

A special report from The Mercy Journey collection,  
in partnership with The Reimagine Group



# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

How U.S. Christians feel about racism —  
and what they believe it will take to move forward

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and what they believe it will take to move forward

Research commissioned by  
The Reimagine Group, Alpharetta, Georgia

Research conducted by  
Barna Group, Ventura, California

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## PREFACE

In my recent book, *The God Impulse: The Power of Mercy in an Unmerciful World*, I defined mercy as having “an engaged heart.” While working on that book, I felt the need to seek in prayer new ways of being merciful in my own life—of allowing my heart to be fully engaged. Interestingly, the answer was racial healing.

As a white man I wondered, *What could I possibly bring to this discussion?* I don’t know what it’s like to be stopped on the streets because of my skin color. I don’t know what it’s like to be eyed with suspicion when I walk through a nice neighborhood. Though I live in Atlanta today, I’m from Connecticut, states away from

the racial segregation once found (and still found at times) in the South and elsewhere. I was just a teenager when Martin Luther King Jr. marched through Selma. I lived a world apart from the “colored only” water fountains, the segregated busses, the lynchings.

So I began by listening to and learning from others. I have experienced a depth of fellowship with new friends, many of whom have been gracious and bold enough to share gut-wrenching personal accounts of racism and its related ills in their lives or homes. I have been moved and amazed by God’s ability to produce passion from this pain.

At the same time, my heart has been broken as I have learned more about the facts of our nation’s history. In Ezekiel 9, God calls his people to grieve and lament over abominations and injustices in the land. In our land, a clear abomination began in 1619—400 years ago—when approximately 20 African slaves were sold in Jamestown, Virginia. Nationally, laws, codes and persistent discrimination ensured that black Americans would remain at a social and financial disadvantage, long after they were technically free. Yes, tremendous strides have been made, yet racial tensions persist today.

Ultimately, the story of the civil rights struggle isn't just black history; it's *our* history—a story that involves and impacts all of us. Too often, some members of the Church have been passive or even been perpetrators in this struggle. We need to realize that the story won't change until we are reshaped by sacrificial love.

Toward that end, I am pleased that The Reimagine Group has partnered with Barna Group to provide this report as a resource for the Church. Just as a greater awareness of the facts drew me into a bigger conversation about racism and injustice, I am hopeful that the data contained herein can be a starting point for churches and Christ-followers, or even a next step for those already deeply invested in this issue and in their neighbors.

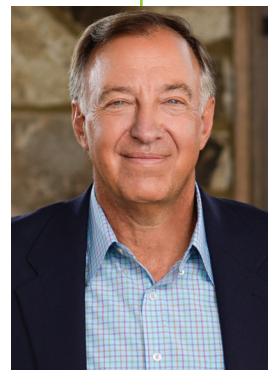
While the research as a whole is sobering, I also see some high points. For example, the Millennial generation is much more likely to acknowledge the implications of U.S. history on racial and societal justice today. They seem to be saying, "Enough is enough!" Additionally, many practicing Christians believe the

Church should do something proactive to respond to injustices facing black Americans, whether it be lamenting, repenting or providing restitution. Though 28 percent say there is nothing the American Church needs to do, another one in four simply doesn't know what should be done. To me, this defines a leadership opportunity for the Church: About three-quarters of practicing Christians are open to solutions, spiritual and otherwise!

My prayer now is that we can find those solutions together with engaged hearts and in authentic, bridge-building relationships. And as we do so, may the gospel be advanced and may Jesus receive glory as unity and healing take place.

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**Jack Alexander**, founder of The Reimagine Group, has a business background as an entrepreneur and has cofounded and built business services and technology companies across a range of industries. He is author of *The God Guarantee* (foreword by Timothy Keller) and *The God Impulse* (foreword by Walter Bruggemann). Jack often speaks at churches, events and conferences and enjoys consulting with business leaders, pastors and ministry leaders. Jack and his wife, Lisa, live in Atlanta and have three sons and six grandchildren.



## INTRODUCTION

August 2019 marks 400 years since European colonists purchased and enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia. In the span of those four centuries, the United States' history of racial injustice toward black Americans has been tumultuous. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863, but only after the start of a grisly Civil War and centuries of inhumane treatment of black people. Even after black Americans' federal legal status was changed, the 15th Amendment wasn't ratified until 1870 and the civil rights movement didn't climax until the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite real progress, it feels like the country is at yet another crossroads—or, perhaps, that it's circling a roundabout. In recent years, there has been contentious debate about the injustices that black Americans still experience in their daily lives, exemplified in events such as high-profile killings of unarmed black men, sometimes at the hands of police, and the resulting Black Lives Matter movement; protests during the national anthem at NFL games; calls for removals

of Confederate monuments and symbols; lagging maternal health for black women;<sup>1</sup> mass incarceration of black Americans;<sup>2</sup> and the resurgence of white supremacists in public life. These examples are so pervasive that, during the time this report was being written, the Associated Press released new standards for covering such events or trends—in short, asking journalists to get more comfortable with calling out racism.<sup>3</sup>

Relatedly, some of the political complexity of these discussions has been agitated during the campaign and administration of President Trump. Barna's own post-election survey in 2016 found that, among the many headlines and moments of the presidential race, Trump's comments about minorities were among the



most defining.<sup>4</sup> His election has also had a significant ripple effect within the Church; by now, you've heard the widely reported stat that Trump earned the support of the majority of white evangelical voters,<sup>5</sup> a fact some black Christians point to as a reason they have felt less welcome and less willing to participate in predominantly white spaces and churches.<sup>6</sup>

It is against this backdrop that Barna set out to assess perceptions of the nation's reputation, and what practicing Christians, across racial and political fault lines, feel should be done to repair the damage. As part of a broader study of the concept and impact of mercy, in partnership with Jack Alexander and The Reimagine Group, Barna researchers explored some issues related to the treatment of black Americans and other ethnic minorities, past and present.

Through this and other research, we see some of the complicated reasons that race relations remains such a quandary in America. Obstacles include a protracted history of racism, not all of which is widely known or acknowledged, deeply embedded systemic inequity, disagreement over whether present-day Americans inherit personal responsibility for former injustices, a lack of meaningful multiracial

community spanning generations and contexts and uncertainty about how to pursue or achieve equality to begin with.

And what about the Church's role? In another previous Barna study, three-quarters of U.S. adults and nearly all evangelicals felt that Christians have an important role to play in racial reconciliation. We see some of that good work occurring, such as in recent denominational expressions of repentance for discriminatory policies and practices, or in widespread efforts across traditions to follow, promote and learn from Christian leaders of color, many of whom have generously contributed to this report. But there is much to be done in recognizing both the problems and solutions to racism in our nation and our churches.

