



ASKing for Healing from Racism

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ASKing Point

is a bi-monthly communication on behalf of ASK Network International. It is an invitation to join the network of prayer throughout the nations, ASKing and agreeing regarding key issues on God's heart. It is a tool for prayer, a place for testimony to God's faithfulness in answering, and a gift of worship to the Living God.

www.ASKnetwork.net

Yes, there is protest. But prayer must be primary. Like the Psalmist, overwhelmed by "the roar of the waterfalls ... the waves and the breakers" (Psalm 42:7). Our protests are expressed in our prayers of lament, ASKing of God, not with worldly sorrow but godly sorrow, which means it is expressing the grief of the heart of God, in the midst of a global pandemic and a global reaction to racism, provoked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, United States. Our ASKing cannot but be global. Our mission statement declares that we gather to ASK for "all nations" and if ever there was a time to do so, this is the time. Please join the ASK zoom calls that are detailed on page 4.

Two weeks ago I was on a zoom gathering with 70 pastors in our city of Washington D.C. after the killing of George Floyd in a political context that has seen the uncovering of our nation. We have been meeting together regularly for some time now, building relationship and seeking God's good for our city. It's make-up is probably 60% African-American and 40% Hispanic, Asian and Caucasian. We realized that our commitment to relationship over the last five years or so had prepared us for the necessary and hard conversations that we are now having that specifically deal with repentance from racism, and what God is asking of us in terms of holy action in Washington D.C. The next Sunday after the protests began, we saw our churches marching to the Capitol and the White House on a prayer walk, with worship that extolled God's righteous and therefore His just character. The question is, will this be just a short-lived reactive or responsive event, or will it be a holy movement of obedience to God's righteousness and justice, which are the foundations of His throne (Psalm 89:14)? When we ASK, this is the throne of grace that ASK Network comes to, ASKing with an open Bible that tells us how to ASK, according to His perfect will, not according to an unrighteous agenda. We ASK according to the Word that God has already spoken about His judgments on evil and wickedness, as well as His resources to obey His commands and be reconciled.

The pastors at that gathering generally agreed that the term 'racial reconciliation' needs to be re-exegeted given its assumptions. You can only have a reconciliation if there is something in the past that was good and that was then broken and can now be reconciled. There is no past racial relationship of that kind given the historic roots of the United States with its 400 years-old race problem, and racial alienation still experienced by millions. Our history bears so much shame and racism: with Native Americans (genocide, treaty breaking); with African Americans (only people brought here against their will); with Asians (cheap labor, citizenship exclusions, internment WWII); with Hispanics (vulnerability to exploitation). The reservoir of woundedness is deep, with limited will to sluice the pain and dereliction. Talking of racial disparities exposed by the global pandemic, there is a serious disparity between God's vision for

us and our present social reality, and of course, there is plenty of evidence for the church's role in racialization, given that the majority of religious groups are racially homogenous.

What usually happens is that there is a necessary response to racial crisis, and we think our response is reconciliation but it is actually conciliation, which does not mean repentance and restoration, but is about pacifying and placating. This is not God's kind of peace. It explains why there is no healing and consequent change. Thus Ferguson becomes New York, and then Baltimore ... and then ... and then Minneapolis ... and then Atlanta. There is a temporary response to an event and it is not a movement of repentance and repair, either personally or locally, either in the church or in the public square of the nation. We return to practiced responses in the face of systemic and systematic racism. We minimize and marginalize it. We individualize it, blind to the collective and institutionalization of it, and we popularize it with simplified repetitions of misguided assumptions. We stigmatize it, defending ourselves by blame shifting and deflecting the attention away from necessary confession and repentance. We vaporize it with a selective and convenient memory that hardens into national amnesia.

