This step is foundational for spiritual reconciliation and social trustworthiness. The complexities of combining the universal Christian God within the physical world are to be realized and applied before any form of biblical reconciliation can be manifested. Faith in God creates the capability of the believing individual to reunite in a relationship with God and to embrace all of God's creation through a new set of lenses. Jesus informed Nicodemus, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3 NIV). The disconnect and disunity with God must be solved before an acceptable union is approved by God. Ephesians 2:8-10 proves the validity of saving faith, Paul wrote, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can

⁹³David E. Garland, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of the Holy Scriptures, 2 Corinthians* vol. 29 (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1999), 286.

⁹⁴John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (USA: Victor Books, 1989), 568.

boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (NIV). Belief in the gospel message is the beginning of the pursuit and practice of building a new and lasting relationship with God and others.

The second principle in the relationship-building process is fellowship with God and other believers. The Greek word is "koinonia." This element binds the Christian community together with commonality, companionship, and comradeship. It is a partnership at work and participation in the divine nature.⁹⁵ It is God's design plan filled with all the fullness of God.⁹⁶ The opposite of Christian fellowship is destructive contention. Proverbs 21:9 warns the people of God, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop [on the flat oriental roof, exposed to all kinds of weather] than in a house shared with a nagging, quarrelsome and faultfinding woman" (AMP). This woman represents anyone who cannot (or will not) pursue a peaceful and loving environment.⁹⁷ The close association that God endorses among his people represents Trinitarian unity and imagination. The root of human fellowship started with Adam and Eve. When Adam saw Eve for the first time, Adam declared, that Eve is "bone of my bones and flesh from my flesh. This one is called woman, for from man was taken this one." Therefore "a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24 TLV). The need for intimate fellowship grows as Christ's identity is recognized.

Effective fellowship with each other is crucial for the advancement of the relationship between the reconciler and the reconciled. God enjoyed and sought fellowship with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). Jesus summoned the twelve disciples to be united with

⁹⁵Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 449.

⁹⁶Eric L. Johnson, *God & Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 554.

⁹⁷Charles Bridges, *A Modern Study in the Book of Proverbs* (Milford: Mott Media, 1978), 441.

Christ and do ministry together (Matt. 10:1). Paul emphasized in his writings the importance of the Christian calling is the fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ the Lord, and with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:9, 2 Cor. 13:14). Psalms 133:1 (AMP), says “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” This fellowship mandate with Christ and each other is not temporary but eternal (1 Thess. 4:17) resulting in commanded blessings by God (Ps. 133:3). Oneness is the divine aim and goal of Christian fellowship, it requires the Father and the Son to spend quality time with the loving believer (John 14:23 17:21, 1 John 1:3) that results in the demonstration of inseparable mutuality.

The third principle in the relationship-building process is friendship with God and with others. Christian friendships are mainly built around the believer’s godly ability to deeply care for the well-being of others. A friend is visible in times of crisis and turmoil (Gen. 38:12), always shows love, and is a person for adversity (Prov. 17:17). This text also suggests that this level of friendship has no exceptions or mitigating circumstances.⁹⁸ Biblical wisdom teaches that true friendship is a priceless commodity. “Oil and perfume rejoice the heart; so, does the sweetness of a friend’s counsel that comes from the heart” Prov. 27:9 AMP). “Iron sharpens iron; so, a man sharpens the countenance of his friend [to show rage or worthy purpose]” (Prov. 27:17 AMP). Moses and Abraham were called friends of God (Ex. 33: 2 Cho. 20:7). True friendship is not automatic but demands loving evolutionary Christological measures.⁹⁹ “A man with many friends may be harmed by them, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24 TLV). Jesus informed his disciples, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You

⁹⁸David A. Hubbard, *The Communicator’s Commentary: Proverbs* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 264.

⁹⁹Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John* Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 153.

are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:12-14 NIV). In this step, a shift in positional responsibility and accountability in the relationship is developed. Jesus went on to declare, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15 NIV). The relationship progresses from slaves to friends to brothers (Rom. 8:14-17, Ga. 3:27-4:8) according to Stern.¹⁰⁰ The dismantling of the notion of an inferiority/superiority relationship is resolved and replaced with deeper empathy and intimacy for each other. Jesus informed the disciples that the relationship has grown and advanced to a level that accommodates a clearer vision and revelation of the Father’s will and love.

The fourth principle in the relationship-building process is the public recognition of the multicultural dynamic of the Christian family. This principle explains that there is a definite diversity among the children of God. John reported that Jesus was initially rejected by the Jewish people but accepted by non-Jewish people. Jesus came to individuals of cultural relevance but was not received. Yet to all (Gentiles) who received the Jewish Son of God, to those who believed in the name of the Son of God, was given the right to become children in God’s family. God’s children are born not of natural descent, nor human decision or of a husband’s will, but born of God’s Spirit (John 1:11-13 NIV). When Jesus was informed of the presence of the biological family members, the response reiterated a divine realignment and prioritization of individuals in the household of God. Jesus asked, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Pointing to the disciples, Jesus said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:48-50 NIV). The nearest and dearest relations connected to Jesus are individuals who may not have kindred ties

¹⁰⁰David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publication Inc., 1992), 201.

but those who are sustained towards him.¹⁰¹ This alignment in the family of God produces righteous divisions. Jesus's message is clear "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. And a man's foes will be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34, 36 AMP). God's family, according to the Bible is made up of Jewish and Gentile believers that may not be participants of the same bloodline but share the same spiritual purpose and DNA.

The fifth principle in the relationship-building process is the intentionality and obligation of the Christian community to demonstrate forgiveness of past sins of racism and the support of an anti-multiethnic agenda. This step also calls for the individual believer's commitment to combat all future forms of racial disunity in the Body of Christ and the world. Forgiveness is a necessity in the grace age, it is the correct response because one has been forgiven.¹⁰² The scripture reference states, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32 NLT). Forgiveness seals the deal for effective spiritual and racial reconciliation in the Christian church and the world.

The final principle in the relationship-building process is the reception of God's favor (grace) on the relationships enjoyed by Christians. A narrative in the Book of Acts explains this concept, Luke wrote, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:

¹⁰¹Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical, Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 137.

¹⁰²Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology: Doctrinal Summarization Vol. 7* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1976), 165.

and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:32-33 KJV). In this text, the Christian community demonstrated a oneness in affection, emotion, understanding, intelligence, and thought, in response, favor with God and man prevailed.¹⁰³ The unfolding of God’s plan within the church is to prove that Christ called, justified, and glorifies the character of the recipient of his grace.¹⁰⁴ Due to corporate collaboration and the absence of selfishness, these followers of Christ in this text were recipients of human persecution as well as divine blessedness.

Theoretical Foundations

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines racism as “A learned belief in racial superiority, which includes the belief that race determines intellectual, cultural, and moral capacities. The practice of racism includes both racial prejudice and discrimination against others based on their race or ethnicity. Two primary forms of racism, individual and institutional, are generally viewed as products of either psychological or social forces. Racism in any form is a sin that embodies both moral and spiritual dimensions.¹⁰⁵ Building on this definition, June asserts that the Christian church has the potential to be the “healing community” that can meet the needs and emotions of institutional racism.¹⁰⁶ Shuler sees the need for the church to date racial reconciliation as a principle to be explored before meaningful and cross-cultural relationships come to fruition.¹⁰⁷ The most relevant approach to racial healing that accommodates the aims of this study is the given emphasis on biblical-based truths that correlates with the notion that

¹⁰³W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1990), 137.

¹⁰⁴Steven J. Lawson, *Foundations of Grace: A Long Line of Godly Men* Vol. 1 (Orlando: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2006), 19.

¹⁰⁵Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2001), 978.

¹⁰⁶June, 115.

¹⁰⁷Shuler, 144.

brotherly love must continue within the Christian community as an active force and a call to action (Heb. 13:1) that will combat problematic racial degenerative issues.

The advent of racial reconciliation and building cross-cultural communication within the Christian community has approached a crossroad with various concepts and approaches to choose from. One approach deals with the examination of history as a predictor of what the future entails. Clarence Shuler suggests that there are four reasons why African American Christians are not motivated to pursue racial reconciliation: 1. White Christians do not care about the plight of the Black community; 2. African Americans see racial reconciliation as a form of Europeanization; 3. African Americans fear losing the last institution that is owned and controlled by Blacks, the local church, and 4. Racism is still a reality within and outside of the Black church.¹⁰⁸ This overwhelmed focus on history distracts from the biblical concept of racial reconciliation. Tony Evans suggests that "the core problem of racial disunity in America is the failure to understand and execute a kingdom-based theology on both righteousness and justice."¹⁰⁹ The significant challenge for a pure kingdom approach resides in the notion that all Christians are prone to embrace, accept, and abide by the biblical implications of racial reconciliation. This level of racial reconciliation is yet to manifest itself.

According to Hays, God's people are made up of multi-ethnic assemblies representing all tribes, languages, peoples, and nations to create a worship atmosphere that focuses on God's throne.¹¹⁰ The combination of kingdom living and racial allyship has the potential to impact guidelines for the engagement of healthy confrontation of racial discrimination and

¹⁰⁸Shuler, 141-143.

¹⁰⁹Evans, 22.

¹¹⁰Hayes, 205.

oppression.¹¹¹ It has been proven that focus groups that are designed to address racial issues can result in a “healthy effect” of making the group participants realize their ethnocentric assumptions and limiting beliefs.¹¹² Focus group experiences have resulted in group collusion that can dictate what level of open discussion, critical thinking, and problem-solving techniques can be used.¹¹³ The more diversified the group is the greater the chances of racial awareness and feelings are deemed to be expressed.¹¹⁴ However, deficient socialization, destructive church practices, and past failed racial harmonization has hindered the actualization of racial dialogue for racial equality.¹¹⁵ Moreover, all is not lost, Black and White church membership realizes the need to continue to pursue true racial reconciliation directives and ministries.

