

Searching Our Hearts For Racism

Times Daily (Jan 15, 2005)
Jim Bevis

As we approach Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I thought it might be good for us to take a look at our lives and search out any bias or racism that might remain.- I am a native of Alabama and a "son of the South."
My parents taught me to be respectful of all people regardless of race or color.

On occasion, however, I saw, in their lives and mine, the "ugly head of racism."

More than once have I confessed to my friends the racism of my past. They have graciously forgiven me.

I would like to believe it has all been rooted out, but on occasion, I see glimpses of a residue of prejudice and racism that must be dealt with.

These are some of the questions that have helped me examine myself.

I must admit that I have at one time or the other been guilty of all of these.

* How do I respond to humor involving people of color?

* Why do I have such a difficult time remembering names of people of color?

Are there names not as important as mine?

* How do I react to the increased presence and participation of people of color on television or in other avenues of media?

* Do I ever speak to a person of another race in a condescending way?

* Do I set a higher standard of morality, integrity and conduct for people of color than I do for myself or my own race?

* Do I ever characterize an entire race as being lazy, shiftless, dumb or distrustful?

* Am I surprised when a person of color makes an important contribution in a conversation or meeting?

* Can I accept black people not only in the pew with me but in the pulpit or on the leadership team of the church I attend?

* Do I limit my contacts with people of color to casual contacts and surface conversation?

* Have I ever had people of color in my home on a social occasion?

* Do I, in any way, look down upon a person who has married one of another race?

* Do I consider my race to be more intellectual or have higher character qualities than those of another race?

* What does it stir within me to think that a family of color might move next door to me?

* Do I recognize and receive the deposits of race and gifts that God has placed in another race?

I do not consider myself an expert on race relations or on the bringing together of the church across racial lines, but I believe that I see things that we can do that might result in progress.

* We must embrace the good done by the civil rights movement and more specifically King.

The "white church" has been slow in doing this.

* We must begin to support by our attendance and participation at events that are held in the African-American churches.

* We must partner with African-American churches and other churches of color in reaching the whole community. I believe this includes both our participation as well as the sharing of resources.

May God give us the desire and power to deal with these issues as well as others that do not reflect our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jim Bevis is president of CSR Ministries.