"Contempt is becoming a cultural phenomenon. It's seeping into every banal aspect of our lives. Not just anger, though there's plenty of that, too. No, I mean pure, unabashed, undignified contempt for fellow humanity. This is so toxic." This quotation is an example of the way that even secular cultural commentators are beginning to realize the horror of it. Contempt is the characteristic demonic response to the presence and purposes of God, to the commands and character of God. The enemy has always opposed our experience of the presence of God with contempt: for Christ, for ourselves, for others. This results in our despising of God, others and self. What was the opening satanic volley in the record of scripture? *"Has God really said?"* (Genesis 3:1) Contempt is the first manifestation of the diabolic subversion of God's presence which led to the expulsion from Eden and the loss of *"the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden."*

Healing begins with the confession of contempt. White supremacy and superiority is a principality and power, rooted in contempt that is demonically and satanically energized to throw back into God's face the demeaning and despising of the *imago dei*, the image of God. The gospel emphasizes the need for ALL of us to experience healing for all of our false identities, and healing from the consequences of the loss of God's creational order in our personal lives, ethnicities and societies.

There are three main constituent elements of contempt:

- **Condemnation and consequent judgment:** someone or something has failed to meet our privatized standards for behavior or whatever are our self-preferred, self-chosen social, cultural, racial, emotional, intellectual or even spiritual norms. The more we elevate our unquestioned individualism and sense of personal rights, the more we idolize our preferences and particularities, then the more we have to condemn and hold in contempt.
- **Superiority and consequent separation (segregation)** and distance because we're better than someone. It's all about hubris, vanity, pretension, conceit, disdain, condescension, insolence, pretentiousness, presumption, pomposity, aggression, narcissism, brazenness, incivility, shamelessness, and any of self-love's progeny like self-admiration, self-exaltation, self-confidence, self-assurance, self-reliance, self-righteousness – it's about superiority and supremacy.
- **Hostility and consequently the desire for someone to be removed**, whether from sight, the public square, the relationship, or the job. There are plenty of ways for the hostility of contempt to remove someone, including just ignoring them. But murder? That's taking it too far. I'd never do that we say. That's a bit extreme! Not according to Jesus when he redefined our understanding of murder in Mt. 5: 21-26. Jesus describes the separation and distance of contempt as equivalent with murder that separates someone's life irremediably from all relationship and guarantees reconciliation will be irrecoverable. Listen to Jesus: *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with their brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother 'Raca!' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."* What do you make of that? 'Raca' was an Aramaic term of malicious contempt, imposing inferiority on the one so named. Isn't it interesting that Jesus' teaching on reconciliation with a brother or someone to whom you are indebted (unreconciled accounts) follows this warning about contempt – the great cause of irreconciliation and the great barrier therefore to reconciliation. This is evil name calling, as all name-calling is evil. Why? Because it removes the significance of the real name, of personhood and personality, of creational uniqueness. To call someone Raca or Fool was to strip them of their identity and impose on them a false identity. Contempt is identity theft. It makes someone what they are not, and thus we dehumanize and demonize, as we determine what is and is not human.

“we think our response is reconciliation but it is actually conciliation, which does not mean repentance and restoration, but is about pacifying and placating”

Genesis 9:6 tells us why murder is so heinous: “for God made man in His image.” So if contempt is equivalent to murder then you now know why God takes it so personally and judges it so severely: it is primarily against Him, His image, before it is against that person or that race. These elements alone give us an analysis of the present state of the civic soul.

Contempt is the nature of the devil and all that is diabolic (*‘diabolos’* means hurler of slander); of evil; of pride in particular; of the root of sin; of all falsehood, heresy, division and schism. It is the nature of the last days. And nowhere does this contempt more masquerade than in the relational divisions and racial irreconciliations of our nations. Whether violator or victim, we have our own infected and infested systemic corruptions of viral contempt for God, for others and for self, deeply embedded in a history past, despicably maintained in a history present, and seemingly doomed to continue in a history future. ‘Prejudice’ is just not strong enough a word. We need to come to terms with the darkness of our acidic, deforming **contempt** – deforming of self, and others, and thus of the image of God. Prejudiced? We are contemptuous. To destroy God’s image is to erect our own in its place which makes us idolaters of the most egregious kind, while we mouth “*in God we trust*”. There cannot be transformation without the excising of the deformation of contempt. The words of Jesus Himself should be our warning and our motivation to get reconciled. The contempt that wants someone to be removed, to disappear, to become persona non grata, to become invisible in the system, to vaporize in color-blindness, is the sin of murder.