The gap between expectations and experiences is important to this study. The model for this study allows the participants to determine both the level of biblical communication needed and the creative application of the biblical knowledge gained and applied for the improvement of race relations. The desired outcome of the study suggests a practical and effective agenda that the participants agree to adopt as an improved policy for cross-culture and diversity success within the Christian community. The model further suggests that all believers demonstrate love practically, continuously, and foundationally as a prescribed way of life.¹¹⁶ Church practices that are below biblical expectations lead to greater confusion and divisions that do not represent the

¹¹¹Sigh, 173.

¹¹²Samuel T. Gladding, *Groups: A Counseling Specialty* 7th Ed. (New York: Pearson, 2016), 129.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵Hayes, 206.

¹¹⁶George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews: The NIV Application Commentary, From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 435.

founder of the church, Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18). Paul rebuked the Corinthians because of divisions in the church. Paul wrote, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought “(1 Corinthians 1:10 NIV). An intentional approach to unite Christian group-thinking that attacks anti-Christological love remains the solid therapeutic path to keep pursuing and expanding.

The applied approach focuses on getting to know people of other ethnic groups, the friendship-ology theory.¹¹⁷ This approach, authored by a White congregation, has the potential to be positive with limited counterproductive challenges. A combination of friendship-ology theory and historical, psychological, and theological initiatives in a ministry context between a Black congregation and a nonblack congregation represents a more realistic deeper approach to building, repairing, and restoring Christian relationships. According to Grudem, the key to race redemption is to embrace restoration and reconciliation. Restoration demands that the offender conforms to the right behavior from destructive and unrighteous behavior patterns and reconciliation challenges all parties to demonstrate a united righteous front with God and each other.¹¹⁸ Therefore, from a Christian therapeutic perspective, racial reconciliation's core motive and purpose is church discipline.¹¹⁹ It is how God replaces the enmity and hostility of man with peace and fellowship among humans.¹²⁰ The Christian church is to speak out and stand against the social evil of favoritism and to demonstrate Christian love and compassion towards both

¹¹⁷Emerson and Smith, 123.

¹¹⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 894.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Enns, 244.

believers and non-Christians.¹²¹ This moral perspective within the Christian community is the practical concept for racial healing and the authentic approach to racial unity.

¹²¹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1067.

Chapter 3

Methodology

BBR (Building Better Relationships) is a six-session, biblically tailored racial reconciliation program that focuses on teaching and helping Christian churches to improve cross-cultural relations with the hope of destroying racism within and without the Christian community. BBR expands on the friendship-ology theory with a church discipline perspective resulting in corrective Ecclesiology. The approach is to teach a variety of scriptural truths that establishes biblical principles explaining concepts of racial reconciliation theology. Consistent with the Bible study focus group learning patterns, building blocks activate the influencing factors (e.g., participant's motivation, ownership, and decision-making prerogatives). Each BBR session consists of the focus group facilitator (the Senior Pastor) introducing one of the racial reconciliation principles for textual observation, discussion, and dialogue. The concluding session of BBR accommodates the participant's fellowship, brainstorming, and plan of action to eradicate racism within the Christian community resulting in a new or improved race reconciliation church policy.

Intervention Design

Racial reconciliation is a journey that is talked about at great lengths with increasing frustration and desperation among most American Christians today. The desire to heal and prevent higher racial division within the Christian church in America is the primary foundation for the thesis proposal project. The process towards a successful solution begins with identifying the roots connected to the problem of racial discord and disunity. It is the position of the thesis problem that there is a limit or lack of theological knowledge of racial reconciliation within the Christian community, and by teaching the church members what the Bible reveals concerning the

history of racial reconciliation intervention, then corrective socialization becomes reachable. Biblical history shows the attitudes and actions of characters who enforced the need for ethical healing. The problem of spiritual and political disharmony manifested itself when Jesus realized that he had to go through Samaria (John 4:4). In the narrative, the history among the Jews and Samaritans had become systematically disharmonious (John 4:9). With a more in-depth education and study of biblical history, this biblical text solidly reveals the problem of bias worship agendas, ethical stereotyping, and traditional behavior patterns that were socially destructive then and are prevalent within the Christian community today.

The research plan to implement racial reconciliation training within the Christian church is the heart-beat of the study, it has three phases. First, a 30-minute interview designed to gather data from consented members of Lord of Lords Christian Church in Detroit, MI, a Black congregation, and His Church Anglican, a White church concerning the level of biblical understanding and indebtedness of the subject matter, will pave the way for phase two. The second phase will be to teach a six-session Bible study on multiethnic conversations collaborating with the works of Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi.¹²² This study prepares the focus group's participants for the application of how to reconcile and fellowship with other races and diverse ethnic groups. The discussion agenda topics are:

1. Why Multiethnic?
2. Why Now?
3. Obstacles to Date
4. Systemic Issues
5. What God is Doing

¹²²See Bibliography, DeYmaz and Okuwobi.

6. How Should I Respond?
7. How Should the Church Respond?
8. Living a Multiethnic Christian Life.

The meeting place for the entire project is Lord of Lords Christian Church, on Wednesdays from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm for six weeks. The Senior Pastor (researcher) of a Black church and a consented Senior Pastor of a White church will facilitate the focus group meetings. The final phase begins once the participants have received foundational teaching and instructions on racial reconciliation.

In the final phase, the participants of the focus groups will advance to the brainstorming process. The charge of learning how to develop healthy and loving relationships among all Christians becomes the call to action, which includes a church policy strategy for cross-cultural integration and experiences. The focus group Bible study is an in-depth study of theologically based principles to build racial relationships, which is a six-week learning process.

The ages of the survey participants and program stakeholders are at least 18 years of age. The educational level is limited to individuals up to the master's degree recipients. Recruitment of an equal number of male and female participants establishes concern for balanced perspectives. After the interview and data gathering stage, the teaching phase will follow to obtain information on race historical development, racial identity, and genealogical positing. Advertisement and recruitment of project participants will focus on the one-on-one conversations, flyers, the church announcements and bulletin outlets, email, and social media posting. Approval of the Project lies in the decision of the Senior Pastors and the church's board of directors. A secondary authorization comes from the volunteer church participant as stakeholders who will assist in discussing racial reconciliation feelings and principles representing the congregations. A pre- and

post-evaluation determines and reports the starting point of the training and the effectiveness of the teaching and mentoring given to the participants.

A preapproval consent form for all participants will grant privilege to the facilitator to manage the thesis project process. Interviews with the participants who are also interested in racial reconciliation will add to the structure and substance of the researcher's investigation. The continued education of the researcher will determine the discovery and rediscovery of critical findings and facts. Reading books and articles on racial reconciliation from a theological and historical perspective gives the researcher suggestive references that either validate or denounce preconceived assumptions. It is the accuracy of scriptural interpretation and the cumulative historical data that moves that researcher from recognizing the problems of racism and racial reconciliation to a solution that will alleviate the problem or fill a gap in the pursue of reducing the problem.

What makes this subject of racial reconciliation so viable today is the reality that a Black man name George Floyd died because a White police officer held his knee on George's neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds. The response to this death exposed different perspectives among Christians. A Christian census was exposed mostly in opposition to the overall racial injustices that identify dysfunctional socialization in America that lack effective solutions. George Floyd's death that was seen all over the world exposed racism, the deepness of it, and the results of it in America. Racial reconciliation is in the hands, and now the hearts of many American Christians. The various marches seen on the news in most states in America and other countries are evidence that not only is racial reconciliation needed but wanted by people of all races.

Another assumption of the researcher is that racial injustice is one of the most talked-about subjects on social media outlets today. Politicians have promised to eradicate the problem, social

groups meet daily to strategize the problem, and spiritual leaders are praying daily to ask God for solutions to the problem. All of this points to one solid Christian conclusion that there is a desperate desire to attack the problem of racism with the determination to remove racial disharmony off of the face of the earth and to bring the Christian church to a successful procedure that will replace social division with multiethnic unity. It is the researcher's hope and the participant's optimism that Christian division is a solvable problem. The focus for the solution of the problem turns from historical and theological correctness to an almost therapeutic approach that recommends the application of biblical principles and church discipline as a practical and spiritual approach for all Christians to implore.

Biblical doctrine on racial issues helps the believer to understand the current challenges that confront the American Christian church. Jesus declared that the end-time events would include hatred among nations and a limited level of love for each other in the world (read Matt. 24:1-14). The Christian church has been strategically placed on the earth by Christ to combat and transform this divided love into divine redemptive love (Rom. 5:8-10). This love is the primary foundation for the Christian church (1 Cor. 13:1-13), the Christ desired priority (Rev. 2:4), and the remedy for sustained Christian unity (Heb. 13:1). Recently, 560 cities marched in protest to the racial disparity portrayed among Black Americans in one day. The high level of disregard and disrespect against Black lives has reached its boiling point, and the call for all Christians to demonstrate divine love, respect, and equality for all peoples seems to be the right solution.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

A Zoom meeting with the Greater Detroit Partnership on June 10, 2020, gave the project an indirect beginning and head start into the project process. A group of twelve Christian church leaders, mainly senior pastors (7 Blacks and 5 Whites), participated in the meeting. The theme

for a discussion focused on church strategies that addressed the racial disharmony and discouragement that resulted from the death of George Floyd by the knee of a police officer. The desire for a greater understanding of multiethnic relations and racial reconciliation from a theological perspective furthered the conversation. The researcher discussed the potential thesis project as an alternative strategy to understand and address church and environmental racism. This suggestion gained immediate acceptance and corporate momentum. All participants agreed that a level of ignorance and impatience clouded past attempts towards regional, racial reconciliation, and the need for more research prevailed.

