



FAITH AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Racism (Clear, Straightforward Definition)

Racism is prejudice and discrimination based on race, combined with the power to influence how people are treated in society.

It's not just personal attitudes. It's also the systems, structures, and practices that create unequal outcomes for different racial groups.

Three Levels of Racism

1. Individual Racism

Personal beliefs, attitudes, or actions that treat people unfairly because of their race.

Examples:

- **Using racial slurs**
- **Believing one race is superior**
- **Treating someone differently because of skin color**

2. Interpersonal Racism

Racism that happens between people. Examples:

- **Harassment**
- **Exclusion**

- **Stereotyping**
- **Disrespectful treatment**

3. Systemic (or Institutional) Racism

Policies, practices, and structures that consistently benefit one group while disadvantaging another. Examples:

- **Unequal access to housing**
- **Racial disparities in schools**
- **Healthcare gaps**
- **Hiring and wage inequalities**

This level is often the hardest to see because it's built into systems, not just individuals.

How Racism Connects to Bias and Prejudice

- **Bias is a tendency or leaning**
- **Prejudice is a negative belief or attitude**
- **Racism is when those beliefs and attitudes are backed by power, systems, or institutions**

Racism = Prejudice + Power

Why This Matters for Faith and Community Leaders

Understanding racism helps us:

- **Teach truth with compassion**
- **Build bridges across differences**
- **Create safer, more welcoming congregations**
- **Address harm in our communities**
- **Live out the love, justice, and dignity God calls us to**

Racism is not just a social issue—it's a moral, spiritual, and community issue.