

# Session Four

---

Read the following sections on page 10-11 of the Response Document:

- A. To cherish the church, while holding it to a higher standard
- B. To hold fast to the true foundation of the American dream

## Biblical Reference

"Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."  
Hebrews 12:14 (NRSV)

A. To cherish the church, while holding it to a higher standard

1. *"There was a time when the church was very powerful."*

As the church continues its mission of being a servant of God's redeeming plan, the church finds itself in need of redemption for some of its failings.

a. As the "powerful" church of Acts 1.8, how can the church redeem her ecclesiology of being a "witness" in the world by enhancing her evangelization theology to include ways in which she combats the ills of racial inequality, which are a manifestation of humanity's sinful nature?

b. In what ways can the church overcome the institutional segregation of the races, seen in many of our collective weekly gatherings?

c. Does this institutional segregation reflect a weakness in the church's attempt to erase these inequalities in other public arenas? How should the church's power be exercised in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's racial tensions?

2. *"The church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society."*

a. From the evangelical perspective, the goal of salvation is eternal redemption (ordo salutis). While Jesus stressed the importance of justice for the oppressed, His message always contained the values or "mores" of the Kingdom as always superseding the goals of the world. Racism and discrimination are symptoms of our fallen nature that necessitate eradication.

b. How can the activism of the church in its fight against racism and discrimination be tempered by the "mores" of the Kingdom so that the church's fight against racism is not another tool of political ideologies and agendas that use the church's platform to further self-serving interests?

c. Is there evidence that the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is “merely a thermometer” and not a “thermostat”?

B. To hold fast to the true foundation of the American dream

1. *“They were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage...”*

a. In seeking to defend “the moral laws of God,” the church is found having to defend herself against the rise of pluralism and secularism that promote different types of morality where the currents of the age dictate their tenets. MLK was able to eloquently hold fast to Biblical pillars that are ageless and eternal. This gave him the moral authority to speak to a culture that was founded on these principles but was not fulfilling them entirely.

b. As Scripture both in the Old Testament and New Testament denounces racism, will the church defend the Scripture of the American Dream with the same unwavering authority as MLK?

c. Can the Church reconcile again to the Biblical authority of *sola scriptura* as her moral compass or will she remain silent as culture redefines Scripture to fit the times?

d. From an evangelical perspective, what would the consequences be if the latter happens as far as *sola scriptura* is concerned?

2. *“...These disinherited children of God...”*

The *imago dei* is present in every person. As the church welcomes and defends the stranger, the sojourner, and the disenfranchised, the sense that we are all “disinherited” still resounds today. The greatest gift of our Judeo-Christian heritage is the reminder that we “were all once strangers.” Since, Jesus’ message was of repentance and conversion, the church is constantly aware of her shortcomings and in need of repentance. But, the true manifestation of redemption is conversion. In conversion, the *imago dei* is fully restored and revealed.

a. As the Constitution is the foundation of the American dream, how can the church defend the Constitution and continue to proclaim repentance and conversion as the only way to protect the *imago dei* of all “disinherited” people?

b. Because segregation is no longer the law of the land but is still practiced subtly, what steps can the church of Jesus Christ, of all traditions, take to call attention to it without sacrificing her Biblical moorings, thus holding fast to the true foundation of the American Dream without censuring the Judeo-Christian principles of the founding Fathers and the Constitution in order to accommodate 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s sensibilities?