The group suggested that the researcher identify interested Senior Pastors in the region that had an interest in implementing a racial reconciliation teaching platform within the churches. The model that the pastors will use will evolve from the two churches' experience in the study. The focus group consists of two pastors and two congregations: one Black pastor and congregation and one White pastor and congregation. The initial start will focus on a recorded interview with the White pastor and the researcher (a Black pastor). Then gathering data from the groups through participant interviews will be given to both congregation's participants. The questions in the study are open-ended to gauge the attitudes and the racial concerns of the participants. After the results of the survey are in, the pastors will identify five congregants to make up the post-survey focus group. The final phase of the project deals with the two churches coming together for fellowship, dialogue, and implementation of the corporate strategy towards racial reconciliation programming. The primary open-ended questions in the survey for the focus group's participants are:

- Why are churches not involved in racial reconciliation programs? If there are churches with racial reconciliation programs, give personal thoughts about the church's plans.
- What are the personal feelings about race relations within the Christian community, America, and the world?
- What are the reasons that most Christian churches are not multiethnic?
- How can building relationships with other races become a church priority?
- What scriptures relate to racial reconciliation in the Bible?
- What are the barriers to racial reconciliation within the Christian community, America, and the world?
- Are there additional personal concerns and comments concerning racial reconciliation?

The answers to the primary questions compiled and organized by the researcher will assist in making directional recommendations to share for deeper relationship development.

The estimated timeline to evaluate the intervention process was six weeks. The first week consists of explaining the thesis project process to the pastor and the focus groups for commitment, consent, and directives. The second week entails the biblical teaching on race and ethnic history, development, and identity from a biblical perspective. The stakeholder's involvement and help in the organizing of thoughts, perceptions, and feelings through the Bible study will determine the level of the impact made for congregational and social change. The oversight of the data gathering and teaching is the responsibility of the pastoral facilitator who is the chief researcher. The third and fourth sessions extend on more combined teaching on race relations and multiethnic conversations from assigned literature, scripture, and personal

experiences. The fifth session consists of the teaching on particular biblical-based relationship-building processes taught by the pastoral facilitator. The sixth-session activity focuses on post questionnaires, mutual fellowship, corporate brainstorming, and the intentional implementation of how to achieve racial unity and harmony within the involved Christian church and ministries.

Chapter 4

Results

The findings derived from the research came from recorded interviews, church leader's surveys, and questionnaires from focus group participants. A total of six White pastors volunteered for the research, and one was selected to promote help for the project. The characterization of the pastor as a model leader/facilitator emerged. The interviews revealed the degree and level of knowledge needed to convey greater understanding and motives behind the low level of racial reconciliation portrayed within the researched congregation. It also provided data to the stakeholders of the project. Fifty percent of the White pastors were reluctant to involve church members due to the fear of the unknown. The other fifty percent showed optimism and excitement to have the church address racial reconciliation as a ministerial task. The selected pastor showed the highest amount of optimism, enthusiasm, and concern for all participants and stakeholders. That level of righteous sensitivity encouraged the selection and agreement to move forward.

The interviews established individual assessments that confirmed certain biases and deep-seated racism that was inherited, learned behavior patterns, and culturally empowered thinking. Pseudonyms were used for each interview participant to maintain privacy and confidentiality. A total of ten individuals representing two congregations and one para-church organization were interviewed. One hundred percent of Lord of Lord's focus group participants and the other recorded participants answered all the questions in the survey. The overwhelming theme emerging from the data collected was the desire of the participants to learn from the Bible principles as it relates to racial relations and how God defines racial unity. The collaboration of thoughts determined the need to shift from investigation to application of racial reconciliation. In

the focus group interactions, the call for embracing the data as a guidepost for building and developing multiethnic relationships suggests that the project's problem categorically addressed the issue. The project's purpose calls for the implementation of the project's problem to be understood, addressed, and discussed. Focusing on specific interview questions and answers concluded with a deeper research perspective and collaborative dialogues that are consistent with already established patterns of Christian thinking. These evolved themes relate to the need for greater racial reconciliation understanding, ethnic sensitivity training, and the direct demand for congregational change.

Individual Themes

Interviewee 1 (Kimberly)

Church: Lord of Lords

Age: 33

Race: Black

Theme: **A Taboo Subject**

The local church that is involved in racial reconciliation programs is the Lord of Lord's church, explained Kimberly. "People tend to stay away from racial reconciliation topics because of course, it has to deal with different races, and racial tension is a big issue in America. "Not many have the courage to deal with it even in the Christian church which is unfortunate."

Kimberly is an administrator of the Lord of Lords church. All of the interviews representing the Lord of Lords church took place in the chief researcher's church office. Kimberly is a single mother with two daughters ages 13 and 17. Kimberly works a full-time job and holds a

bachelor's degree in psychology. With a growing interest in racial reconciliation, certain concerns emerged from Kimberly's perspective.

Kimberly explained the reason for the divisions among races in America and the Christian church, she said, "Well race relations in America, as I said before is a taboo subject because of slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and everything that is happening in America". The impression is that Christians have always struggled with implementing programs to build race relations within the Christian community and America. Kimberly's observation is that many Christians feel that it is a lost cause that certain things should not even be discussed because Jesus did not make a divide as far as race is concerned in anything. Kimberly went on to explain that Jesus told his followers to go into all the nations and talk to all people. This is the responsibility of every believer. Kimberly also suggested that those in the Christian community focus should be on Jesus, it should not be on race identity. Kimberly reports that a lot of pastors and a lot of church members say that this is not the church's job to focus on race relations. Kimberly's understanding is that the believer's job is to teach Christ and follow Christ, and that it is not the job of the believer to focus on the history of slavery and what has happened, it is the believer's job to focus on what God said and want the church to do.

Kimberly remarked, the precepts and principles in the Bible are not divided so why do Christians speak and promote division? Why should that be the Christian's focus? The state of the Christian church is unfortunate because the division observed is the opposite of true Christian unity. Kimberly suggested that the division is ingrained in society and if Christ is in the Christian, then social Christians are supposed to deal with those things that are not right in God's eyes. The reality of those problems has divided and devastated God's people for many years. Kimberly asked a few impactful questions: How can the church have unity if no one wants to

face those issues that are dividing the church? How can the church overcome anything that is not talked about, or light shed on it? Kimberly summarized these questions by saying, “The church is supposed to be the light of the world, but for various reasons won’t shed light on this one subject.”

It is easier not to talk about racial reconciliation. Kimberly suggested that the church likes to go the easy route, that most pastors want to keep the people coming, so pastors give the people what the people want to hear. Kimberly explained that the pastor wants to talk to one specific group that the pastor is familiar with because the pastor knows what church people want to hear. The pastor knows what the people want and what the people's needs are, and because the pastor's focus is on the individual needs of the flock pastors tend to gravitate towards that familiarity. According to Kimberly, that way the pastor doesn't have to go out and look for other people, It is easier for the pastor to take this route.

Kimberly reflected on leadership training, “We have to know our ministry before we can grow our ministry so we can show our ministry.” Kimberly questions related to leadership engagement: Do Christians have to know who other races of people are? What are the likes and dislikes? How to study other races to correctly reach out and minister to others is important. Reconciliation wisdom implies that Christians have to know or learn what's on other individual's hearts. Kimberly's questions on culture engagement: Where do people like to work? What do people like to eat? Kimberly believes that the Christian church has to know people to reach out to help people. If the church is reaching out to other races, the church has to know what people are like, and what do people gravitate to? And where are the minds of people? Kimberly reiterated what Jesus said, “where your treasure is there your heart will be also (Lk. 12:34 KJV).” Kimberly went on to ask, where is a person's treasure? What do others focus on? Maybe

when the church can answer these questions the creation of more outreach programs to reach other cultures will materialize.

Kimberly explained that Jesus purposely went to Samaria. Jesus did not want to ignore those people of Samaria or ignore the divisions among the Jews and Samaritans. Kimberly suggested that if everybody is in Christ; everybody should worship God together in spirit and truth. Another scripture Kimberly mentioned is about Peter when God came to Peter in a dream and told Peter to eat certain foods. Peter said the food is unclean, Peter rejected the food. Three times the Lord told Peter that the food that God had blessed, no one can't say that it's unclean. God told Peter to go preach the gospel and get Jesus in the Gentile's hearts. Kimberly explained the scripture context to mean that God is unified, and if the church would focus on God, the church can be unified even though there is diversity.

Kimberly further explained that the Bible reports that God loves the world meaning God loves all peoples. The Bible did not say that God so loved Black people or God so loved White people or Asian people. God so loved the world that God gave Jesus, the only begotten Son that whosoever wants to believe in the Son will receive that love. Kimberly emphasized this church reality that very seldom is this message heard or is being taught in many churches. The way the Bible refers to people is not because of the color of one's skin, but for various reasons the Christian church refers to people as a color, (Black or White) more than what nationality or culture a person comes from.

Kimberly believes that there are two barriers to racial reconciliation the present politics and major unforgiveness between races. Therefore, racial reconciliation should be taken on by the Christian church as an urgent problem. Kimberly suggested that "Everything is coming to a head, and if the people of God don't stand up and do something about it, the only thing it's going to do

is get worst.” Kimberly’s census is that more Caucasian people, Asian people, and other races are standing up and saying this is not right, we can’t stand for this even if this is not our problem. It is also our fight; they are our brothers and sisters. Kimberly concluded the interview by saying, “If the world wants unity among races, then the people of God are supposed to be at the forefront saying what God says. Because the church represents God’s people, the world must be challenged to fall in line with what the church is doing. For various reasons, the church is not saying enough, and that is dangerous. Racial reconciliation has to be addressed now by the church because it cannot afford to lose its relevance.”

Interviewee 2 (Samantha)

Church: Lord of Lords

Age: 18

Race: Black

Theme: **Progressive Pain**

Samantha, a college student, opened the interview with the understanding that the Lord of Lords church is a church that promotes racial reconciliation programs. “A lot of churches, especially in their summer Bible classes and summer vacation Bible study don’t focus on anything racial,” Samantha explained that, racial reconciliation has to be more than just teaching the word of God but training the church on how to bring all races together and that this is important for American Christianity. It is taught in the word of God that Christians should promote unity in the faith (Eph. 4:13 NIV). Samantha suggested that it would be better if Christians could talk to each other about race issues with each other because all believers have cultural differences and ideals that are misunderstood. This cumulation of knowledge about the

different cultures can help each other to connect biblically and positively not just in the world but for the world.

