



## **Questions on Bent Tree's Statement on Racial Equality**

Our hope with this additional resource is to help with questions arising out of Bent Tree's Statement on Racial Equality and to continue the conversation around this important topic. This is not an all-inclusive document, and we welcome the opportunity for further dialogue that we may all continue to grow in our dependence on Christ and in our unity.

### **Is this statement a reaction to our current culture or part of our church's mission for Jesus?**

Throughout history, there have been significant issues and moments when written statements are helpful and even necessary. Currently, there is much confusion in our culture about how the Bible and belief in Jesus directly impact and transform not only how we see God and ourselves, but also one another. We desire to see our cultural context through the worldview of God's divine plan in Scripture, rather than having the divisions in our culture inform our worldview. Through asking the Spirit to lead and clarify, we believe this statement is an act of faith that is necessary as the Lord continues to live in us and through us to the world around us.

Additionally, one of our core values is biblical equality. Through countless conversations with people who God has brought to Bent Tree, as well as those in our community, we have recognized that we cannot assume all people will have a biblical worldview toward one another and the impact our union with Christ has on our relationships.

This isn't a political statement, it's a relational statement birthed out of Scripture. In a world increasingly ignorant and hostile toward Christianity, it is a proper time to clearly articulate what God's desire is for how people view and treat one another.

## **Why is this statement being issued now?**

Bent Tree does not issue statements frequently or frivolously. We do not take it lightly, and we prayerfully navigate where we sense the Lord leading us and how to best articulate his life and love to the world and within our own faith family.

This statement was not written overnight nor in isolation. Many hours of prayer, discussion, and collaboration went into this statement. Additionally, we wanted to do more than just release a statement. We wanted to do so in a manner that was most helpful. This involved solid teaching and discipleship so that our framework for approaching this statement would be biblical and filled with grace and truth so that we are equipped to engage well in our culture.

## **Why do we need to issue this statement if we are focused on deep and accurate biblical teaching?**

Our commitment to biblical teaching hasn't changed. It remains one of our distinctives. Statements are not our primary method of communication or teaching. However, there are times when crafting official statements are necessary, and we will not shy away from following where the Spirit leads when it comes to making sure there is clarity about who we are and how we need to best communicate to those who have found their home at Bent Tree and those who are in our community.

History has shown that there are appropriate times to set aside to address specific issues thoroughly beyond attaching them to a sermon. We trust that this statement brings clarity into a culturally chaotic conversation and removes assumptions about our understanding of the powerful work of Christ that has made us reconciled reconcilers.

## **What other plans are in the works besides this sermon series and statement on racial reconciliation & biblical equality? Words are nice, but how will Bent Tree engage in racial reconciliation once the sermon series is over?**

There have been many actions taken over the past three years to increase our understanding and awareness of issues involving racial inequality. These will continue, as well as intentionally expanding our network of churches with whom we partner to foster the diversity that reflects God's kingdom. As we continue to launch initiatives from our vision in the coming months, we will have more opportunities for us to thoughtfully, wisely, and intentionally engage with people so that we may better experience and share the life and love of Christ together.

Months ago, we began to step into the vision that God has given us for this season in the life of our church. Specifically, that we are a movement of ordinary people experiencing and sharing the extraordinary love of Jesus. God continues to lead us to engage with those around us and all over the world through pursuing, reflecting, and transforming our community. We have only just begun! We are eager to experience more of him and his overwhelming love for us while sharing that love with others in practical, meaningful, and tangible ways.

### **In light of the divisions in our current culture, how should we go about engaging with people with whom we disagree?**

Our hope with this statement is to equip us with a biblical mindset so that our engagement in the world isn't directed by or reacting to the waves of the culture. Our posture is one of dependence on Jesus, being fully available for him to live in and through us in the Spirit's power —clothed with humility, kindness, compassion, grace, and truth.

As we engage with our culture, our desire isn't to "win" an argument, but for more people to know Christ and experience his salvation. This statement isn't intended to be used as a weapon or talking point, but rather a coherent, clear, and thoughtful explanation that details how our union with Christ directly impacts our unity with other believers and how we interact with all people, regardless of their faith.

### **Does this statement endorse protests or political activism?**

This statement isn't a cultural statement about how to protest politically. It's a relational statement about how God reveals how our relationships are to be with people who are different from us. It's not a comprehensive statement regarding all cultural issues, it is a statement inviting all to see that God was very intentional in his creative work, with the pinnacle being human beings, made in his image, equal, and deeply loved by our Creator. Jesus, our Creator, now lives within all who believe and has so designed us that our relationships with one another are to be marked by his love through us towards them, just as he has loved us.