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

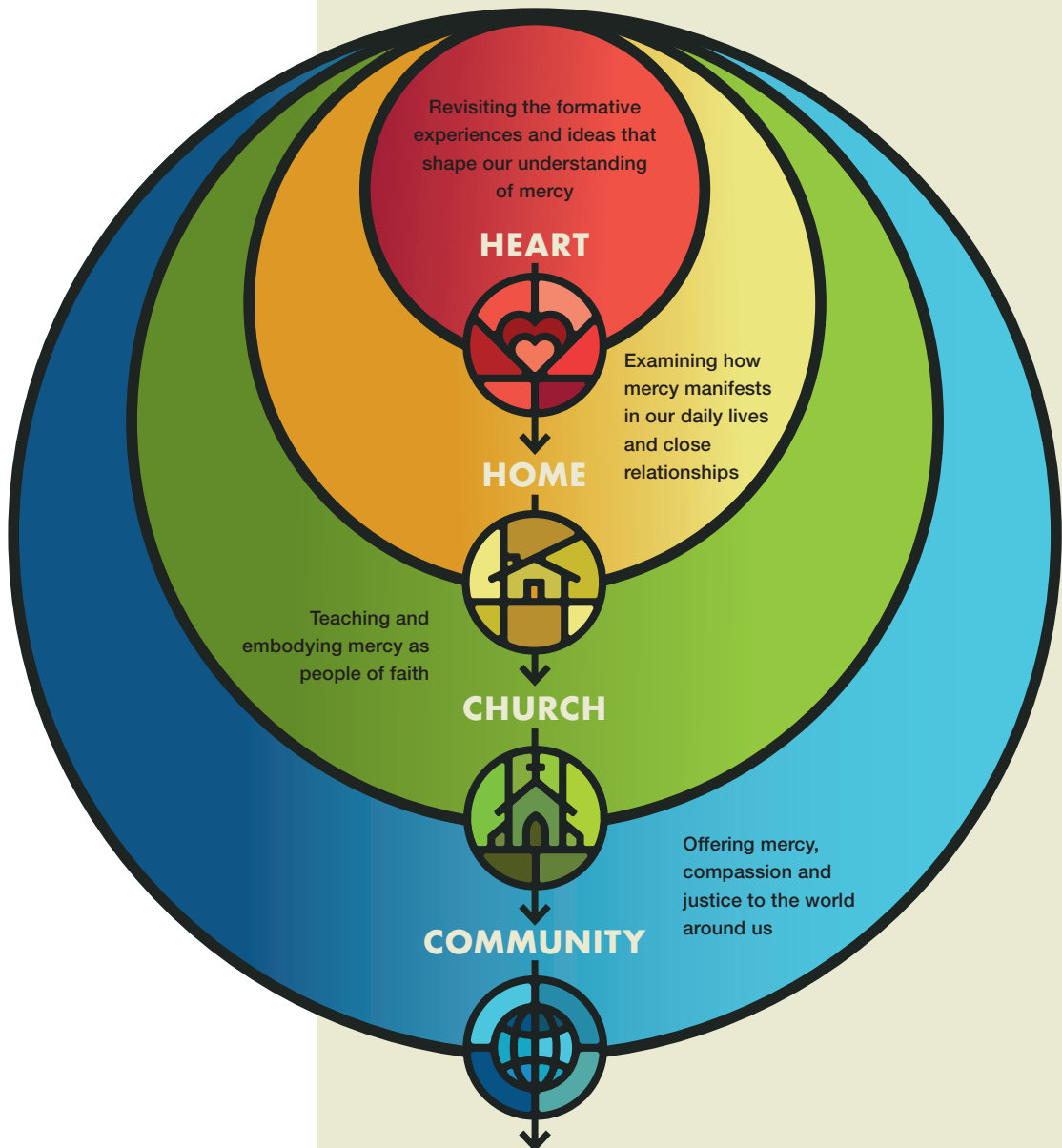
Barna surveyed the attitudes of 1,502 practicing Christian adults (as compared to the broader population of U.S. adults) and 600 senior Protestant pastors (including an oversample of black pastors) in the U.S. in April and May of 2018.

A reality of most nationally representative surveys is that racial and ethnic minority groups may be too small to examine for statistically significant results. We are aware that the experiences of some non-white respondents are not overtly or consistently represented here. There are many worthwhile discussions and lines of questioning surrounding racism in our world and in the U.S. today, affecting many groups beyond the black and white practicing Christians most often reported on in these pages. This study alone, designed primarily to reflect on the impact of the enslavement of black people in the U.S, cannot fully address all of these topics, populations and concerns. But we hope these findings, as well as the diverse commentary and recommendations shared alongside them, might form just one unique contribution to a broader understanding of race relations in our present moment, in the Church and beyond.

With that in mind, we hope this data is illuminating, for church leaders and those they influence—regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, ideology or any nuanced, identity-shaping combination of the above. The premise of The Mercy Journey collection is this: As representatives of the whole gospel, Christians have an opportunity to be not only messengers of truth but also ministers of mercy, agents of healing in their churches and communities. Barna offers this special release to shed light on opportunities for repentance as well as restoration. We do so humbly, having been impacted by this and similar research ourselves, and with the awareness that little about this discussion is straightforward ... except this: The image of God is present and praiseworthy in all of us, across all of our differences and our commonalities—the most important common ground being that we are all recipients of his mercy to begin with.

This report is part of The Mercy Journey collection, a data-driven exploration of the topic of mercy, based on Barna research conducted in partnership with The Reimagine Group. The goal of these resources is to inspire reflection and then action, moving outward from our **hearts**, to our **homes**, to our **churches** and, finally, to our **communities**.

## THE MERCY JOURNEY MAP



## Q&A PANEL



**Bishop Claude Alexander**

*Senior Pastor of The Park Church  
(Charlotte, North Carolina)*



**Andy Crouch**

*Partner for Theology & Culture at Praxis*



**Dr. Heather Thompson Day**

*Associate Professor of Communication at Colorado  
Christian University*



**Rev. Dr. Craig Garriott**

*Executive Director of Baltimore Antioch Leadership  
Movement, Dean of Church Planting & Urban  
Missions at Metro Baltimore Seminary*



**Maria Garriott**

*Intercultural Development Consultant for Parakaleo*



**Stanley Long**

*Associate Pastor / Interim Lead Pastor at Faith  
Christian Fellowship (Baltimore, Maryland)*



**Dr. Eric Mason**

*Founder & Pastor of Epiphany Fellowship Church (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)*



**Nicola A. Menzie**

*Religion Reporter, Founder of Faithfully Magazine*



**Dr. Russell Moore**

*President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*



**Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra**

*Affiliate Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary*



**Dr. Mark E. Strong**

*Senior Pastor of Life Change Church (Portland, Oregon)*



**Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

*Executive Director of Evangelicals for Social Action / The Sider Center*



**Michael Wear**

*Chief Strategist & Member of the Executive Leadership Team for The AND Campaign*



**Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley**

*Distinguished Professor of Faith & Culture at George Fox University / Portland Seminary*

## AT A GLANCE

- ✓ Overall, half of practicing Christians (50%) believe the United States' history of slavery continues to impact black Americans today.

⊕ 8 in 10 black practicing Christians agree (79%), compared to 42 percent of white practicing Christians.

- ✓ Two-thirds of Millennial practicing Christians acknowledge ongoing repercussions from the era of slavery.

⊕ This younger, more diverse generation is also more likely to be in multiracial friendships, to support Black Lives Matter and to want the Church to be involved in racial healing.

- ✓ Practicing Christians align with the national average in saying that racial minorities "always" or "usually" experience undeserved hardship.

⊕ In the Church and among all U.S. adults, white respondents' views of such hardships do not match minorities' own descriptions.

- ✓ Two in three practicing Christians say they have a long-term friend of another race or ethnicity—and reports of such friendships accompany many positive traits.

⊕ Respondents in multiracial community also show spikes in spiritual engagement, compassion and cultural awareness.

- ✓ Whether liberal or conservative, practicing Christians are equally likely to have friends of other races, but views on race diverge by ideology.

⊕ 3 in 4 practicing Christian liberals (76%) agree that effects of slavery are still felt today; about 2 in 5 practicing Christian conservatives (38%) say the same.

✓ The majority of black and white practicing Christians (62% and 71%) agrees that forgiveness means repairing relationships.