Samantha believes that not too many Christians are looking forward to understanding the different cultural norms and perspectives. The assumption is based on how generations in the past sought to solve the racial issues in America. Samantha's information from this interview is painful because it implies that the Christian church must value various points of view to address generational concerns and strategies for racial harmony within the Christian community. There are discouraging realities and hurtful histories explaining why Christians in America are divided down racial lines. Samantha believes that the Christian community is segregated and that everyone has individual communities that limit individuals from coming together.

Samantha argued that Christians don't want to come together mainly because of the negativity of many and what has happened in the past. It is validated that even Christians have cultural differences and ideals on how to relate to one another. Ignorance or denial of this factual history has resulted in a lot of unnecessary injustices and discrimination. Samantha said, "A lot of people feel like there is still a lot of hatred in the Christian community." Therefore, the Christian church has failed to put racial differences aside and talk openly about the racial disparity that exists. This discourages multiethnic gatherings among believers. Samantha explained that racial division among Christian churches has to do with familiarity and location. "We are in Detroit; Detroit is mainly Black and doesn't have the money or the community support to regulate a racial reconciliation agenda." It must be the church's priority to have outreach programs that reach out to all people which is a costly gesture.

Samantha stated, "the church won't know how effective racial reconciliation programs are until the church engages with other communities. That's the way to find out how alike and

different people are.” Effective outreach programs focus on those cultural differences to bridge cultural gaps. Church people are more alike than unlike because Christians are spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. The question is, what team or whose side are the average Christians on? Samantha explained that knowing what makes each culture tick is the key to bringing different races of people together, that most of the time the church miss connecting people with people because the church did not focus on getting to know the culture of the people. Samantha believes that understanding different communities and different cultures will promote unity. Samantha also accepts the harsh reality is that most Christians feel like that’s not the church’s business to fight racial problems. This ignorance of God’s perspective about racial reconciliation has crippled the Christian church in many ways. Racial reconciliation is a very important subject for the Christian church to address. Samantha concludes the interview by suggesting that too many people are closed-minded, and it will help God’s people to move the church and the world forward as a united force for good.

Interviewee 3 (Edward)

Church: Lord of Lords

Age: 61

Race: Black

Theme: **The Application of God’s Word**

Most Christian churches and congregations may not have grown enough to implement the ministry of racial reconciliation. Edward, a church Elder started the interview by saying, “Although the pastor may have a desire for racial reconciliation in the church community, the pastor is the one that should know if the flock may or may not be ready for a real racial

reconciliation program.” Some people in the church might be ready for racial reconciliation programming but will not approach the pastor for advice or approval, because the pastor probably has not had a conversation or mentioned it to the congregation about establishing a racial reconciliation program within the church. Edward believes that there are no churches that really show racial reconciliation within the Christian community.

Edward explained, “Let’s go back to the days of slavery when our people were sick physically and spiritually, we were hurt but demonstrated love, this love for others had to come from God.” The indictment to the Christian church by Edward is that Black and White Christians have come out of slavery, but are still recipients of the slavery culture in mind and behavior. This has resulted in a high level of mistrust of White Christians by Blacks and disgust of Black Christians of White Christians. Edward detects a lot of fear and ignorance within the Christian community. The implication is that this deep-seated fear and ignorance can stagnate racial reconciliation progress. It can hold the church back.

Edward believes that God’s word teaches the believer to launch out into the deep waters to catch an abundance of fish. Edward explained, “If we can overcome fear with love, we can go places. That’s one of the Christian attributes for spiritual growth.” The Bible challenges the church to grow up spiritually (Eph. 4:15). God’s word challenges the believers, how can two walks together accept they agree (Ec. 4:9-12). Edward explained these scriptures by saying, “God was not talking about two Blacks or two Whites of the same culture. He did not point to a particular race.” Edward also believes that Christians have to agree with one another according to the word of God and find biblical information that will help the Christian community to go further as God’s earthly representation. Edward explained, the problem is that God’s people lose sight of God’s word if it’s not reiterated regularly from the pulpit.

Another scripture Edward quoted is Second Chronicles 7:14 says “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Edward pointed out that if each Christian will look at what God is saying, God will keep his promises. If each Christian looked at the scriptures to understand what the church is supposed to be doing and who the church is supposed to be then the characteristics of God will be manifested and embraced. The main attribute and nature of God that follows the believer is love.

Love is an action word that identifies God’s biblical character. Edward said, “If you love to hate, you will produce hate. If you love to love you will embrace God. Just like the marriage ring is symbolic of my love for my wife. God’s love in us is symbolic of our love for each other.” Edward further explained that Second Chronicles 7:14 is also the church’s call for repentance and restoration. God’s people represent the Body of Christ that has turned from wickedness to true righteousness.

Edward believes that the barrier that hinders racial reconciliation within the Christian community is fear, fear will stop progress if Christians refuse to change. Racial reconciliation helps the church to build relationships with all people. Edward suggested that a barrier to racial reconciliation is not asking God for the revelation of a biblical text. Before the believer reads the Word of God there must be a divine dialogue concerning the meaning of the text. Most of the time, Christians misinterpret the Word of God when it comes to racial unity because an in-depth study of the text is missing. There are no mistakes in God or his word, the mistakes are in humanity’s interpretation of his word. Edward believes, “The church has to stay in God’s Word, to practice God’s Word. The church has to love the Word, and eat the Word so that those scriptures come off the page and rest in our hearts.” God wants his Word to be hidden in the

believer's heart and not allow Satan to come in and destroy the influence that accompanies God's Word. Edward explained that the believer can take the Word of God and walk through any barrier built by man, that everything a Christian does is scrutinized by the enemy, and at the same time, whatever the believer does reflects the definition of Christianity. Therefore, the key to racial reconciliation is to mimic Christ's attitude and thinking on race relations. The mind, heart, and Word of Christ have to be in the believer to take on the attributes and characteristics of Jesus Christ.

Interviewee 4 (Joan)

Church: Lord of Lords

Age: 65

Race: Black

Theme: **The Problem of Fear**

Fear is a negative force that hinders racial reconciliation success. Joan one of the church ministers suggested that the Christian community don't know one another, and are influenced by stereotyped images. Instead of Christians really coming together to get to know what racial reconciliation is all about, the fear of failure has crippled significant past efforts. The church has to be able to come together to reconcile. Christians must look at each other as brothers and sisters who are not concerned with skin color. The church is another home for the believer. When believers come to church it's like walking into a place where everyone can be family regardless of how a person looks. Christian relationships cannot be based on fear or being afraid of someone because of what was heard. Christians got to give each other a chance to be able to come together to declare true brotherhood or sisterhood in the Lord, and really mean it.

Christians got to come to the reality of the truth, so everyone who is in racial bondage can be delivered from these stereotypes that have been put on the Christian community.

Joan believes that when the church comes together there is the power to love people. Joan said, “If Christians really begin to come together as the loving church all of the stuff that’s going on can be stopped because the church has that power, that anointing of God that can put the church in its rightful place of authority, this is how the church shuts the enemy down.” The problems associated with race relations within the Christian community and in America are bigger than any local assembly. What flows into and from the Christian community must come from the Lord. Joan explained that multiethnic churches are willing to go out and minister in the various neighborhoods and invite people to experience church in a different setting. Joan asked, “Do we have that evangelism boldness? Do we have that boldness to really step up and ask someone of another color to come and see how we worship at Lord of Lords?” The change agent must be willing to travel, to go to other neighborhoods. It’s a sacrifice that the church will have to make, to ask God to lead and guide the congregation. Joan believes that through prayer and training the church will know where to go, who to talk to, and what to say. The church will then know that God wants to bring disconnected people together.

Joan went on to suggest that the church has to step out of traditions to invite people and have activities with other races. The church needs to establish leaders and committees that represent various races and communities. Joan suggested that this should be the believer’s life priority of allowing God to love through the believer’s actions and attitudes. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Joan explained, “This scripture speaks for itself.” Joan

concluded the interview by attacking the spirit of fear and declaring, “We are still stuck in time, the barrier is hating, hate is what got us here. We must break this hate barrier?”

Interviewee 5 (Trina)

Church: Lord of Lords

Age: 49

Race: Black

Theme: **The Problem of Ignorance**

Not too many churches are involved in racial reconciliation programs because of past historical pain and misrepresentation of the truth as it relates to race relations within the Christian community. Trina, a church minister stated “this situation is so huge, it’s a troubling problem that has been going on for many years. Many Christians don’t want to deal with racial reconciliation because it will open up old wounds and they will get a lot of backlash from people that are against it. Trina explained that there are a lot of churchgoers that are against mixing different races because some people look down on certain people, this makes it hard for the Christian community to preach oneness, and it makes some church members uncomfortable, and it may mess up the tithes and offerings with the big supporters.

Trina believes that there is a high level of ignorance and misinformation concerning racial reconciliation within the Christian community. Trina said, “I don’t know of a church that has motivated the congregation to learn and implement racial reconciliation programs that is effective.” Trina did limit personal research on racial unity and the church and found out that racial reconciliation is a good thing. Trina believes that racial reconciliation is good because it

brings out the capacity of the love of God which reiterates that all humans come from one human race through one loving God. This knowledge can stop a lot of Christian separation. Another observation by Trina is that some people are people persons; that don't mind being around different kinds of people, also, some people have been taught not to be around a lot of different cultures. This attitude is what raises a lot of animosities among Christians.

Racial reconciliation is a good thing. The church should be ok with it. Trina believes that racial reconciliation is about a love that starts with God and is demonstrated through the believer. But because there are a lot of people in the world who are worldly in thought and behavior, all human intentions and motives do not come from the loving Creator God. Worldly thinkers are contrary to the Christian thought and belief system. Trina believes that the conflict is that worldly people don't always obey God and his word. The challenge for the loving Christian is not to talk to another Christian about loving each other but for a Christian to talk to someone of the world about how to love one another.

