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CALL TO JOIN

# Let's Get Uncomfortable

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*By CCM staff members Rebecca Barrack, Kimberly Robinson, and Pastor Jerry Lawrence*

“I was berated publicly in front of my peers by a male teacher as early as elementary school; then again in middle school by a male teacher who seemed to take pleasure in singling out the females in the class. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I had a substitute teacher call me up to his desk at the front of the class so he could privately make a sexual comment about my figure... as a 15-year old.

As a 24-year old young woman, it was not easy entering a predominantly male saturated field (college athletics), but I was pursuing my passion at the time. The challenges I faced fueled me to be the BEST at what I did so there would be no doubt I was the right person for the job—male or female.

It wasn't easy though as I started to see my male counterparts through the years with higher pay and swift promotions that I had been working hard toward. It wasn't easy when I had a supervisor who passed off all my ideas as his own just so he would get the glory because he didn't value *any* woman in the business.

But here's something God had to humbly teach me over the years: I work for Him, not for the approval of man. Colossians 3:23-24 tells us, *'Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.'*

- Rebecca Barrack



“I have encountered many instances of racism in my life. My earliest memory was when I was 7 years old asleep in the back seat of my grandmother’s car when I hear my mother’s voice saying in disgust, “I am so glad I no longer live here.”

We were driving down on old country road in the middle of the night. I open my eyes to see what she was talking about and as I look around all I could see was darkness except for a flickering light in the distance, and the smell of smoke. I still was not understanding or knowing what my mother was talking about.

As we got closer I saw the object burning was a cross. I asked my mom why she did not like it in Mississippi and what was burning. Her response to me was to go back to sleep. We continued to ride down that long road in silence.

Years later I still thought about that night and I always wondered why a burning cross. What did that represent? When I think of a cross I think about Christ and His love for us, but this could not be what it was about. After researching I found out that the burning cross originated in Scotland, known as a Crann Tara, and was used to signify a declaration of war.

As a child I grew up in a middle-class household in the suburbs. The high school I went to had 1,800 students and only 83 were black. I was suspended in 1989 for three days for hitting a girl who called me the n- word. She was walking with a group of people, and walked up to me and said it. She was trying to make a name for herself being the new girl.

My actions may not have been appropriate, but I felt if I did not respond to that word being used, the other 1,717 non-black students would think that word would be okay for them to use, referring to myself and the other black students.

These instances that I described are minor, but when multiplied by 300 it becomes a problem. I wanted to speak on things that happened to me to show there is a thin line and, depending on your view, it might just not be so black and white.”

- Kimberly Robinson

It's stories like these and more that need to be told... that will help us as a Church, as a nation, begin to maybe understand each other. With understanding comes sympathy and compassion if we strive for it. And with sympathy and compassion comes more love and less infighting.

Are we always going to know *exactly* how others feel? Not unless we are just like them. But we don't have to know *exactly* how they feel to sympathize with them.

We live in hard times and more hard times are coming for the church. If there was ever a time when the body of Christ needs each other, it's now and it's going to be in the years to come. We need to start working on reconciling, and loving, and changing, and drawing closer to each other now more than ever before.



Just because things will get worse as God promised, does that mean we sit idly by and do nothing? In contrast, we see in Scripture what Christ calls His church to do and what characteristics to display over and over.

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”* Philippians 2:3

*“Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”* 2 Corinthians 13:11

*"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* Romans 12:18

*"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"* James 1:19

*"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;"* 1 Peter 1:22-23

*"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* John 13:35

If change is going to happen as a nation, if racial harmony is going to happen, if cultural harmony is going to happen, we need to put our differences aside and it's going to happen one person by one person by one person.

The body of Christ has been called to be an agent of reconciliation. Not just with those who look like us, not just with those who belong to the same organization or are from the same culture as us, but with *everyone*. Because the Gospel is for the entire world.

In order to be an agent of change, you have to put yourself in uncomfortable circumstances where you will get to know people who are different than you so that you no longer have suppositions of what they're like.

God loves *everyone*.



This is the problem we have within the body of Christ today. We want souls; we want to see people get saved, but no one wants to go and minister to them. But we have to go into the places where it might be a little uncomfortable.

*“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:27-29*

We have to come to the place where we connect. Christ is the central figure and the reason we gather – what we have in common. All that matters is our identity in Christ.

“I could tell you all kinds of stories of things that have happened to me that could have caused me to be jilted toward whole groups of people.

When I first moved to Palm Bay, Florida 20 years ago, I was called to pastor a church. I took on the leadership of that church—it was a black church—and I looked around at the church I was supposed to be ministering to and I said, “Not so.”

Over the last 20 years my wife and I have worked to break down those cultural barriers, from a church that was only ministering to part of the community and said, “No. If we are in Christ and have a vision, *all* men deserve to hear the Gospel and, therefore, we’re going to reach *all* people, not just some. It hasn’t been easy, but we accomplished it. And everyone loves each other.

I have been chased by a mob of 300 people who sought to kill me because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong color skin.

When I wanted to buy my very first house, I went to a realtor to show me some houses. When I found one who was willing to work with me, she took me to a house, calling ahead to say we would be there. As I stood on the stoop of a house, the woman (seller) came to the door and said, 'Oh no, they will not come in our neighborhood.' And she closed the door.

Though our realtor was embarrassed by what happened, she was later told there was no realtor that was going to show us a home in this community.

I ended up buying a house in that community, but I had to go three towns over and ask a realtor there who did not know that community to come and show me houses there.

Was it uncomfortable? Sure, it was. But those nine years I was in that community... those were the best neighbors I ever had! We put ourselves out there because we realized we couldn’t allow our cultural biases to keep us from what God has called us to.”

- Pastor Jerry Lawrence





An ambassador does not operate in his own nation. An ambassador goes into another nation with another culture, another mindset, maybe even a different set of rules, and they go there and represent their nation abroad. We represent a heavenly Kingdom of the God who loves all mankind equally.

If we are saying we have the heart of God and we want the heart of God, we have to be able to stretch ourselves and go beyond what's comfortable.

Jesus prayed to the Father, “that they may be one just as We are one” (John 1:22). That’s His heart. That *has* to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

When a lawyer asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was as we read in Matthew, chapter 22, Jesus tells them, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ *This is the first and great commandment. And the*

*second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

Who is your neighbor? Is it only those who look like you? Is it only those who have a similar background as you? Is it only those with the same social status as you? The truth is, as long as we are human, everyone is your neighbor.

Are you willing to listen to God and go beyond your huddles? Are you willing to reach out to your neighbors and love them? Are you willing to get uncomfortable?

Christian Living



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