⊕ Black practicing Christians, however, are more likely to clarify this effort does not mean forgetting an offense (32% vs. 21%).

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✓ More than two-thirds of practicing Christians (68%) say their church shows mercy by building relationships among a diversity of people.

⊕ Among both pastors and parishioners, younger respondents are less inclined to say this is something their church offers.

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✓ One-third of white practicing Christians doesn't think the nation's history of racial injustice requires a response from the Church.

⊕ Meanwhile, one-third of black practicing Christians has a clear next step in mind: repairing the damage.

✓ Practicing Christians who say they often hear sermons about justice are more likely to affirm the reality of racial injustice and to see a role for the Church in addressing it.

⊕ Those who say they never hear about justice at church are twice as likely to say they have never considered the impact of slavery on black Americans today (58% vs. 28% of practicing Christians who frequently hear about justice).

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✓ Even more so than their congregants, pastors appear attuned to racial injustice and eager to see the Church address it.

⊕ If a pastor identifies with a non-white race or a mainline denomination, these tendencies increase.

## Half of Practicing Christians See Ramifications of Slavery

Barna asked respondents whether they agree the history of slavery in the U.S. still has a significant impact on black Americans today. Half of practicing Christians (50%) “mostly or totally” acknowledge ongoing repercussions, slightly ahead of the proportion of the general population who feel this way (46%). Just over a quarter of practicing Christians (28%) says the U.S. has moved past this shameful part of its history, also on par with the national average (28%).

A sizeable percentage of practicing Christians has not reached a conclusion; 16 percent are unsure, and 7 percent have yet to consider the matter. This too is on track with percentages among all Americans (18% are unsure, 9% have not considered). It may be that some are beginning to weigh whether America’s past negatively impacts the black community today. The data show this group still believes that non-white groups in general experience undeserved hardships at some frequency (82% say this occurs at least sometimes).

### Different Views Emerge Across Races & Generations

While some practicing Christians perceive the history of mistreatment of black Americans to be just that—history—the majority of black Christians feels differently on this issue. There is little doubt among them that slavery has left a lasting impact on their community (79% agree “mostly / totally”). A minority, one in 10, disagrees or doesn’t know (9% each).

**Millennials appear to be the most sensitive to these conversations, even though they are the farthest removed from the civil rights era**

White respondents are the least likely racial group to agree that slavery’s effects can still be felt today; just 42 percent say this is the case. One-third of white practicing Christians (34%) feels the country is beyond the fallout of slavery. One-quarter is uncertain (18%) or hasn’t thought about it (7%).

Looking at age groups, Millennials appear to be the most sensitive to these conversations, even though they are the farthest removed from the civil rights era. They are the generation most likely to report being aware of effects of slavery on our present-day society (65% vs. 55% of Gen X, 40% of Boomers, 41% of Elders). Only 2 percent of Millennials haven’t considered the impact of slavery on black Americans today. This could be because, as this and other Barna studies show, Millennials (and Gen Z beyond them) are more likely to represent a multiethnic community.

### Justice Teachings & Pastoral Influence

Church teachings have some correlation with how attendees approach this discussion. Practicing Christians whose churches “never” teach about justice are more



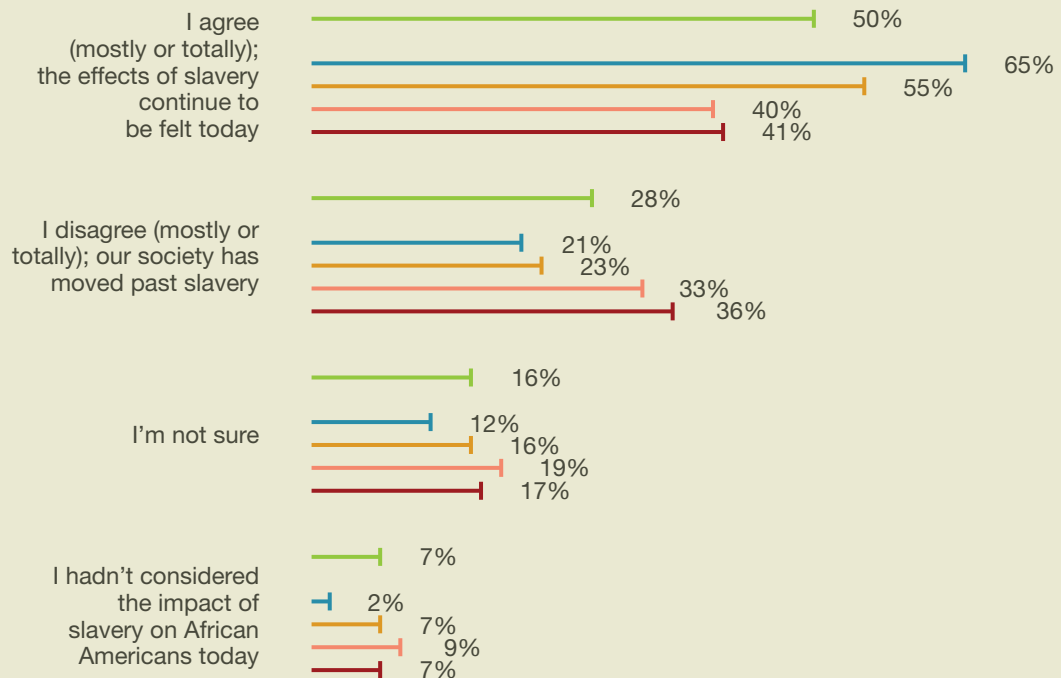
likely than practicing Christians who “constantly” hear justice messages at church to say they either haven’t seen or haven’t considered the impact of slavery today (58% vs. 28%). Meanwhile, respondents in justice-oriented churches are more likely (59% vs.

33% of practicing Christians who never hear justice messages) to agree the slavery era has complicated life for black Americans. Whether pastors influence views of congregants, or congregants seek out pastors with similar views, this finding at least suggests that pastors are to be counted among leaders toward racial reconciliation—and, as shown on page 45, many appear willing to be a part of this journey.

## VIEWS OF ONGOING IMPACT OF HISTORY OF SLAVERY

August 2019 marks the 400-year anniversary of when slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia. Would you agree or disagree that this 400-year history has a significant impact on the African American community today?

- All practicing Christians
- Millennials
- Generation X
- Boomers
- Elders



## Awareness of Hardships Facing Non-White Groups

The concept of white privilege has become a common term in public discourse of late. This refers to the idea that individuals who are white receive certain benefits in society due to stereotypes that favor members of the majority culture—and in the shadow of white privilege, non-white people face the drawbacks of systemic prejudice. These dynamics might play out overtly or subtly, professionally or personally, collectively or individually.

Though the phrase “white privilege” has recently become mainstream, it isn’t universally embraced and can at times be divisive. This study, however, probed for perspectives that could be related to the core of this idea—for instance, with what regularity do people believe racial minorities in the U.S. (non-white groups) experience undeserved hardships in life?

### Views of Practicing Christians Mirror National Averages

Out of all practicing Christians, 43 percent express confidence that racial minorities suffer undeserved hardship (18% “always,” 25% “usually”). Nearly half (47%) say this is “sometimes” true. Small percentages believe non-white individuals “rarely” or “never”

face such challenges (6%) or confess not knowing if this is the case (4%).

