



PRAYERS THAT HEAL THE SPIRIT OF DIVISION

A PRAYER GUIDE FOR RACIAL HEALING,
JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

GOD'S ROADMAP TO GUIDE OUR PRAYERS

Racism is a prevalent theme in the news and weighs on the hearts of our churches and our neighbors across the United States. God's Word offers roadmaps to guide our prayers and inform our actions.

“The LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.”

MICAH 6:8 GNT

One way we do what is good is by praying for and loving those who don't look or think like us. Another is to grieve with those hurt by racism, to acknowledge pain and injustice. Constant love for neighbors and humbly walking in God's ways will draw us to a growing prayer life. Intercession fuels our ability to engage in courageous conversations and advocate for social changes that will break down division and reflect biblical justice.

Healing from the divisive spirit of racism comes as we recognize our true identity in God. God loves each of us perfectly and wants all people to be united in love for one another. As we respond to God's love and begin to live out of the Spirit he gives, we will want to treat each other with kindness, dignity, and respect. As Jesus says, “Do for others what you want them to do for you” (Matthew 7:12 GNT).

To understand how to pray against the spirit of racism and division and for unity among people of different groups, we can start with three ideas.

- **Racism is sin.** It is contrary to biblical teaching. In the book of James, the writer says, “You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you as a lawbreaker” (James 2:8-9 GNT). Racism goes against every command of God to love one another.
- **Racism is injustice.** According to Genesis 1:27 (NLT), “God created human beings in his own image.” Every person is equally valued by God. Treating others differently because of race is unjust. Racism denies the dignity and source of our humanity as God's image-bearers.
- **Racism grieves God's heart.** It leads to separation of God's children from one another. In Paul's letter to the Galatians he writes, “So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28 GNT). God's intention is for us to be one in him. Racism divides and harms children who call to the same Father.



PRAYER IS OUR SPIRITUAL WEAPON AGAINST RACISM.

Racial tensions in America have roots in history as well as in current events and divisive voices. Many attitudes, actions, and systems oppressed people because of their race and cultural background. Despite real progress in reforming systems and recognizing prejudices, we do not always live up to our national ideals, let alone the Bible's teaching. As we pursue justice, our response must also be grounded in fervent prayer to disrupt evil forces perpetuating strongholds of racism and division in our hearts, institutions, and systems. We pray with confidence for a future of reconciliation from the promise of Matthew 7:7 (GNT): **"Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you."**

FIVE WAYS TO PRAY AGAINST RACISM. PRAY FOR:

- 1. God's justice.** Lord, I pray for justice and righteousness on earth that reflects your original design. May the dignity you give each person be honored. May our institutions promote order and right living to free each person to do all you have made them to do and be. I pray against spiritual strongholds that sustain corrupt systems. May dark and idolatrous ideologies be dismantled. Silence all voices of division and dissension. Help us recognize and repent for patterns of sin in our lives and institutions. May we look to wisdom from your Word to rebuild ways of thinking, being, and doing that honor and serve all people. Grant wisdom to those working for reform, that our society will align with biblical truths. I ask for justice for the suffering, mercy and repentance for perpetrators, courage for bystanders, and a knowledge of Christ's restoring grace for all. May our participation in society contribute to its transformation and the good of every person.

*"The LORD is your mighty defender, perfect and just in all his ways;
Your God is faithful and true; he does what is right and fair."*

DEUTERONOMY 32:4 GNT

- 2. Healing.** God, please heal the spiritual, emotional, and physical wounds many carry from mistreatment over their appearance or their background. Remove all spirits of division and alienation and replace them with your love, unity, and peace. Bring hurting people to the place of forgiveness for enemies and oppressors. Release us from sins like racism and resentment that separate us from you and others. Restore families, communities, and social and civil institutions. Bring healing and righteousness to broken systems in education, family care, employment, criminal justice, and housing. Use encounters with Scripture and your people to heal wounds of trauma.

"I will make you well again; I will heal your wounds, though your enemies say, 'Zion is an outcast; no one cares about her.' I, the LORD, have spoken."

JEREMIAH 30:17 GNT



- 3. Courageous conversations.** Lord, give empathy, discernment, and understanding to all those seeking to build relationships with people from other backgrounds. Help us see your image in our neighbors and our enemies, and give us, through your Spirit, true love for them. Deliver us from agendas, stereotypes, and assumptions. Give us an ability to listen to and honor the stories and cultures of people we may mistrust. Grant your church humility to have honest and truthful conversations about race and history, and to persevere in building bridges with those of different backgrounds. Help us not to rush through disagreement to superficial unity, but persevere into a thirst for justice that is grounded in the gospel and honors all people. May our conversations build on each other and lead to many Spirit-led actions that will transform and unite communities and shift our national discourse.

“My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry.”

JAMES 1:19 CEV

- 4. Repentance and forgiveness.** Lord, search my heart to reveal any offensive way in me that has contributed to the sin of racism or contempt of others. Produce in me and others in our nation a godly sorrow that leads to true repentance. Show me and others how to demonstrate the fruits of repentance. Help me and others to forgive as you have forgiven us. Take away all guilt and shame from our hearts, and free us to serve you and each other in joy. Bring healing and reconciliation to communities harmed by injustice and by the silence, ignorance, and inaction that perpetuate it. Redeem, restore, and renew. May reconciled believers in Christ live out our true unity in him.

“If [my people] pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins, and make their land prosperous again.”

2 CHRONICLES 7:14 GNT

- 5. Churches.** Jesus, one of your final prayers was for unity among your people (John 17:21). I pray for the coming together of people of all colors, classes, and cultures within the church so that the world will believe that you are Lord. Gather people from diverse backgrounds around your Word, so that we can hear your voice more fully and find our identity in you. May we seek you in repentance, turn to you for guidance, and follow where you lead. Soften and transform our hearts, and empower us to move toward each other in reconciliation. Give church leaders courage to lead in the pursuit of healing, unity, and justice, and empower them to minister your Word with boldness. May your churches catalyze healing and restoration in communities across this nation as we turn to your Word to illuminate the issues we face.

“Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.”

HEBREWS 10:24 GNT