Trina believes that the church must address the rebellion that comes from individuals who don't believe in God's plan for universal collaboration. This establishes a greater conflict and responsibility for the believer to embrace racial harmony as a worldwide mandate. Trina agrees that people should be taught by the church to love all people. Trina suggested that if God's people would reach out to other people, it will make a difference, moreover, The church has to go out and get the people. Trina stated that everybody is not bad, the Black race is not bad, and the White race is not bad, a person can find good and bad in all groups of people. To develop confidence for racial healing, the church should have workshops, seminars, and visit other cultured churches, this will bring out scripture in a different context. Trina explained that the challenge for the church is to teach on the subject of racial reconciliation because a lot of people

don't know what to do or know scriptures that help Christians engage with other cultures who may want to build better relationships.

Trina also noted that racial reconciliation has been taught in a small way among a few Christian congregations but has not been implemented on a large international scale. There's a need to go deeper into studying and applying biblical racial reconciliation to everyday Christianity. The scriptures referenced by Trina is Galatians 3:28 which says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Trina believes that God did not divide people racially he did not choose to distinguish people based on physical characteristics. Daniel 7:14 says "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Trina explained, Jesus went to different places, different areas where other people did not want to go. The divine plan was to bring all people together, that there should be no separation among Christ's followers. Jesus went into different towns like Samaria and showed love, therefore, Christ-followers should not treat people differently because of where they live or the color of their skin, or the way they look.

According to Trina, some of the barriers to racial reconciliation are people not being willing to be accountable for their racial attitudes, people unable to forgive, people compromising the Word of God for themselves and their generation, and people who are stuck in the past. The church must know how to help people with these barriers. Trina believes that racial accountability means accepting the fact that someone of one race did something wrong to someone of another race and if there was an opportunity to help that person of another race and help did not come because of the color of a person's skin, that person or people should remain

accountable for that sinful behavior. Trina concluded by expressing optimism, “the church must do right and love more and have more love in their hearts.”

Other themes emerged from the recorded Zoom meetings with the White participants. A list of selected statements is considered. The need for intentional leadership was discussed by David, a para-church organization executive. David said, “Intentionality is very important. It is easy to just be with our families and friends, relationships that we have made over the years with people that look like us, act like us, live in our community, and go to school, work, or church with us. Being intentional about meeting people of different races and cultures allows us to know people that have different upbrings, traditions, foods, and experiences.” There is a need for effective change, according to Donald, a church leader. In this interview, Donald explained, “White churches that exist in segregated communities that lack cultural diversity do not do the work of racial reconciliation because of unconscious feelings of racial superiority that lead them to believe they are fine as they are.”

There is a need for corrective theology as it relates to traditional racial reconciliation theology. According to Sam, a church leader, “We have to fully embody our theology. When we are unfair to people of minority races and cultures when we are divisive, and ignoring others-that actually says that there is a hole in our theology.” There is a need to accept and follow the direction of the Holy Spirit in building racial harmony within the church community, according to Naomi, a church leader. Naomi explained, “It is the prompting of the Holy Spirit that will put racial reconciliation a top church priority.” There is hope for the Christian community to advance the biblical principles of racial reconciliation theology, according to Liz, a church leader. Liz reiterated this hopeful agenda by agreeing that, “It’s a matter of knowing where to start and

continue.” The assumption is that there is a need and demand for an expansion of a regional model of racial reconciliation among the Christian community in the Detroit area.

Findings

The Need for Pastoral Leadership

The first finding from the interviews suggests that there is a need for pastoral leadership to prioritize and motivate racial reconciliation as a crucial and urgent ministry of the church. Sixty percent of the Black participants and sixty percent of the White participants agree that racial reconciliation is rare in Christian churches mainly because it does not meet the need as a top priority of the Senior Pastor and the pastoral staff. Because racial tension is on the rise in America, it is implied that Christian leaders are now challenged to rethink their position to better serve and socialize all parishioners. There is an absence of focus, courage, unity, growth, and intentionality coming from the pulpit that must change if racial healing is to become a reality. Eighty percent of all research participants interviewed expressed deep congregational concern because many believers want to see effective programming for racial reconciliation. It will take mature wise pastoral leadership to know when the congregation is ready to implement strategies. The pastor should have knowledge, experience, and courage that will address congregational fears related to race relations.

Based on the participants’ responses, the pastor must become the leader for race relations problem-solving forums for the community and congregation and be the pastoral care counselor that deals with the pains and anxieties related to racial disunity. Racial reconciliation programs come with monetary costs that must be considered from a pastoral budget perspective. The need for resources and training must become a high-budget priority. Moving the congregation towards a positive influence for program implementation calls for church stakeholders’ approval at the

tithes and offerings level of engagement. Four out of five Black participants and three out of five White participants suggest that the application of loving pastoral leadership helps transform the congregation's attitude towards positive racial reconciliation activities.

The Need for Corrective Education, Exposure, and Awareness

The second finding from the interviews suggests that there is a need for bringing corrective education, exposure, and awareness of the political and cultural differences among races within the Christian community. The painful past of America's race relations has hindered progress and the dissolving of racial disunity within the Christian community. According to every participant in the study, the history of racism, such as slavery, segregation, and White supremacy has impacted and hindered processes for racial reconciliation directives within the Christian community. The reasons identified are biblical ignorance, segregation, lack of accountability, lack of focus, lack of love, lack of understanding of other cultures, and the lack of stable Christian upbringing. Other elements of the historical breakdown of races have to do with the reality of stereotyping among all races, the lack of knowledge of racial reconciliation terminology, and the absence of effective dialogue among the races.

The attacks and frustrations detected came mainly from participants in the age bracket between forty and sixty-five years of age. The youth (college student) portrayed overwhelming empowerment to change the narrative by nontraditional measures, such as supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Along with two out of five White participants, the suggestion was that there must be self-change as they relate to faulty thinking, fears, counter-productive behavior, and beliefs. The challenge to love individuals unconditionally and embrace cultural diversity surfaced as key components for change. The participants (8 out of 10) believe that certain racial reconciliation jargon should be changed or eliminated, for example, replacing the race

categorizing narrative with the notion that all peoples are derived from one race, the human race, and therefore the church should have only spiritual and multicultural destinies. Another observation is based on denominational structures that prohibit multi-ethnicity this reality complicates establish norms of worship styles and order of service preferences. The thing to remember is that different cultures have different appetites for assembling and are not prone to change because what works for one particular congregation may not work for another congregation.

All participants voiced concerns about the high level of racial disunity and tension among Christians. This disunity has been a problem within the Christian community for centuries. A division that is prevalent every Sunday at 11 am throughout churches in America is still the most segregated hour among Christians. For the most part, Whites worship with Whites, and Blacks worship with Blacks. This adds to the damaged emotions that already exist due to past and present race tensions. The political climate in America is the core carte blanche for modern-day racial problems. Forty percent of the participants agree that politics drives denominational theology. This is a huge barrier and determinant for the continued hindrance of building a solid racial reconciliation theology. The argument is that internal and external angry trajectories identified within the Christian community violate basic human rights and the biblical command to love one another.

The Need for a Historical and Hermeneutical Approach

The third finding derived from the participant's interviews and Bible study surveys is that there is a need to apply a historical and hermeneutical approach to teaching racial reconciliation to the Christian community. The Bible study used foundational scriptures as the authority for teaching racial reconciliation theology. All participants agree that it is the Christian community

that must take responsibility to solve the racial divide among them. Eighty percent of them believe that racism is a sin and is explained in the Bible. Three out of five White participants suggest that the White church should lead the way to the healing of race relations. One of the White participants suggested that it is harder for Blacks to keep reliving the painful past and accept the call to walk in love and righteousness according to biblical principles. This call means that all Christians should fully embrace Jesus's passion and teaching on spiritual reconciliation and ethnic unity among all peoples. The scriptures given in the interviews were:

- John 4:1-42
- Daniel 7:14
- James 2:1-13
- Ephesians 4:3
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- Galatians 3:28

Ninety percent of the participants referred to Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in chapter four of John's gospel as evidence and motivation for the implementation of multiethnic healing and restoration from religious and political division. Paul's letter to the Galatians informed believers that Christians are to be unified in Christ Jesus. Daniel's text explains that everyone should serve the God of the universe. James challenged the Christians not to show favoritism. The book of Ephesians encourages the Body of Christ to focus on true unity, and the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians explains how each follower of Christ has an individual obligation to implement a ministry of reconciliation to the unsaved world. This approach to depend totally on the Bible as the secure mandated manual for achieving congregational multiethnic

affirmations, information and application will supply the restoration of multiculturalism back into the Christian's heart and the Christian community.

Bible Study Survey Analysis

After the six-session Bible study, a survey was given to the participants to see if there was an increase in theological knowledge as it relates to dissolving ethnic division that leads to racism and are there reconciliation strategies and policies to improve congregational life. A brief summation of the Bible study lessons reveals that the problem statement and thesis purpose was addressed and the need for future advancement in racial reconciliation theology for the Christian community is suggestive. These are the focus groups (Black and White) participants' brief Bible Study answers:

What is the Scriptural basis for racial reconciliation?

- Christians shall be one as the Father and Jesus are One. We should be one family. No one is better than another person. Christians are called to repent, reconcile, and love each other.
- Christians must reach out to all parts of the world to unify the races.
- John 17:21-23, Eph. 2:8, 2 Cor. 5:11-2; Jesus speaks that individuals are all one in God. With God, Christians can come together and live peacefully, but without God, there will be conflict. Phil. 4:3 teaches that Christians can do all things through Christ that gives strength. The Christian's love, faith, and grace are in Christ Jesus. With these, Christians can overcome racism. Before reconciliation takes place, one must see a fault and recognize the transgression and admit the wrong. Christians must also recognize that the real fight for racial reconciliation is not against flesh and blood but against unclean spirits in high places.