Whether or not one is a practicing Christian has a slight but not dramatic effect on awareness of hardships faced by minorities. The responses of these committed Christians—and, as we’ll see below, the factors that appear to influence their responses—mostly align with the general population. Compared to all U.S. adults, similar percentages are convinced (20% of all adults and 18% of practicing Christians say “always;” 24% of all adults and 25% of practicing Christians say “usually”) that minorities encounter such obstacles. Practicing Christians are more likely to “sometimes” be in agreement with this statement (47% vs. 41% of all adults), while the general population is more likely to disagree (10% vs. 6% of practicing Christians say “rarely / never”).

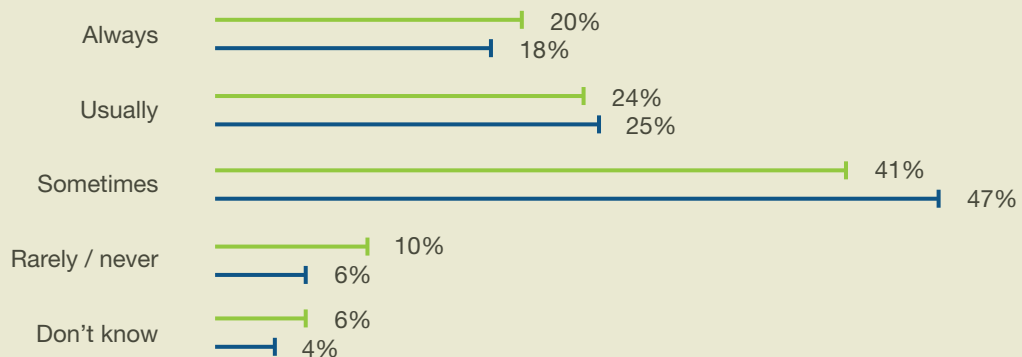
## White & Non-White Americans Differ on Disadvantages

While this question does not explicitly ask respondents to compare the minority experience with the majority experience, the responses reveal some asymmetry along racial lines—specifically, white respondents' views of hardships faced by minorities do not align with minorities' own descriptions.

Racial minorities are more likely than white respondents to perceive these disproportionate challenges as part of their regular experience. Black and Hispanic practicing Christians are more than twice as likely as their white counterparts to say minorities

### DO YOU BELIEVE MINORITIES (NON-WHITE RACES) HAVE EXPERIENCED UNDESERVED HARDSHIP?

○ All U.S. adults  
○ All practicing Christians



“always” suffer undeserved hardship (35% and 27%, respectively, vs. 12% of whites). Differences persist among other response options (32% of blacks, 33% of Hispanics vs. 21% of whites say “usually”; 24% of blacks, 29% of Hispanics vs. 56% of whites say “sometimes”).

**Black and Hispanic practicing Christians are more than twice as likely as their white counterparts to say minorities always suffer undeserved hardship**

These ethnic imbalances in the Church are also reflective of the general population, whether respondents feel minorities “always” (23% black, 22% Hispanic, 15% white), “sometimes” (22% black, 33% Hispanic, 47% white)

or just “rarely” (4% black, 9% Hispanic, 12% white) come up against these troubles.

## Other Demographic Factors in Responses

Millennial practicing Christians (60%) believe far more strongly than preceding generations (44% Gen X, 31% Boomers, 35% Elders) that minorities experience hardship. This tracks with other generational shifts that correlate with a higher sensitivity to race-related difficulties: For instance, Millennial, as well as Gen X, practicing Christians are more likely to be racially diverse, to identify as liberal, to live in cities and to have longstanding friendships with someone of a different ethnicity (see page 29).

Responses are also correlated with the neighborhood one inhabits. Urban practicing Christians, often in more racially and economically diverse communities, are more likely than their counterparts from suburban, small town and rural areas to affirm that minorities suffer undeserved hardships (52% vs. 41% vs. 33%, respectively). Beyond location alone, the makeup of one’s specific circle of friends may be linked to an awareness of challenges facing minorities, as reported in greater detail on page 29.

## Black & White Christians Apply Different Standards of Forgiveness

Beneath any person's reactions to the afflictions of prejudice and racism are other worldview-shaping ideas about morality or theology. For those in the Church seeking next steps in racial reconciliation, it might be helpful to examine ideas about or experiences with forgiveness, and specifically what the practice of forgiving means to people of different ethnicities.

First, some common ground: Black and white Christians are similarly likely to regard themselves as merciful people or to say that, as people of faith, mercy influences their thoughts and actions. There is also little difference between these two racial groups when it comes to reporting personally having given or received forgiveness in their relationships. A closer look, however, suggests that their standards of what real forgiveness should entail aren't quite the same.

Regardless of race, the plurality of respondents links genuine acts of forgiveness with the repairing of relationships. However, more black practicing Christians express the idea that forgiveness involves restoring a relationship without forgetting the wrongdoing (32% vs. 22% of white practicing Christians). They are also more likely to see forgiveness as a gift

to the forgiver—or rather, as a means of lessening one's own suffering (39% vs. 28%).

White respondents, meanwhile, are more motivated to see real forgiveness as prioritizing repaired relationships (71% vs. 62% of black practicing Christians), not seeking retribution (61% vs. 52%) and providing relief to the offender (46% vs. 34%).

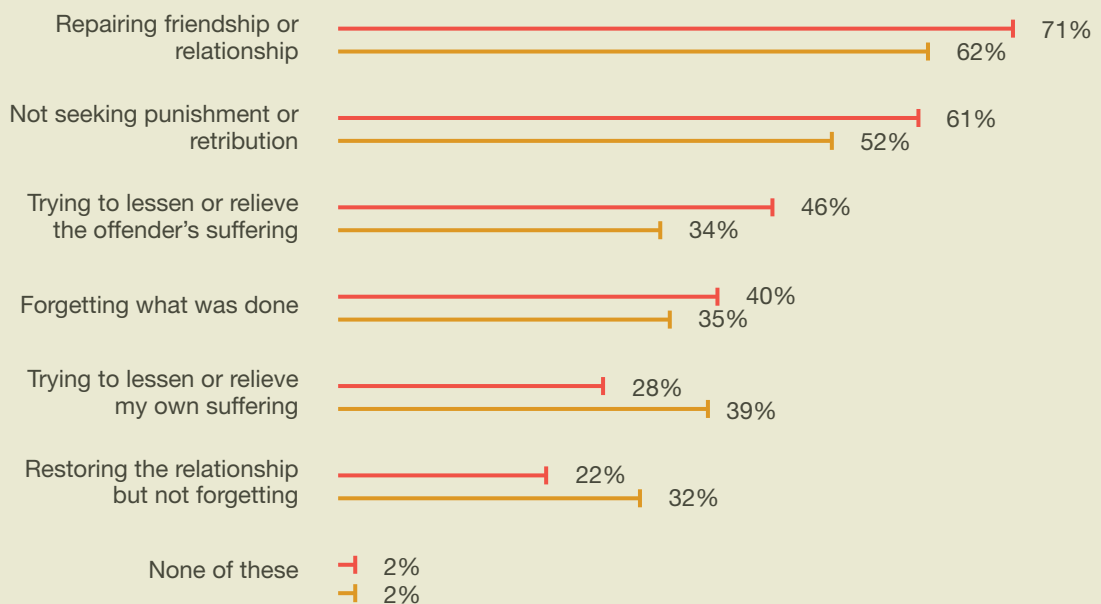
**Black practicing Christians express more reluctance about the idea that restoring a relationship means forgetting a wrongdoing**

These differences in perceptions of the responsibilities of forgiveness have a significant bearing on how Americans approach a number of cultural or political issues. As we see elsewhere in this report, these core ideas could be connected to white

## ETHNICITY & IDEAS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Which of the following should characterize real forgiveness?  
Check all that apply.

