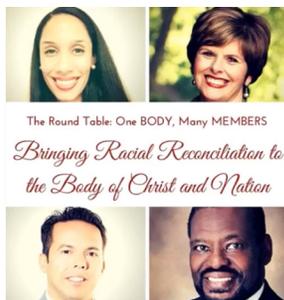
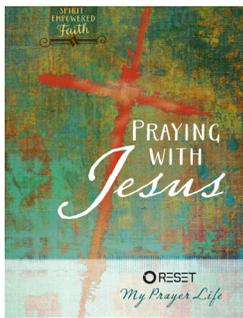




Bridges of Reconciliation

This article is from *Praying with Jesus*. It is an excerpt from the article: “*The Reconciled Church: Seven Bridges of Reconciliation*” by Bishop Harry Jackson with Raphael Green.



Click here to hear a word from Sammy Rodriguez and Bishop Harry Jackson on Black Lives Matter

The atmosphere in our culture has reached a critical, if not powder-keg, stage. Violent protests have become symbolic of the racial divide in America with clear, unabashed examples of the need for racial reconciliation and criminal justice reform.

It is the church—God’s people—that must spearhead the movement and lead the way in racial reconciliation, societal reform, and changes in the current criminal justice system. Only through a unified church and adherence to Jesus’ prayer in John 17 will we heal the racial divide in this country and prompt justice system officials to bring about the much-needed change in the way they handle volatile situations.

The greatest source of influence over this nation should be the church. We’ve tried to make government another pharaoh—our source of provision and hope. Consequently, we’ve been kept in bondage by a system we have erroneously put our trust in. We need to get an immediate answer to Jesus’ prayer. Father God is looking at us right now. He sees His family, the church. God wants that family to love their Father so much that they love each other.

When the church employs seven bridges of reconciliation, we can bring about transformation within our communities.



LEARN to Encounter Jesus

Take the next few moments to reflect on Christ's final moments with His disciples. Revisit the emotions that must have filled the upper room. Jesus knows He is only hours from the cross; His time with the disciples is short. He tenderly washes the disciples' feet in an ultimate gesture of humility and service. He reassures them of the kingdom that awaits them. He reassures them of the Comforter who will come. Then, out of this heart of love, Jesus makes a bold declaration. Jesus is about to die a horrible death, so the words He says must be important. His words also have importance because Christ gives a command, and only God gives commandments! *"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples"* (John 13:34).

Christ gives us this same command. The One who humbly sacrificed Himself for you and died a horrific death for you gives a command. Jesus has a heavenly kingdom that awaits you; He gives the Holy Spirit that's ever-present. Now Christ, Himself, gives a command: **Love others like I love you.**

Talk to Jesus. Tell Him about your willingness to love others just as He has loved you. Without regard for race or status, tell Jesus that you are willing to yield to His command.

Jesus, I know that You love me with extravagant love. I am willing to obey Your command and share this love with others so that the world will know You.

We need gatherings of Christian, interdenominational, and multi-ethnic believers to lift up specific prayer points. In order for reconciliation to occur, prayer must be perpetually offered to God requesting wisdom and divine aid for the multi-generational fulfillment of the **Great Commandment** (John 17:1–26) and the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18–20). We also need periodic, voluntary engagement in transparent, honest, frank, civil, and godly dialogue. The implementation of plans of action to confront, overcome, and resolve destructive views, values, convictions, preferences, and practices (like racism, sexism, age-ism, etc.), that divide the Lord's church, misrepresent Jesus Christ, defame God's creation, and hinder the fulfillment of the **Great Commandment** and the **Great Commission**.

We need the church's involvement in order to foster academic skills in the lives of our young people. God's people must work together to increase access to early educational programs prior to kindergarten for children. Churches can play a major role in offering academic and character-building enrichment programs to students in middle and high school.

We need to address citizen and law enforcement rights and issues while engaging in civic responsibilities. The church can play a vital role in helping to emphasize and educate in Christian citizenship training. Wise community leaders will review best practices for dealing with citizen and law enforcement rights and issues that threaten to denigrate, deteriorate, debilitate, or devastate the highest quality of life for urban residents.



We need strategic efforts identified in order to serve under-resourced residents in financially depressed zones of our urban community. Compassionate outreach efforts are needed to serve the poverty-stricken residents living in economically devastated areas of our communities. Models must include services such as counsel and representation for legal issues, financial assistance, housing education, healthcare programs, and employment training.

We must nurture the divine sanctity of life, identity, purpose, and destiny through programs for marriages and families. The church can help facilitate transformation by providing services that will help to introduce, rebuild, or enhance the sanctity of life, the discovery of personal and relational identity, and the relevance of healthy marriages and families. Church leaders can help citizens navigate the fulfillment of this vision through seminars, counseling, youth athletic programs, pro-life services, and biblical marriage and family training. Mentoring and fatherhood initiatives will be a key component of family development.

We need strategic involvement with the criminal justice system and a plan for reform. The need for minority engagement with the criminal justice system is at the core of our current tensions. Transformation would include training for prison evangelism workers and regional partnerships for prison aftercare and job creation. Outreach to the incarcerated is a strategic opportunity to bring transformation and reconciliation. The church is needed to reach those behind bars by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. This aspect of service is a specific way that the church can reach out to love the least, last, and the lost.

We need to equip churches in how to encourage ethical capitalism. In addition to personal financial training, credit repair, and benevolence, many other dimensions of economic equipping can be launched within churches. Investment training, schools of business, and specific entrepreneurial training plans can be developed, providing hope to even the poorest communities. As the church models unity—as God’s people address the racial divide in our own house—new things can happen. We will see more clearly that we have not just a race problem but a class problem, a poverty problem, and a spiritual problem. Church, government, business, together we stand—together we can revitalize education, economic development, and justice—or divided we fall.

PRAY and Experience Scripture

“I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me” (Matthew 25:45).

Read the passage above carefully. Allow Christ’s words to penetrate your heart. When we refuse to help the “least of these” in our communities, it’s as if we are refusing to help our Savior. Pause for a moment and ask the Lord to reveal any times when perhaps you have seen the needs of the poor, the less educated, or people of a different economic status or race. Yet you were not willing to help. Ask His Spirit to show you any needed areas of growth.

Jesus, show me any times that I passed by the needs of others and was unwilling to help. I know that I hurt You at those times, and my heart is grieved. Change me.