- Romans 15:5-6; Christians must identify and overcome cultural assumptions in life that have the potential to hinder the spread of the gospel.
- Living by faith in God and being unified both with God and humanity through Jesus Christ is biblical.
- Christians are saved by grace; it is a gift from God. All are one, just as Jesus and God are One. Christ died for all of humanity. Christians are new creations and have the message and ministry of reconciliation (White).
- Jesus prayed that Christians would be one. This would be a difficult assignment for believers. Jesus knew how important it would be for the Christian community to come together. Christ reconciled the world to the Father by dying for all sins. Christians were made new and have been transformed from old ways and beliefs to be Ambassadors for Christ to the world (White).

What are the biblical blessings connected to racial reconciliation?

- God is pleased when believers all get along resulting in the gift of eternal life.
- Unity is precious and pleasant in God's eyes. It produces cooperation, peace, and love.
- Unity is in God; it is pleasant as Saints dwell together to experience the sweetness of unconditional love in God.
- Blessings flow when the church or denominations come together to reconcile as God commanded believers to do.
- Commanded blessings and eternal life are for the Body of Christ when believers come together in harmony as children of God.

- Compared to precious oil running down the bread of priests so dwelling in unity would fulfill the calling of God in the believer's life by carrying the message of unity into the world (White).
- Divine blessings are for today, to experience a good and pleasant life living in unity, and to carry this over into eternal blessings of being with Christ forever, what a precious gift (White).

What are the steps to building positive race relations?

- **Faith**

- Christians must believe in God.
- Christians must receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- Christians must believe in Christ Jesus.
- Christians must believe that all peoples are children of God.
- Christians must believe and receive Christ to enter into the family of God.
- When individuals become believers, then all are in the same family (White).
- Through faith, believers must believe in Christ Jesus and become children of God (White).

- **Fellowship**

- Christians cannot love God and not love others.
- Christians must do things together as one.
- Coming together and seeing no fault or color in each other is Christianity.
- If Christians hate or discriminate, that's an act of walking in darkness.
- True fellowship is the result of being in Christ and Christ being in the believer.

- Christ's blood cleanses everyone from all sin. That will help the church with building better relationships with people from different backgrounds (White).
- God is Light. People will see the Light in the believer and be attracted to that Light (White).
- **Friendship**
 - God wants Christians to love others because Jesus is the greatest friend.
 - Christians can become truly intimate friends.
 - Friendship is a higher level of love.
 - Believers are friends of Jesus who obey Christ's commands.
 - Christians are called to build positive intimate relationships with Jesus and others.
 - One way to love is to lay down a life for someone else. This includes everyone regardless of race (White).
 - Jesus is the Christian's friend and calls us to be friends with each other (White).
- **Family**
 - Whoever does what God wants to be done is in the family of God.
 - Those who do the will of God are family.
 - Jesus's brother, sister, or mother are those who obey the Father.
 - All who confess Jesus as Lord is in God's family.
 - The true family is the family of God, those that do God's will.
 - Anyone who does the will of the Father is part of the same family (White).
 - The family will disagree, however, when believers focus on Jesus and follow God's command to love one another, disagreements are minimized (White).
- **Forgiveness**

- Christians should put aside differences, be kind, and forgive because God has forgiven believers through Christ Jesus.
- Forgive those who have wronged people.
- Forgiveness can only be attained through Christ. If forgiveness does not take place, racial reconciliation will continue to be as it is today, unresolved.
- If believers don't forgive others, then the father will not forgive the believer.
- Knowing that as believers have been forgiven, believers must also forgive.
- Hatred is to be put away by the Christian, believers are to be kind and tenderhearted (White).
- Christians have a choice to forgive or follow personal desires and be tempted by the evil one toward self-gratification. Also, God forgave the Christian and asked the Christian to forgive others (White).

What are the divine results of racial reconciliation?

- Christians receive God's grace.
- Christians receive great power and grace.
- Favor comes when Christians begin to love and care for one another regardless of skin color or cultural differences.
- Having favor with all peoples (Acts 2:44-45).
- The divine result of being of one mind and one heart manifesting great power and great grace.
- Christians receive favor (grace) from God (White).
- Christians will find favor with God. This is effortless because it is not something Christians do; it is what God does through Christians (White).

What are the Christian responsibilities to building better relationships within the Body of Christ?

- **Personal Responsibility**

- Believers must make a change, walk in love.
- Christians must walk worthy of the ministry calling.
- Christians must be intentional, do what believers are called to do, and be commissioned to do all in the love of God.
- God loves all created beings; believers must do the same.
- Christians must be humble, meek, and having great patience with others.
- Christians are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that's been given, which would include loving members of God's family (White).
- Christians must be patient with one another realizing Christ made all people different (White).

- **Spiritual Responsibility**

- Be aware and keep the spirit of peace, be a peacemaker.
- Keep the unity through peace.
- Christians are told to cover feet that are in readiness with the gospel of peace. The spirit of peace should be with ministers and in ministers.
- Christians are not to grieve the Holy Spirit by holding on to bitterness and evil speaking.
- Stay unified in Christ and focus on keeping that unity through peace.
- Keep unity and peace (White).
- Christians must hold onto the peace that is beyond all understanding. By doing this the world will know that the Father sent Jesus into the world (White).

- **Doctrinal Responsibility**

- God gave leaders to equip ministers in righteousness through the word.
- Christians are to make disciples of every nation and to build up the church.
- Every man and woman of God should live a life according to God's word.
- Christians should fulfill the Great Commission.
- Christians should stay true to God's word and his perspective for the believer's life.
- Christians need to build the Body of Christ up into maturity (White).
- Christ gave the believer divine power, talent, abilities to be equipped for works of service that believers may attain the whole measure of the fulness of Christ (White).
- **Moral Responsibility**
- Believers must change for the better, renew minds to do good things, and mouths to speak the truth in love. Believers are not to sin, stay angry, steal, etc.
- Believers must behave as Christians by living a life that is renewed and charged by the Spirit of God.
- Being reconciled to God makes it possible to live a God-honoring lifestyle.
- Believers must continue to walk in the light and not in darkness, be in the world but not of the world.
- Christians are to love and forgive each other. Christians are to do nothing that keeps Christians from building others up (White).
- Christians are created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Once Christians have tasted the life that Jesus has laid out for the believer, no other life is worth living.

These responses to the Bible Study survey questions came from Black and White participants.

These are not full answers, but brief concise representations of the material taught and the responses given in the six sessions.

The advancement of relevant scriptural knowledge of the ministry of reconciliation is the aim and goal of the research and was contextually met. Racial reconciliation ministry is a result of spiritual reconciliation ministry interwoven into the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that is progressively revealed in scripture. God is a relational God who determines humanity's engagement with divinity and with each other (Ex. 20:1-17). The participant's interviews validate this assumption. David suggested that "We are all loaded with a tapestry of God's imagery." Kimberly stated, "Racial Reconciliation should be taken on by the church." Samantha explained, "God's word teaches the church to always come together." Trina explained that "Jesus' overall planned for humanity is to bring all people together." Edward said, "Loving and obeying God is Christ's mandated agenda for believers. This redemptive love is an action word that identifies God's character in the Christian." Joan believes that the extension of this agenda is that believers also love each other (John 13:34). Sam believes that God's love in the believer is symbolic of the believer's love for each other. It is this force of love that identifies and builds the community of believers (John 3:16). The believer's life's priority is to allow God to demonstrate unconditional love through the believer. This love reflects God's agenda.

God, being the chief reconciler, reconciled the world back to the desired relationship through Jesus Christ and has given the believer the corresponding ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). The believer is God's earthly representative, Christ's ambassador with the assignment of connecting divine favor to this sinful world (2 Cor. 5:18-6:1). The believer is to go into all the world and make disciples for Christ from all nations (Matt. 28:19). A strategic model for evangelizing all races is given by Jesus in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth" (NKJV). Donald believes that "The church should look at

building community, building deeper relationships as an opportunity to know the kingdom of God more truly.” According to David, “The Body of Christ can go out into the communities to be the good news and show people of all colors and cultures the true love of Jesus.” Sam explained, “This is important because when people of other races are ignored by the church, the barriers of divisiveness, unfairness, or oppression hinder the church’s relationship with Christ.” Liz understood the core of what pleases God is when believers reconcile with each other, which makes the church one in Christ.

Jesus demonstrated multiethnic healing and cross-cultural evangelism in the fourth chapter of John. According to the narrative, Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman. The significance of this conversation has layers of meaning, one ethnic-related observation is that “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (v. 9). The Samaritans lived their lives being hated and oppressed by the Jewish people based on the historical Jewish perspective of Samaritans (John 8:48). However, Jesus’ redemptive plan includes loving all individuals even those that the world and religious community had rejected. Luke wrote that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power “who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38 NKJV). Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman resulted in a new way of communicating with non-Jewish communities. Because of Jesus’s intentionality to break the traditional cultural and religious norms of the day (John 4:39-43), the American Christian church sees hope for destroying present-day anti-multiculturalism. In this text, Jesus demonstrated to the disciples that there is a level of redemptive work that is the will of God but must be progressively manifested (John 4:31-35). It is an act of faith that the believer uses to advance and pave the way for building kingdom relationships with the understanding that the Christian community is potentially and divinely made up of all races and ethnic groups.

Biblical racial reconciliation accommodates a unified people who represent a holy and righteous God that blesses followers of God with peaceful living now and throughout eternity (Ps. 133). Unity among God's people has always been rare and a struggle since the fall of humanity. Many Christians tend to stay away from racial reconciliation directives because of the deep roots of mistrust among races and the high cost connected to cross-cultural communication. The Bible informs the believer that fights and wars originate due to Christians' desire for worldly friendships and selfish pleasures according to James 4:1-4. Edward believes that most Christians have created divisions among each other and have erected personal barriers for safety. Joan believes that some Christians are still stuck in the past and that believers must break the racial barriers that keep Christians from engaging with each other.