○ White practicing Christians  
○ Black practicing Christians



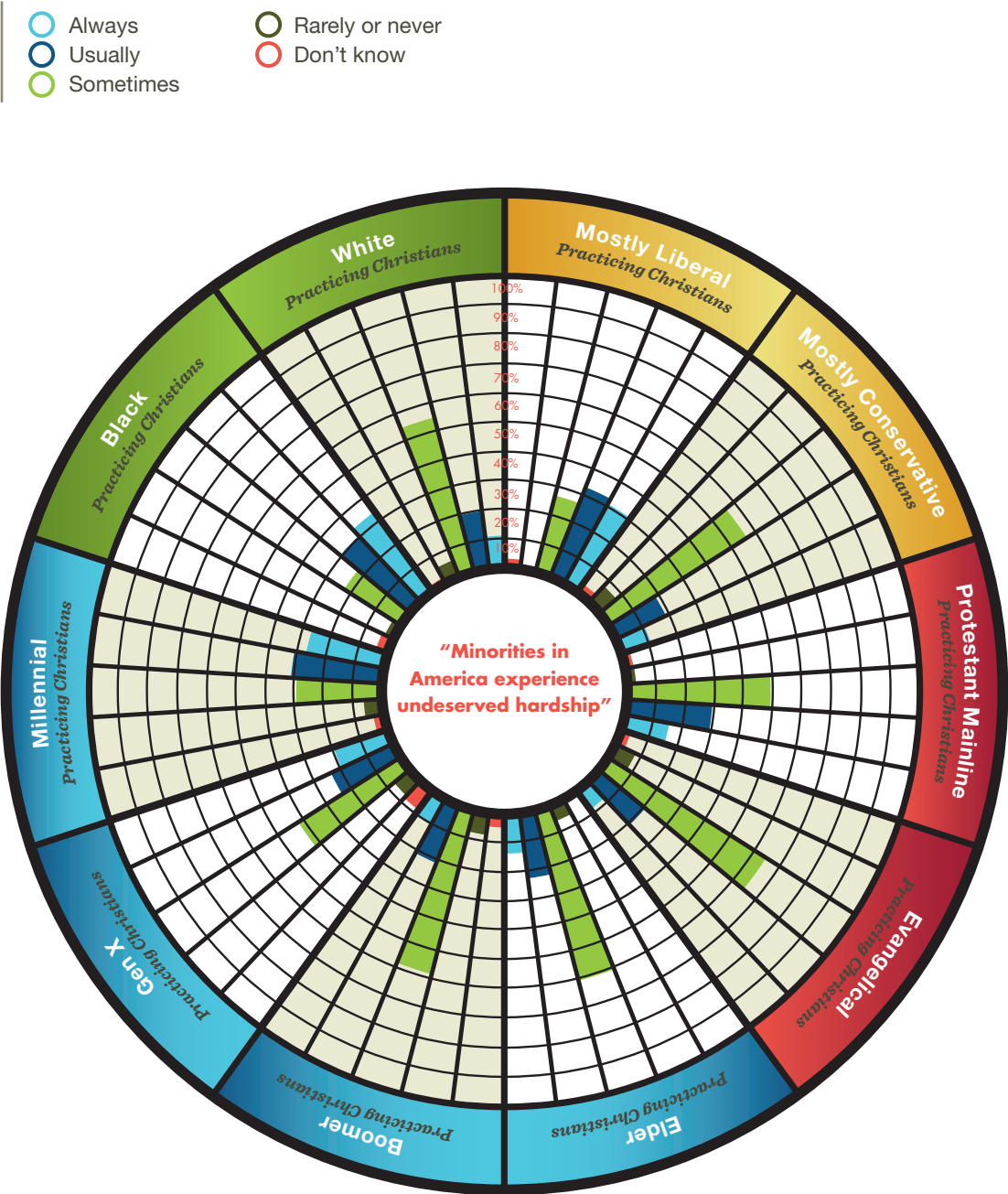
*n*=1,208 U.S. practicing Christian adults, April 12–May 2, 2018.

and black practicing Christians' differing expectations of the Church's role in racial reconciliation (page 45).

*Learn more about how Americans, including practicing Christians and pastors, broadly view the topics of mercy, compassion, forgiveness and justice in The Mercy Journey report. See [www.barna.com/mercyjourney](http://www.barna.com/mercyjourney) or page 63 for more information.*

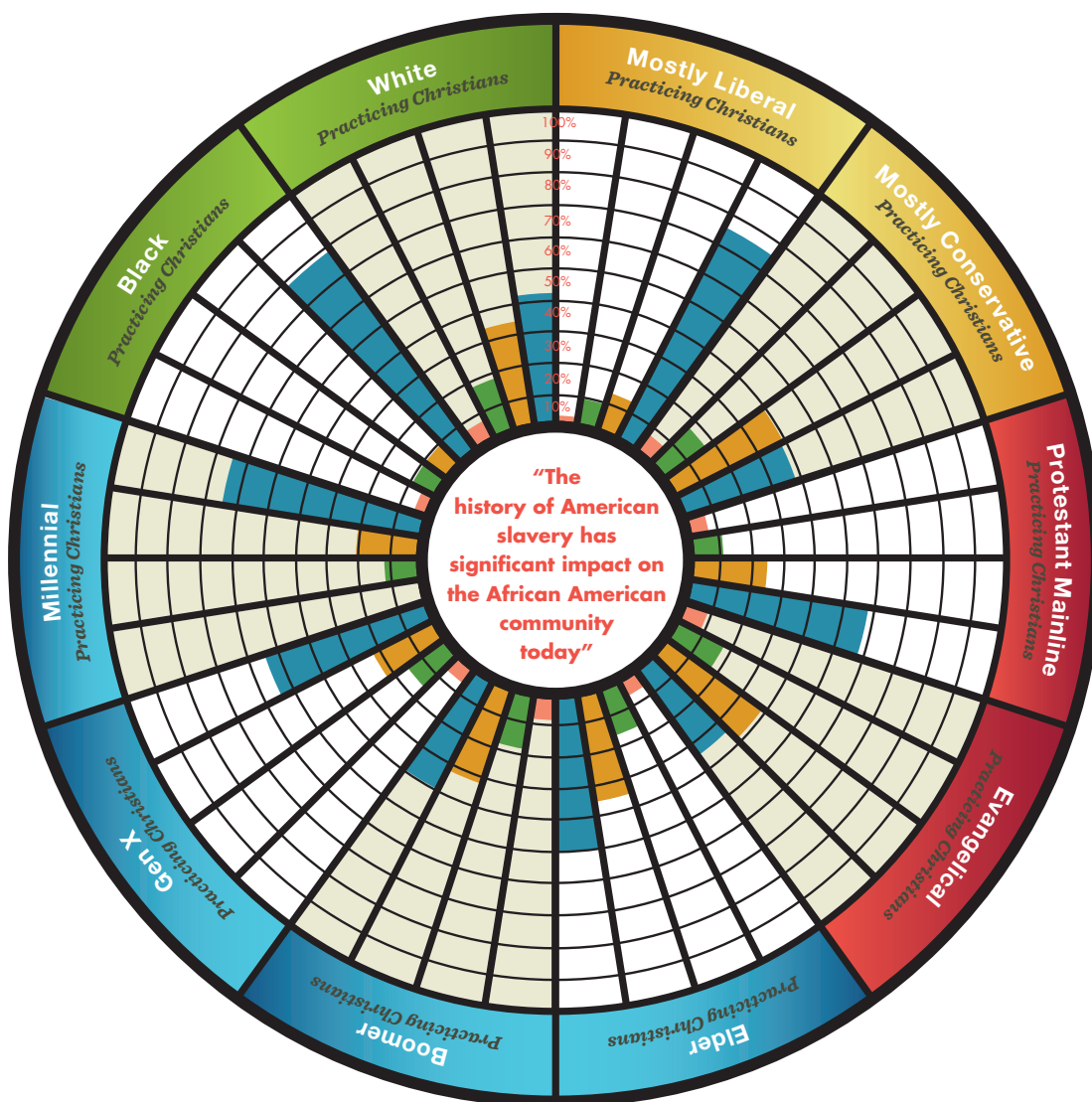
# SEEING THROUGH THE LENS OF ANOTHER

In the data, we see minorities in America telling their stories of hardship: both present-day hardship and a history of persecution that continues to affect them. Yet, the data also show that white Americans are not as likely to believe minorities today still experience undeserved hardship and ongoing effects of slavery. Younger white Americans, however, show significantly more empathy toward the minority experience than their older peers.



