

Since the murder of George Floyd, as highlighted by Mary as part of this seminar, many issues have been raised, so many questions, so many opinions. And as Mary has also said, we, as White people feel like we have the option to close down, avoid these issues if we so wish. But I would argue, whatever our context might be, the issues of racism dig deep into who we are as followers of Jesus and simply as human beings – this is a deep issue of human sinfulness.

All of this, and more, might mean that we feel overwhelmed. What can I do? Do I need to do anything? What is the right thing to do? I don't want to do the wrong thing!

Never fear...here is a 10 point plan with some suggestions, largely personally owned by me, as to things I am learning about how to respond to the issues raised by racial injustice.

My context is that I live in a multicultural, mobile part of Birmingham and my church is a Black majority church...but yours might be completely different: no matter, I believe that there are things you can take from what I am offering here...

- 1. Keep learning**.....Give the issue of racism some serious thought. Do some research. There is so much good information out there: there are loads of amazing Baptist resources and CTBI ones and all sorts of good books, articles and programmes. Ignorance is not an excuse. And listen to the stories and the views of people of colour. Ask questions! We live in a time that is rich in resources...
- 2. Self aware** .....Be aware of Whiteness. White Privilege is a thing! A while back, someone sent me a 1990 article by an American writer, Peggy McIntosh, it's called: *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. It comprises a long list of her privileges as a White woman. I have made my own list. I am still adding to it. Why not draw up your own knapsack list and keep revising it?
- 3. Take responsibility**...One of the things that has come out of conversations with friends of mine who are Black, is that White people need to sort out this problem. We need to work it out for ourselves and not keep putting responsibility back onto the victims of racism.
- 4. Acknowledge mistakes**...Dealing with racism and navigating our way through all of this is sometimes simple and sometimes very complicated. There are times when I get it wrong. When I have messed up and caused offence or not thought through the consequences of what I have said or done or not said or not done, I *think* I am getting better at putting my hand up and just apologising, graciously accepting culpability and learning from it with humility. Denying our own racism is unrealistic, unhelpful and basically untrue. We need to treat racism like we do all of our sinfulness.

5. **Balance...**As I've already said, navigating our way through all of this is sometimes simple and sometimes very complicated. Be aware it's a balancing act. Don't overdo it. There needs to be a blend of intentionality and simply being natural about how we approach racial justice. We need to bring other White people with us on our journey but at the same time, we should not worry about offending White people.

6. **Call it out...**One thing I have found as a White pastor is that quite often Black and Brown people have held back from framing a situation of injustice at work or in other settings as being an issue of racism. I *think* it has felt like the right thing for me to name it as being so. Asking questions like "And are you the only Black person on the team?" or "Do you think it is a race issue?" seem to have been helpful. As White people we can play our part in affirming lived experiences of our Black and Brown sisters and brothers and becoming part of a safe, honest space in which to talk about racism.

7. **Get empathy...**Put yourself in the shoes of people of colour. How does it feel to be in situations when we are the only White person or the only female? How do we feel when we are in a meeting or any conversation and we are the person least listened to?

8. **Challenge...** There should be no bubbles where it is OK to revert to being racist, just because we are surrounded by White people. We need to challenge things when we see them – when we hear them. Be courageous! Intervene. If you have followed any of the coverage around the death of Dalian Atkinson, it is good to hear about the witness statement of a neighbour, but does it also raise a question about intervening and challenging and advocating in order, in this case, to save a life.

9. **Give it up!** Power...be prepared to give way. This can be a hard one for us White people. There needs to be meaningful change...relinquishing power and control in all sorts of ways. Not just including Black and Brown people in things but working at meaningful partnerships and actually handing things over. Maybe we should all be looking at everything we are involved in and be asking the questions about where the people of colour are? Why is our leadership team all white? Why is this church group all white? Or why are people given certain roles and responsibilities?

10. **Love one another....**It's a simple command from Jesus. We need to live it out in all our relationships. I appreciate this is harder if you are in an all-White context, but still we should ask ourselves, if we don't know any Black people...why is that? Get to know people! Form real friendships. We choose all the time who it is that we relate to, who it is we try to get to know. We need to be intentional about this.

And finally, some scripture to guide us. Peter was anxious that the people of Jesus he was writing to in Turkey would overcome ethnic differences and form a new identity in Christ...

**"Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind."** 1 Peter 3:8 As Jesus would say: Go and do likewise.