This may seem like a lot of bad news. However, if we have been cut down by any kind of despising, personal or corporate, familial, parental, or racial – God happens to specialize in choosing despised things (1 Corinthians 1:28) and forgiving and changing despising people. God specializes in removing reproach, removing the roots that cause us to despise others; removing the garments of reproach with which others may have clothed our characters and spirits. From Genesis 30:23 onwards God says, “*I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt*.” How has God done this? How has he absorbed all despising that we may be absolved of it? The answer is the core of the gospel: in His own body on a tree. He became the toxic waste dump of the world’s despising. He was “**despised** and rejected of men ... He was **despised** and we did not esteem Him” (Isaiah 53:3). No one was ever more drained of esteem than Jesus, or held in more contempt. One of the most often quoted psalms in the gospels, with reference to the cross, not surprisingly has this emphasis: “*I am a worm ... a reproach of men and despised by the people ... All those who see me ridicule me ... They shoot out the lip ... He trusted in the Lord ... Let him rescue him*” (Psalm 22: 6-8). And after this concentrated horror of despising comes an unbelievable delivering truth: “*God has not despised the suffering of the afflicted*.” When anyone is moved to repent of the ways they have despised Him and not esteemed Him, God takes the repentant response as personally as He took the sin of despising: “*a broken and a contrite heart I will not despise*.” There is forgiveness for our despising, there is deliverance from its bondages and healing from its defacements of identity and spirit.

What we will celebrate next time we take communion, in whatever setting, in whatever nation, regardless of tribe, language or people, is nothing less than revolutionary. It is not even about ‘integration’ of our old selves, or about social diversity – it is about becoming one “*new man*” (Ephesians 2:15). What meets at communion is not a variety of races, but one race, one church. Within that race are many different faces, dances and songs, traditions, regalia, tastes – but as Revelation shows us, when they are all gathered around the throne (including some really weird looking creatures!) there is no self-consciousness, as the work of Jesus has flushed out the beauty and brilliance of our creational individuality, surrendered to God, and there is no room anymore for the rights and claims of our individualism and our identities. So often we seek, well-meaningly, to resolve our sins in the context of brotherhood. In the racially divided church, we live as if we have a common mother (the church) but a different Father. A recovery of a common Fatherhood, of our equal sonship and daughterhood, is biblically necessary if there is going to be change. When Father runs the table that we meet at, no elder-brother spirit is going to control the conversation or the consequences. Racial justice does not begin first in our brotherhood, but in God’s Fatherhood, and thus we ask Father for a revelation of His heart that wills that every ethnicity and nationality will be at that throne. Racial justice does not begin from the ground up, but from the throne down as we ask “*Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*.” Amen.

Use these scriptures to meditate and ASK for racism to stop in all our nations:

- *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. **Galatians 3:26-29***
- *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. **John 17:20-23***
- *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. **1 John 4:2***



Stuart McAlpine
International Director
ASK Network

Remembering a faithful servant and friend ~

On April 26th, Pete Berg, a beloved brother to ASK Network International, unexpectedly made the journey home to heaven. He had worked with us since the founding of ASK Network in 2008. As a gifted artist and already a friend, he jumped in to develop the logo and began designing so many elements that have defined us, thus launching more than a decade of service to ASK. Whenever you print a piece of literature (in all 13 languages) or download teaching resources from the website, read through Stuart or Celia McAlpine's books/booklets on ASKing, pick up an ASKing Point to pray, you hold Pete's work in your hands.

He loved the Lord and his extraordinary creativity and contagious sense of humor always brought life. Whatever job needed doing, no matter how stressful, he kept us laughing and made what was sometimes a grueling process full of joy. God graciously gifted us with this humble servant in our most formative days, and he has left us a legacy. We will miss him immensely, but cannot be sad for him. He is with the One who loves him most.

Please remember Pete's beloved son and daughter-in-law, Blake & Kimberly, and their three sons, Oscar, Miles & Jack. They were the center and the joy of Pete's life.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Psalm 116:15



GATHERING TO ASK BY ZOOM

Please join us on any or all of the calls below. We look forward to seeing your face and hearing your voice! According to our God-given calling if you are able to, join the Zoom calls fasting.