“Minorities in America experience undeserved hardship”

- The effects of slavery continue to be felt today
- Our society has moved past slavery
- Not sure
- Have not considered the impact of slavery on African Americans today





## Q&amp;A

**Q** *Why do you think a generational gap in views of race and racism persists? How does this come to bear on other discussions of how to keep Millennials and Gen Z engaged in their faith?*

“The generational gap reflects how history was taught in our public educational school system. The history taught in school today—United States history, European history, colonialism, etc.—is likely to be from a different perspective than what was taught to Boomers and Elders. I think we all need the hope and the confidence of the Millennials. There can be solutions and reconciliation. But right now we need older generations to not sap that energy. We need the new generation. We need to give them space, faith and permission to experiment, because maybe they do see something that other generations don’t. It is very important for older generations who are working with younger people to recognize that a faith that does not engage with these issues becomes an irrelevant faith.”

**- Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

“Older generations have learned how to adapt, to live life and survive. The young haven’t acclimated yet. They still have the fight in them. What’s more,

younger generations are exposed, through technology, to injustice playing out everywhere in the United States in real time, beside the global and historical issues. It is a deluge that has disillusioned them toward the complacency of many of their elders, and they want something different. The callus has not yet built up over their nerves.”

**- Mark Strong**

“Millennials recognize the world is multiethnic and wonder why their churches aren’t. They are hungry for authentic relationships, and a faith that actively engages with the world. Frederick Buechner wrote, ‘The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ What gifts has God given you to partner with him in his redemptive work in the world? Our evangelism and discipleship cannot be compartmentalized into a purely cerebral faith; we need a head-hands-heart model. Our Lord saw people and engaged with them at their point of need as part of his evangelism and discipleship.”

**- Maria Garriott**

“Part of the generational gap comes down to remembering how much worse, as a whole, things used to be. When

I was a kid, I saw crosses burnt. My dad marched for our civil rights in 1963. There's memory of 'separate but equal,' segregated water fountains and all the rest. There are people alive who have experienced that, and they have, as best they can, repented of that. They see what's happening now and say, 'Well, we're not back there, so things are better.' There's some truth to that. But our nation's racism and prejudice is more subtle today. It is just as real. And because it's so subtle, it's easy for the very people who are perpetuating it to not realize what's happening."

- **Stan Long**

**Q** *What is the place of Christian teachings about mercy, forgiveness, compassion and justice in racial reconciliation?*

“What binds mercy and justice is love. A Christian's greatest call is to love (Mark 12:28–31). This call is complemented perfectly in 1 Corinthians 13. There is nothing more foundational to Christianity than the concept of *hesed* (loyal love), which God attributes to himself (Exodus 34:6) and requires of his covenant community (Micah 6:8). One can perform acts of mercy and justice without genuine love, either through compulsion or guilt. As anyone knows, love

does not come naturally. It has to overcome numerous emotions (e.g., selfishness and greed) and requires discipline. So for mercy and justice to be effective and genuinely reflect God's own character, they have to be rooted in love. Needless to say, there can be no racial reconciliation if love is absent; otherwise it is just racial tolerance.”

- **Nicola A. Menzie**

“Only the gospel will give us the strength to engage cross-culturally and examine our own areas of sin and blindness. The gospel tells us we're more sinful and broken than we dare admit; yet more loved, forgiven and made righteous in Christ than we ever dared hope. Only the gospel enables us to forgive those who wound us and to ask others for forgiveness when we wound them. The power to practice unconditional love can't be willed into existence. Racial reconciliation will bring suffering, so we need to be prepared for that. Our capacity to engage in racial reconciliation ministry depends on our capacity for suffering.”

- **Maria Garriott**

“Sometimes 'forgiving and forgetting' has a connotation of keeping us from seeing what really happened.

Acknowledgement is vital to the forgiveness process. We can't just fly over; we have to intimately see the landscape. Acknowledgement allows a person to see and absorb what has happened so that they are ready for grace to be applied. Even before God forgives our sin, there has to be an acknowledgement. We can't be afraid of hard, uncomfortable conversations. Navigate through it. The destination for Christians has to be forgiveness, but not without acknowledgment."

**- Mark Strong**

"The Christian call to forgiveness has too often been used by those in power to silence just calls for repentance and justice. The person who is wronged is not wrong for seeking justice, particularly when the effects of that injustice were against a class of people and continue to be felt today. Forgiveness must be the choice of the wronged, not a demand of others. Pastors can help by teaching not just on mercy and compassion, but how to avoid using mercy and compassion as weapons and instead view mercy and compassion as flowing from God's love for expression in our own lives first."

**- Michael Wear**

"This generation needs to be reawakened to a part of worship that has historically been an important part of the black church: lament, including wailing and weeping and 'the moaner's bench.' Our culture teaches us to 'just get over' pain. Lamenting allows us to enter it. It is emotionally healthy to enter into grief. It's also biblical. Romans 12 talks about presenting our bodies as living sacrifices and goes on to say one of the ways we do that in community is by weeping with those who weep. Honestly, we have enough conversations already, but they're just exchanges of information that don't produce significant generational change. To experience real change, we must learn to lament together."

**- Eric Mason**

"If pastors try to keep forgiveness, repentance and lament as only disembodied 'spiritual' things, they shortchange the gospel. The gospel is embodied and manifest in all aspects of life. It's personal. It's social. It's cultural. It's economic. It's political. What does repentance, forgiveness and restitution look like in all the spheres of human life the Church touches?"

**- Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

## In Someone Else's Shoes: Empathy & Diversity

The majority of practicing Christians reports having had at least one experience in their lives that has engendered empathy. More specifically, seven in 10 (69%) say they have gone through “something emotionally painful that later motivated them to help other people in the same circumstance.” A quarter (26%) says this has not happened to them, while 6 percent are not sure. Women, younger generations and residents of urban areas are among the practicing Christians more likely to describe having such encounters.

There is no significant difference between the proportions of individual racial groups who report these moving incidents, and we can't determine from this data alone whether some of the painful events acknowledged are linked with race. However, could an empathetic attitude influence understanding of racism and inequality in the U.S.? There is at least a correlation between the two.