According to Trina, the past will open up old wounds that will result in backlash from people that is against racial reconciliation. Trina also believes that Jesus's prayer in John 17 explains the Christological passion to make the community of believers a unified force on this earth just like the Father and Son's relationship defines and demonstrates true oneness (John 17:22-23). Furthermore, the children of God who have learned to live together in unity represent anointed, refreshing, enjoyable, and secured blessings from God (Ps. 133). Donald suggested that the challenge for the believer is to separate from platforms of unbelief, unrighteousness, and false fellowships and then be received by almighty God as spiritual sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The biblical truth is that everyone has sinned and made mistakes and needs redemptive love and empathy.

To deal with past mistakes as it relates to the racial breakdown in the Christian community is to seek to understand how historic segregation evolved and played a role in limiting ethnic diversity. Christians must accept the responsibility for the part that the Christian church played in

supporting the system that for hundreds of years destroyed families of color. The journey comes with a gigantic price tag that many Christians are not willing to pay. Sam explained that White Christians are not willing to be uncomfortable and the price for the Black Christian is too high. Christians normally gravitate towards what is comfortable and not always what is biblically expected. The crucial point to grasp is the notion that many Christian leaders don't know where to start or what to do to be successful in racial reconciliation programs and activities. Therefore, a workable solution seems invaluable and desired based on this research.

Step One: Demonstrating Faith in Christ

Stemming from this research are suggestive practical steps to building godly Christian relationships within the Christian community. It must start with demonstrating faith in the Spirit of Christ as the agent for racial healing. John 1:11-13 says "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (NKJV). Jesus's ethnic group initially rejected the Messiah, but other ethnic groups believed and received the kingdom message and were born through the Spirit of God into the family of God. Those who believe in Christ have everlasting life. To win a soul to the family of God, Jesus was intentional. To be intentional is to be accountable. It is the prompting of the Holy Spirit that will bring intentionality to the believer to win souls into the family of God. The benefits resulting from the believer's faith to reach out to other races are enormous. Meeting people of different races and cultures allows the Christian to know people that have different upbringings, traditions, foods, and experiences which enhances the Great Commission.

Every disciple of Christ must learn also to be a discipler for Christ, and recognize that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon

Him” (Romans 10:12). Edward explained that the job of the believer is to teach and follow Christ, to take on the mind, attributes, and characteristics of Jesus Christ through the word of God by precept and example. Jesus gave the world an example by showing the believer how to accept, love, and treat all people as God’s creation. Sam explained that each believer has an amazing opportunity to show the realness of Christ in the interknitting of God’s people. With this thought in mind, racial reconciliation ministry starts with the believer’s commitment to evangelism, then spreads outward to draw all kinds of people into God’s love (Acts 1:8). It is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and faith in Christ for salvation that crystallizes that relationship with God and with other believers.

Step Two: Validating Relationships Through Fellowship

The second step to building godly relationships with God and other believers is the activity of validating the Christian relationships through fellowship with God and others. Christians who love and obey Christ will experience constant fellowship with the Father and the Son (14:23). The Christian’s fellowship (koinonia) is not only with the Father and the Son but is also with each other. Kimberly explained, “The divine instruction is to go into all nations and talk to all people and get to know an individual’s likes and dislikes. God wants to bring disconnected people together; this unity is important to God.” Trina suggested that “Two individuals must agree to walk together. The whole church must walk together, and view each other as part of a whole with conversations that build relationships.” No one can successfully separate racial reconciliation principles from the believer’s relationship with Christ and other believers. Sam said, “Christians should be united because we are one in Spirit, and this spirit represents the relationship that Christians have with each other.” Racial reconciliation churches know how to make positive changes to bring all people of color together in unity. This unity is possible

because “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). This makes Christian fellowship effective.

The challenge for the believer is to spend quality time with God and with other believers. The infant church in Acts 2 daily fellowshiped together in the Temple and from house to house (Acts 2:46). God daily added to the Christian community as the relationships matured by spending time with each other (v. 47). There was an awareness of economic and social issues that involved the entire community of believers to address. To spend time with and care for all peoples identifies the church as God’s relational children. True fellowship is the combination of the believer being in Christ and that the life of Christ is dwelling in the hearts of engaged believers for mutual support and activity.

Step Three: Deepening Friendships

The third step to building godly relationships is when secrecy, intimacy, and loyalty in the relationship matures to the level of friendship. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for his friends. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13, 15 NKJV). Jesus changed the dynamics of the master (kurios) servant (doulos) relationship to friends (philos). This is a major shift in the relationship-building process. Complete honesty and transparency complement the union. This is a higher level of Christian love and legitimate affirmations of personal sacrifice for the relationship to keep developing. David and Jonathan exemplified the uniqueness and loyalty that are precious qualities that characterize godly relationships (1 Sam. 20). The text says that Jonathan loved David like he loved his own soul (v. 17). In David’s Song of the Bow, David’s declaration of the relationship explains the power behind godly covenant relationships. David

said, “I am distressed for you, my brother Johnathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women” (2 Sam. 1:26 NKJV). A realization of a personal obligation to care for and share passionate truths solidifies this level of Christian engagement.

Step Four: Engaging the Family

The fourth step to building godly relationships is the acceptance of fellow Christians not only as friends but as family members in God’s family. Jesus asked, “Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?” The response was, “Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:48, 50 NKJV). A member of God’s family portrays family values (John 19:26-27). Jesus instructed John to assume the role of a son in Mary’s life when Jesus could no longer do it. In the Christian family, there are times when members of the family need strength and encouragement. Jesus demonstrated this with Peter. Not only did Peter need to be prayed for but was also instructed to do the same for other family members. Jesus said to Peter, “Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31-32 NKJV). The noticeable sign of a mature member of God’s family is the ability to follow God in conquering the sinful flesh and to be led by the Spirit of God to live a life of freedom and righteousness (Rom. 8:1-17). Edward believes that more Christians are coming together and saying racial reconciliation is everybody’s fight because all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ, also that developing a mixed neighborhood is implied in scripture.

Step Five: Demonstrate Forgiveness

The fifth step to building godly relationships within the Christian community is dissolving past failures and mistakes by Christians that hindered past biblical racial reconciliation

advancements. Kimberly explained that the Christian community cannot have unity if the problems that divide the believers are not addressed. The modern barriers to racial reconciliation within the Christian community are selfish politics and unforgiveness both must not be neglected. Paul wrote, “As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Col. 3:12-13 NKJV). When Christians allow God’s love to be manifested, the church can let go of differences and be eternally connected. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). God does forgive sin according to 2 Chr. 7:14.

Trina suggested that the Christian that is unable to forgive is in personal bondage. David believes that “the important thing is when White Christians focus on apologizing for past pains and sins made on individuals of color the process for change occurs.” Donald explained, “The church also must accept responsibility for the church’s part in supporting the system that for hundreds of years destroyed families of color. The situation will not change until more White Churches are willing to bear more personal costs.” The model prayer of Jesus teaches the disciple of Christ to ask the Father for forgiveness as forgiveness for others is implemented (Matt. 6:12). The challenging reality is that if the follower of Christ doesn’t forgive others, then the heavenly Father will not forgive also (v. 14-15). Therefore, forgiving others is the critical step to help the Christian community bring closure to racial disunity and unsolved racial problems.

Spiritual unity and maturity are evidence that the Christian community is in line with biblical truths and righteousness. Paul had to rebuke the Corinthian believers for disunity and immaturity

within the congregation. The indictment was that there were contentions within the congregation. That some followed Paul, some followed Apollos, some followed Cephas, and some followed Christ only (1 Cor. 1:11-12). Since Christ is not divided then the congregation should not function as carnal people (babes in Christ), guilty of envy, strife, and divisions (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Each Christian must take on certain responsibilities that promote and enhances corporate unity and spiritual chemistry within the Body of Christ.

The Christian church must share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all people by empowering the believer to focus on a personal racial reconciliation ministry because many individuals are closed to the very idea of congregational multiculturalism. Edward suggested that personal growth is needed in most Christian's lives before implementing a program of racial reconciliation. According to Joan, "There is a rightful position that the Christian must take to build positive race relationships. That reaching out to other people is a church game-changer."

The Christian must be transparent about individual learned behavior patterns of biases and prejudices. Donald suggested that "White churches should listen, follow, diverse voices, and prioritize racial reconciliation learning." There must be a personal conviction from pastoral leadership that motivates others to get involved. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians and other New Testament scriptures, the believer can find information that can help facilitate reconciliation principles that improve congregational life, individual growth, and ministry development.

The Christian has a personal responsibility to live a life that is worthy of the Christian calling (Eph. 4:1). Christ-like examples are at the core of the Christian lifestyle. Christians are to imitate God and walk in love (Eph. 5:1-2, Gal. 5:14) and to make every effort to maintain spiritual unity in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Peace is part of the spiritual fruit that is manifested in the Christian character (Gal. 5:22). The warning is clear to the congregation, "If you bite and devour

one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:15 NKJV). The Christian congregation has the responsibility to grow into mature believers. Christ gave gifted men to the Christian community so the membership will be equipped to serve and build each other up until perfected unity is accomplished (Eph. 4:11-16). Doctrinal unity is the recipe for congregational stability so that “we should no longer be children, tossed to and for and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (v. 14). The truth that cannot be compromised is that “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (v. 4-6).

The Christian has a moral responsibility to represent a moral God. James wrote, “Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (Ja. 1:21 NIV). Once saved, the Christian “should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their minds” (Eph. 4:17 NKJV). This means that the unsaved self which is corrupted with deceitful desires is abandoned and the new self that is created in true righteousness and holiness by God is embraced and empowered to direct the Christian life (v. 22-24). This new self must be renewed in the spirit of the mind (v. 23, Rom. 12:2) and impart the practical moral directives given by Paul continuously (v.25-32). In summation of the Bible study, racial reconciliation theology demands that the Christian believer intentionally go into all the world and preach the good news of the kingdom of God to all races (ethnic groups); and take responsibility for any disunity in the Body of Christ by imitating God and promoting a life of love, understanding, and forgiveness among all of God’s creation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to bring teaching, awareness, and focus on the need for biblical doctrine and effective methodology to the Lord of Lords 'congregation who exemplifies a passion to champion racial reconciliation as a definitive way of life. This thesis addresses the need for more historical, psychological, and theological research on racial reconciliation to determine the application of a workable solution for the Lord of Lords' congregation. There is a moral responsibility at work to promote and educate the local church on racial unity as a unique quality of the Christian community. The researcher of this thesis has developed and acknowledged practicalities that can lead the Christian church away from the ignorance and into the engagement of racial reconciliation theology that produces support and rationale for advancing this God-centered church agenda.