EVERY TUESDAY:

ASKing for Nations—Psalm 2:8
8AM PST / 11AM EST / 4PM GMT,BST
Email Sue Huston for inquiries or more info:
suehuston@asknetwork.ca

EVERY FRIDAY:

ASKing the Lord of the Harvest
Praying for UPGs
7AM PST / 10AM EST / 3PM BST
Email Nga Dang for inquiries or more info:
nga1048@yahoo.com

FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH:

ASKing with Compassion for the
LGBT+ Community
7AM PST / 10AM EST / 3PM GMT/BST
Email Fawn Parish for inquiries or more info:
fawnparish@gmail.com

CONNECT to Above Prayer Calls:

- Login to Zoom:
<https://zoom.us/j/3928843865>;
Password: 426129

- Or call-in: 1 312 626 6799 or 1 669 900 9128—Call in ID: 392 884 3865,
Password: 426129

FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH:

ASKing for the UK & Europe call: 7AM BST

- Join from PC, Mac, Linux, IOS or Android:
<https://zoom.us/j/2795509928> (if you are able to join using your computer, we will be sharing information over the internet)
 - Or iPhone one-tap: US: +1 408 638 0986, 2795509928# or +1 646 558 8665, 2795509928#
 - Or Telephone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a # based on your current location):
 - USA: +1 408 638 0986 or +1 646 558 8665
 - UK: +44 (0) 20 3695 008
- Email Jenny Bailey for inquiries or more info:
askuk@asknetwork.net

ASKing for the Nations

NICARAGUA

Nicaragua is the poorest country in Central America and 2nd poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Marked by a history of war, corruption and natural disaster this largest Central America country struggles to get ahead of poverty, oppression and pain.

Civil unrest erupted in 2018, as educated youth wanted to halt the oppressive rise in Social Security costs. Roads were blocked and government sponsored police turned on the people. Many people lost their lives and the economy plummeted. The President wanted to remind the people of what it was like to “only eat rice and beans”. People were powerless in ousting him, his wife and vice president. Over 60,000 people fled the country and nearly 500 people died.

Distrust of the government and police remains with no expected change with the 2021 election. The unemployment is 11% and average income is \$140 per month. People are struggling to find hope. Incertidumbre is a word spoken often in Nicaragua. This word marks what it is like to live and work in this country ... uncertainty.

Nicaraguans were hoping their resiliency would protect them from COVID-19 as they watched it wreak havoc throughout the world. The president and his wife called for marches of love and support for the affected. However, they don't allow public workers and medical staff to wear masks, nor do they report the ill, so as not to worry the people. Actual cases of COVID-19 are unknown. The health department reports 1,464 cases and 55 deaths but several newspapers report higher numbers: 5027 cases and 1114 deaths. Some privileged people can take precautions by staying home, as an option, but for the majority they must work each day to eat. Since the first cases were reported at the beginning of May, many people are dying, bodies are buried at night, and families are not able to say goodbye. There are no ventilators or oxygen for those affected.

Ministry leaders are working together to give out food, information, masks and cleaning supplies to the people expressing their love and letting the people know they are not forgotten in the midst of the COVID trial.

Let's ASK:

- Many families have lost their jobs and there is an increase in abuse. Food prices are rising and money is lacking. Many families will have to learn to survive on much less. Ministries are serving the most needy, but are exposing themselves to the virus. They need wisdom, protection and provision. **Isaiah 61:1** *The Sovereign Lord has filled me with his Spirit. He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor. He has chosen me and sent me to heal the broken hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison.*
- There is great anxiety about catching COVID in hospitals, and the country is in great despair. Many doctors are quitting their jobs in fear for their lives, leaving hospitals without staff. **Isaiah 61:2** *He has sent me to proclaim that the time has come when the Lord will save His people and defeat their enemies. He has sent me to comfort all who mourn, to give to those who mourn in Zion joy and gladness instead of grief, a song of praise instead of sorrow.*
- Students must continue to receive classes “online”, but the public schools are not prepared with the technology needed. The students are required to visit the school 1-2 times a week bringing greater exposure to families. **Isaiah 61:3** *They will be like trees that the Lord himself has planted. They will all do what is right, and God will be praised for what he has done.*