One in five practicing Christians with an “I've-been-there” sense of compassion feels that non-white races always experience undeserved hardships in the U.S. (20% vs. 14% of those who have not had an empathetic experience). Those who report having emotional, motivating memories are also more likely to agree that the effects of the history of slavery continue to be felt in the U.S. today (56% vs. 41%). As noted,

non-white practicing Christians are more likely to acknowledge continued injustice for black Americans, but this view is boosted among both white and minority respondents who have had tough life experiences (72% of non-white practicing Christians and 47% of white practicing Christians with empathetic experiences vs. 56% of non-white practicing Christians and 34% of white practicing Christians without such experiences). This could be linked with the fact that these empathetic Christians also tend to have racially and ethnically diverse community (72% vs. 53% have a long-term friend of another race). Meanwhile, those who have not faced painful circumstances that now prompt them to help others are twice as likely to say they have not even considered the ongoing impact on black Americans today (10% vs. 5% of those with an empathetic memory).

One example of a challenge that might spur empathy is economic hardship. The data show that this specific experience alone correlates with an increase in the

chance that practicing Christians recognize adversity faced by racial minorities (23% of those who worried about money growing up vs. 13% of those who felt financially secure say “always”) or the ongoing damage of the nation’s racial history (56% vs. 49%).

## EMPATHETIC EXPERIENCES

Have you ever experienced something emotionally painful that later motivated you to help other people in the same circumstance or experiencing the same thing?

Yes No Not sure



Practicing Christians with empathetic experience  
Practicing Christians without empathetic experience

*The effects of slavery continue to be felt today.*



*Ethnic minorities “always” experience undeserved hardship.*



## The Blessings of Multiethnic Community

Scripture offers us a picture of heaven that includes “every nation and tribe and people and language” (Revelation 7:9). How often do Christians’ faith communities and personal circles reflect this multicultural vision?

### Diversity in Churches

When asked to think about ways that their church shows mercy, more than two-thirds of practicing Christians (68%) select cultivating “relationships with a diversity of people.” Looking at specific faith segments, evangelicals are considerably more likely than nominal Christians to feel their church engages across differences in this way (79% vs. 56%).

Interestingly, there is no significant gap produced by respondents’ race on this point. However, reports vary somewhat

by generation. Elders are most likely (77%) and Millennials are least likely (63%) to characterize their church in this way. In a similar vein, pastors under 40 tend to perceive a weaker level of diversity in their faith community; 28 percent say their church is rarely in relationship with a diversity of people, compared to 13 percent of pastors over 40.

Christians’ perceptions of their own social circles add another dimension to the story.

### Diversity in Personal Circles

Practicing Christians are more likely than not to say they experience some level of diversity within their circle of long-term friends. This isn’t exclusive to race—three-quarters of practicing Christians have a close relationship with someone whose spiritual beliefs or whose socioeconomic level differs from their own—but two-thirds (65%) are indeed engaged in multiethnic friendship. Though a majority of both white and black practicing Christians has a long-term friend of another race (62% and 68%, respectively), white respondents are somewhat more likely to lack these bonds (35% vs. 27%, with 4% and 5%, respectively, who are not sure).

Here, patterns seen when looking at diversity in the local church are reversed: Younger generations are more likely to personally be in a cross-racial friendship (69% of Millennials and 71% of Gen X vs. 63% of Boomers and 53% of Elders). Looking at faith groups,

evangelicals are less likely than nominal Christians to be in multiracial or multiethnic community (57% vs. 66%).

The data suggest an interesting interplay between personal relationships and institutional community for Christians. For leaders and congregants seeking to become multicultural, the challenge is not just to agree on whether diversity is an area of need but to have a similar understanding of what makes a congregation sufficiently diverse. As those who say their churches already cultivate diverse relationships are more likely to personally be in homogeneous friendships, it's possible they have a lower bar. Meanwhile, those in cross-racial friendships, who may have an appreciation for the complexity of creating diverse community, see more work to be done in their church.

### Two-thirds of practicing Christians are engaged in multiethnic friendships

It's important to also keep in mind that the number of these long-term friendships may be limited, as another Barna study shows those in U.S. adults' social circles often believe and look alike. Three-quarters said their current friends are mostly similar to them in racial or ethnic background; for evangelicals, that percentage climbs to 88 percent.<sup>7</sup>

### Diverse Community Accompanies Other Benefits

A number of positive traits appear among Christians who say they have friends of other races. Beginning with faith practices, they are more likely than those with racially homogeneous friend groups to read the Bible on their own (54% vs. 48%), to attend a church small group or Bible study (46% vs. 39%) or to volunteer at church (32% vs. 25%). They are also more likely to say their churches engage in a diversity of relationships (71% vs. 64%) and keep justice at the forefront of their teaching (32% vs. 26%). In other words, those with multicultural friendships are also more engaged in their faith. While we can't ascertain which leads to which—these are correlations, not causations—they do point to a trend Barna regularly sees in its research: intentionality begets intentionality.

**Those with multicultural friendships are also more engaged in their faith**

Those with friends of other races or ethnicities experience diversity in other areas too; they are noticeably more likely to have friends who fall in a different income bracket (88% of practicing Christians with a friend of another race vs. 55% of practicing Christians with no friend of another race) or who practice a different religion (86% vs. 57%). Greater levels of reported compassion emerge among this segment, including a high degree of compassion for the poor (54% vs. 46%), people in distress (58% vs. 51%), people who have wronged them personally (15% vs. 9%) and even those who have committed crimes (10% vs. 5%). They are also more likely to be moved by past painful experiences to help others (75% vs. 57%).

Relatedly, practicing Christians in multiracial or multiethnic friendships have a somewhat different outlook on race issues. They are more likely to believe the present-day minority experience includes undeserved hardship (45% vs. 38% “always” + “usually”) and to feel that the Church should help repair the damage resulting from racial injustice (28% vs. 22%). They are more inclined to agree that the effects of slavery in the U.S. continue to be felt today (54% vs. 44%) and less inclined to believe that society has moved past slavery (26% vs. 32%). These trends are still evident (if more subdued) among specifically white practicing Christians (46% of those with multiethnic friendship vs. 36% of those without agree the impact of slavery is still felt today; 37% vs. 26% say minorities “always” + “usually” face undeserved hardship; 27% vs. 20% say churches should help repair the damage of slavery).

Whether diverse friendships shape our perspectives, or whether our perspectives lead us toward diverse friendships, the data suggest striking connections among these positive traits: spiritual engagement, compassion, racial awareness and relationships across differences.



## INSIDE OUT

Do the insides of churches look different than everyday life? Do people find more diversity within their church or within their personal friend groups? We see that pastors and younger generations believe they are personally more likely to cultivate diversity in their friendships than to experience it in their churches. But older generations see their churches cultivating diverse relationships—even more than they do personally.