The problem was the need to address and apply teaching for racial reconciliation ministries at Lord of Lords church because of the lack of understanding of biblical racial reconciliation among the church membership. The dialogue with the focus group participants validated the thesis purpose and problem. All of the focus group participants passionately and actively anticipated the research with the optimism to carry the problem statement to its evolved solution.

The procedure used for data gathering and obtaining information took the form of recorded face-to-face and Zoom meetings interviews. Ten participants were selected from two churches, and one para-church organization, five Black church leaders, four White church leaders, and one White para-church organization executive. A Black inner-city church and a White suburban-based church were selected. The ages of the participants were 18 years or older. The participants received a flyer from the researcher asking for volunteerism. A consent agreement accompanied

the flyer. The five focus group participants from the Black church became the observative group. The White participants added credibility to the research findings and dialogue. All ten interviews were recorded and transcribed although the five from the Lord of Lords church were the research focus.

Discussion of the Findings

Numerous biblical narratives validate God's desire for a unified world and church. For example, in Paul's attempt to dissolve disunity in the Philippian church, an appeal for healing the church's torn relationships prevailed. Paul wrote, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:1-4 NIV). The Message Bible says "If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand" (Phil. 2:1-4 Msg). This text reveals four principles that can produce unity among the people of God.

Christ-like Humility

First, the exhortation (encouragement) for unity starts with Christ-like humility. Philippians 2:5-8 says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in the very

nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedience to death even death on a cross” (NIV). Paul’s encouragement (paraklesis) to the Philippians was to not only obey Christ’s teaching but to also follow an example of righteous humility (tapinofrosonay), that lowliness of mind that emptied (kenosis) Christ of divine majesty.¹²³ This demonstration of Christ’s selflessness is of the highest excellent form of New Testament Christologies.¹²⁴ Jesus suggested that Christians should follow this pattern of Christian behavior.

Matthew reported Jesus’s humble exhortation, Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30 NIV). Note that Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. On another occasion, Jesus challenged the disciples to lead a life of Christ-like humility and servanthood (Jn. 13:12-17). Paul explained this Christological humility (trapeinos) and submission (hupotasso) as they relate to congregational life in the letter to the Ephesians, “Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:25-27 NIV). Christ-like humility is a byproduct of Christ-like thinking that instructs the believer to embrace, accept, and love each other and the result is a flow of true unity and mutual love, and respect for each other. Diversity should not detour Christians from being like-minded (autos-phroneo). According to

¹²³Jerry Vines, *The Vines Expository Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 1725.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Strong's concordance¹²⁵ to be "like-minded" means to be of the same mind, to agree together, to cherish the same views, to be harmonious, and to seek one's interest or advantage. Church disunity and divisions are dismantled when like-minded Christians learn to dwell together.

Christ-like Love

Second, a comfort from Christ's love in the heart of the believer manifests love towards other believers. According to Romans 5:5, "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (NIV). With agape as one of the believer's core ingredients to process spirituality, the believer is engaged with present moment aliveness to God's loving initiatives and step-by-step processes within the Christian community and the world.¹²⁶ Boa believes that a genuine response to what God is doing in the Christian life is of critical importance,¹²⁷ and that life in Christ is the manifested life of Christ in the believer loving the world which is kingdom living actively in the present and future realities.¹²⁸ Therefore, the love of Christ must be realized, renewed, and restored among modern-day Christianity.

A hindrance to Christian unity is the separation of God's love among believers. Regardless of the spiritual giftings and abilities that accompany the Christian character if love is missing the motive for Christian service is flawed, it is useless, and the Christian is unprofitable in God's eyes. Love is that spiritual fruit that unifies God's people (Gal. 5:22), and should be manifested in every believer (1 Thess. 4:9, 1 Jn. 4:7-8). Through the ministry of reconciliation, the Christian ambassador is divinely equipped and occupied to love and serve the world with the gospel of

¹²⁵James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 44.

¹²⁶Boa, 255.

¹²⁷Ibid, 257.

¹²⁸Ibid, 265.

Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14). Because of this constraining force within the believer, the believer takes on the qualities of unconditional love and servanthood to build God’s kingdom on the earth.

In Paul’s description, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:4-8a NIV). This Christ-like love is greater than faith (dependence on God) and hope (focusing on a brighter day) because agape is the very nature of God (v. 13, 1 Jn. 4:8). Christ-like love also calls for a maturing of the believer, Paul explained, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (v. 11). It will take loving mature Christians (not infants in Christ, 1 Cor. 3:1-4) to embrace and apply racial reconciliation principles and corrective theology for racial healing in the Body of Christ.

Fellowship with the Spirit of God

Third, fellowship with the Spirit of God unifies believers to come together to choose right and do right. The Holy Spirit that comes from the Father to bear witness of Christ to the world is in the believer and is the Spirit of truth (Jn.14:17, 15:26). The work of the Holy Spirit is to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8 KJV). The Amplified text reads, “And when He comes, He will convict and convince the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness-uprightness of heart and right standing with God-and about judgment.” The practical side of Christian unity is based on the believer’s ability to be an advocate and supporter of the Holy Spirit’s agenda for the church and the world. This means that the believer

must grow spiritually and be developed as a mature follower of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 says, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (NLT). It is the Spirit of God that pours agape into the hearts of the believers (Rom. 5:5). It is the Spirit of God that teaches the follower of Christ all things and brings Christ’s words back into memory. “He will teach you all things. And he will cause you to recall-will remind you of, bring to your remembrance-everything I have told you” (Jn. 14:25 AMP). Spiritual oneness is not only a passionate prayer of Christ (Jn. 17:20-21), and an exhortation of Apostle Paul (Eph. 4:13), but also the acclimatization of the collaboration of the Holy Spirit’s work in the church and the world (Rev. 22:17).

Christ-Like Fellowship

Fourth, believers unite because there are qualities of tenderness and compassion from Christ for others. When these qualities prevail among Christians, divisions disappear, and unity prevails.¹²⁹ Paul wanted to encourage the Philippian Christians to live in harmony and oneness. The Amplified text says, “So by whatever [appeal to you there is in our mutual dwelling in Christ, by whatever] strengthening and consoling and encouraging [our relationship] in Him [affords]. By whatever persuasive incentive there is in love, by whatever participation in the (Holy) Spirit [we share] and by whatever depth of affection and compassionate sympathy, fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention” (Phil. 2:1-2 AMP). No one can compete with a considerate caring Christian in a hostile environment.

The NIV text uses the words “tenderness” and “compassion” to explain attributes of Christ-like fellowship. Homer A. Kent Jr. suggested that the understanding of the text should read “if

¹²⁹Wuest, 112.

any fellowship, (let it be) of spirit; if any (such fellowship), (let it be) tender mercies and compassions!”¹³⁰ Therefore, manifested Christ-like humility, Christ-like love, and Christ-like fellowship, are attributes in the Christian and the seeds to the path forward towards racial reconciliation and multiethnic healing in the Christian community and the world. The call is for the Christian community to keep forming meaningful relationships with all races and ethnic groups through spiritual empowerment, mutual engagement, and biblical wisdom. In summary, effective Christian relationship-building has been the missing and craved ingredient to spiritual reconciliation and racial harmony in American Christianity but is now being addressed with a practical approach through corrective racial reconciliation theology.

¹³⁰Homer A. Kent Jr. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Philippians* Vol. 11, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 126.

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Appendix A
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Interview Questions:

1. Why are churches not involved in racial reconciliation programs? If there are churches with racial reconciliation programs, give personal thoughts about the church's plan.
2. What are the personal feelings about race relations within the Christian community and America?
3. What are the reasons that most Christian churches are not multiethnic?
4. How can building relationships with other races become a church priority?
5. What scriptures relate to racial reconciliation in the Bible?
6. What are the barriers to racial reconciliation within the Christian community and America?
7. Are there additional personal concerns and comments concerning racial reconciliation?

Appendix B

Racial Reconciliation Bible Study Survey

1. What is the scriptural basis for racial reconciliation?
2. What are the Biblical blessings connected to racial reconciliation?
3. What are the steps to building positive race relations?
 - Faith
 - Fellowship
 - Friendship
 - Family
 - Forgiveness
 1. Move by faith; this connects individuals to the Family of God (Eph. 2:8, Jn. 1:11-13).
 2. Make time for fellowship; this compels individuals to spend time with each other (1 Jn. 1:5-7, Jn. 14:23).
 3. Nurture friendships; this constrains individuals to love each other (Jn. 15:12-15).
 4. Acknowledge family; this conforms individuals to do God's will (Matt. 12:46-50).
 5. Demonstrate forgiveness, this corrects and heals individuals and races of people from past hurts, faults, failures, and sins (Eph. 4:31-32).

4. What are the divine results of racial reconciliation?

- Favor (Acts 4:32-33)

1. Embrace favor; this creates God's people as persecuted but blessed influential individuals in society (Acts 4:32-33, Joel 4:9-10).

5. What are the Christian responsibilities to building better relationships within the Body of Christ?

- A Personal Responsibility (Eph. 4:1-2)
- A Spiritual Responsibility (Eph. 4:3)
- A Doctrinal Responsibility (Eph. 4:4-16)
- A Moral Responsibility (Eph. 4:17-32)

(Sample IRB Approval. Replace with your official IRB approval)

January 1, 2014

John Doe

IRB Approval 120Y.11Z611: Adult Perceptions of Spiritual Gifts: A Phenomenological Study

Dear John,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

IRB Mentor

Liberty University