Unreached People Group:

Arab of Nicaragua

Population: 700
Primary Religion: Islam
Language: North Levantine

Background

What is thought of today as the typical Arab does not hold true for those living as Diaspora Arabs. Many now live in cities and towns. This has caused the traditional family and tribal ties to be broken down somewhat. Women, as well as men, now have greater educational and employment opportunities. These and other changes have created a new "middle class" within their society and their way of life is different than in the past. As a result, they have experienced much tension that is weakening family ties even though aiding their poor living conditions. There is greater freedom for women to leave the home, fewer arranged marriages, and less social pressure to conform to traditional religious practices. Today, most Diaspora Arabs identify themselves by nationality rather than tribal affiliations.

In this mostly Christian nation, the Arabs are the slowest people group to become believers in Christ but this is beginning to change with 70% Muslim and 30% Christian.

Ask...that a complete translation of the Bible in their language would be a priority for this Arab group. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

ASK for the softening of their traditional culture to create open doors for the Gospel to be preached among them.

Galatians 1:10-16

ASKing for the Nations

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Unreached People Group:

Japanese in Dominican Republic

Population: **1,700**
Primary Religion: **Buddhism**
Language: **Japanese**

Background
More Japanese live in the Dominican Republic than anywhere else in Central America and the Caribbean except for Cuba. They speak Japanese and Spanish and follow Buddhism.

After World War II, the Japanese migrated to the Dominican Republic, which had a treaty with Japan to open its doors to Japanese workers for agricultural labor. The Japanese had been promised houses and land but promises were broken after the civil war in the Dominican Republic. Many Japanese went to other Latin American countries and after the early nineteen sixties, only a few Japanese stayed in the Dominican Republic. The Japanese migrants sued the Japanese government for the suffering caused in the Dominican Republic and were compensated financially.

ASK... that the sufferings of the Japanese in the Dominican Republic will cause them to come to the abundant life Jesus Christ offers.

ASK... that God will show the Japanese the relevance of

Christianity to their lives.

John 10:7-16; Matthew 5:3-10

The **Dominican Republic** (DR) is a land of contrasts, where rich and poor live in close proximity to each other. In the southwestern region of the country, near the border of Haiti, poverty runs rampant. Much of the population of this area is made up of an estimated 800,000 undocumented immigrants and refugees, Haitian refugees and their descendants. In these 'bateyes' (the shantytown remnants of sugarcane work camps from the 1960s) the Haitian families often live without electricity, running water, or roads, and have very little food, clothing, and medical care. The Dominican poor live in similar circumstances in numerous impoverished communities. Both groups often lack the resources required to access social services. Sadly, not much has been done about these issues, and they are left for non-governmental organizations to address.

Christopher Columbus explored the modern nation of the DR on his voyage to the New World in 1492, calling it Hispaniola. The DR share the island with Haiti and is located in the middle of the hurricane belt. After enduring the process of colonization and independence four times, it gained independence from the United States in 1924. It was ruled as a dictatorship until 1961, but now functions as a democratic republic. The government is known for its corruption and resists efforts toward reform and transparency, even though there is widespread suffering.

The population of the DR is under 11 million and is 16% black, 14% white and 73% other ethnicities. As has been mentioned poverty plagues the nation, with a few controlling much of the wealth. There is an ever-decreasing middle class.

The primary religion of the DR is listed as Roman Catholic, but the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are growing. Evangelical ministries have doubled between 1990 and 2010. Cross cultural missions are critical, with as many as 4,000 villages without an evangelical witness. Afro-Spiritism is prominent even influencing beliefs of many Christians who practice a admixture of both.

About 45,000 people have HIV/AIDS and there are 190,000 orphaned children. Only 51% of boys and 65% of girls attend secondary schools.

Let's ASK:

- *That within the Catholic Church there will be an increased understanding of the Gospel and acceptance of Jesus. **Colossian.1:19-23***
- *For Dominican believers to reach out to Haitian immigrants with love and compassion. **Deuteronomy 10:17-19***
- *Increased outreach to the large orphan population in the Dominican Republic. **James 1:27***