○ Pastors

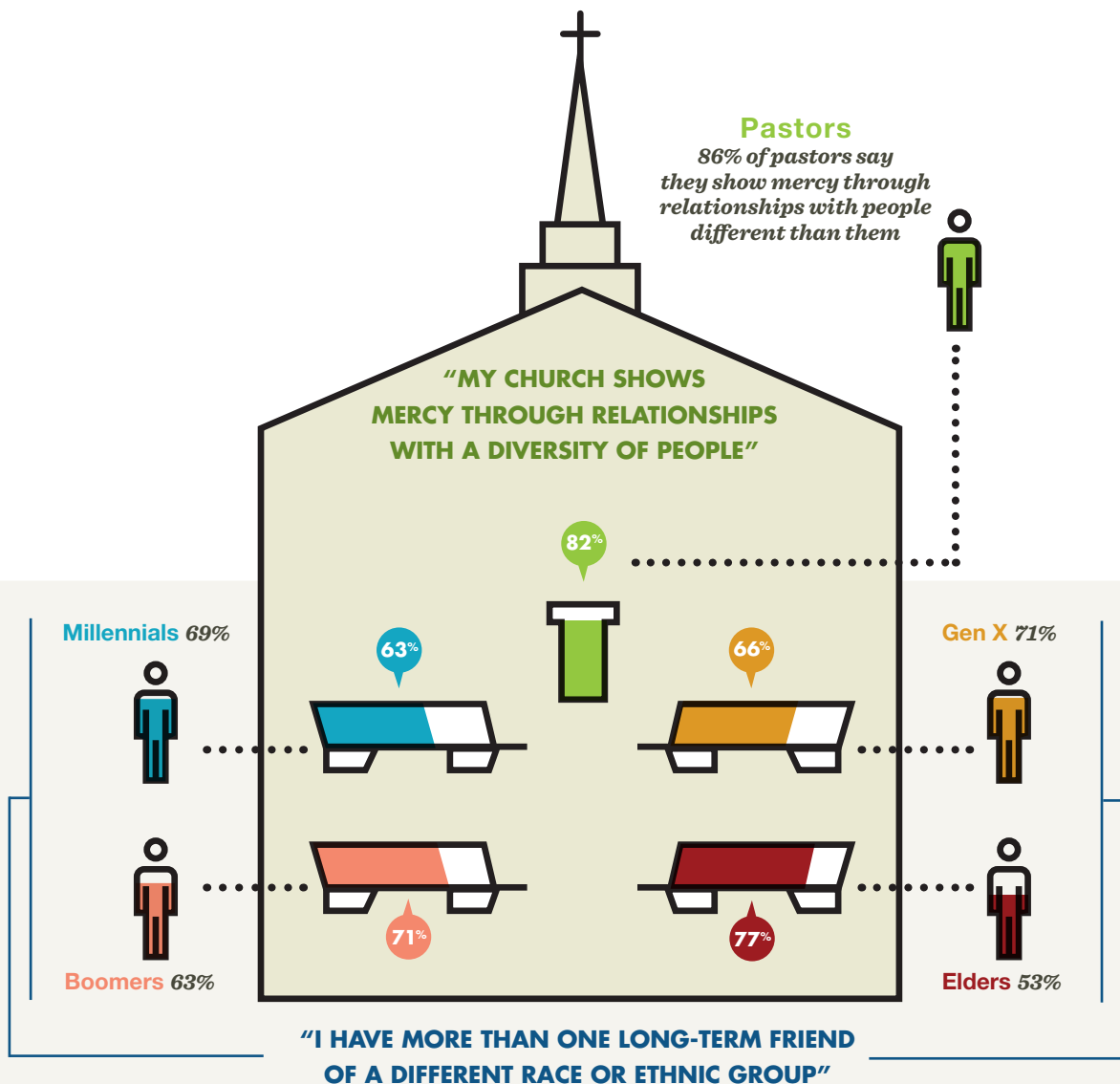
### Practicing Christians

○ Millennials

○ Generation X

○ Boomers

○ Elders



## Who Should Address Discrimination?

One goal of this study was to identify some social causes that practicing Christians feel the Church at large or individual Christians are called to address—in other words, some key areas in which faith requires people to be hands-on ministers of mercy. Among examples of groups that could be considered in need of relief (whether through donations or through in-person assistance), Barna included people who face discrimination.

Overall, just over one-fifth of practicing Christians (22%) says they have an individual responsibility to help those who experience discrimination; this is the top option selected, over other individuals, organizations (Christian or otherwise) and churches who could lend a hand.

Though there are certainly many groups who might be victims of discriminatory attitudes or behaviors in the U.S., a primary example is racial or ethnic minorities. Thus, responses to this question are pertinent to broader discussions of racial justice or reconciliation. By race, there are few significant differences in how practicing Christians see a responsibility to help, in terms of offering resources. When it comes to providing help in person, however, black practicing Christians are somewhat more likely than their white counterparts to see Christian

organizations as most responsible for this kind of institutional support (21% vs. 15% of white practicing Christians). White respondents assume more personal responsibility to help others who are on the receiving end of discrimination (25% vs. 17% of black practicing Christians).

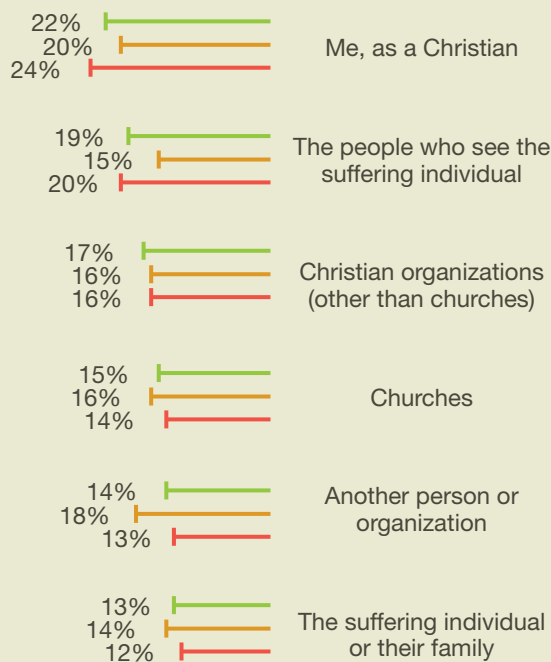
### White practicing Christians assume more personal responsibility to help people who experience discrimination

Younger generations tend to feel churches should be the primary source of support to those who have been discriminated against (21% of Millennials, 22% of Gen X), while Boomers assume a personal duty to help (27%). This could be linked to a growing public conversation on the realities of systemic injustices and whether their solutions should be individual or institutional in nature.

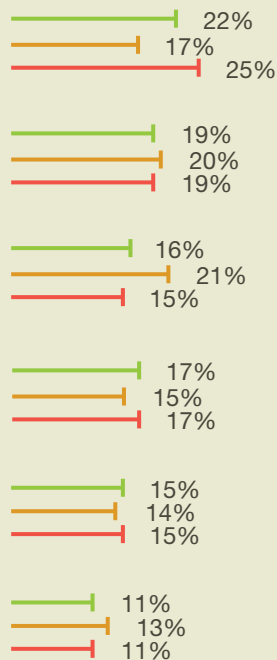
## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO CARE FOR PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION BY ...

- All practicing Christians
- Black practicing Christians
- White practicing Christians

### GIVING MONEY AND RESOURCES



### SERVING THEM IN PERSON



## A Political Predicament

One of the starkest divides observed throughout this study occurs along lines of political ideology. In short, practicing Christians who have liberal views—just 17 percent of this sample—are dramatically more likely than practicing Christian conservatives (52% of the sample) to perceive consequences of racist structures, both past and present, in the U.S. Not surprisingly, moderates tend to occupy a middle ground between liberal and conservative approaches to this issue.

**Practicing Christian liberals are dramatically more likely than practicing Christian conservatives to perceive consequences of racist structures, both past and present**

Three in four practicing Christian liberals (76%) agree that the effects of slavery are still felt in the country today. Conservative practicing Christians are just as likely to agree (38%) as they are to disagree (39%) that race relations remain fraught because of this painful history. A not insignificant proportion of conservatives, however, is unsure (17%).

Though few practicing Christians of any political conviction say minorities rarely or never experience undeserved hardships, liberals are firmly convinced these obstacles exist. Two-thirds in this camp say there are “always” (32%) or “usually” (34%) hardships for minorities, well above the percentage of conservatives who agree (11% “always,” 19% “usually”). Instead, the bulk of conservatives says these

challenges “sometimes” occur for non-white Americans (57%).

Barna studies, including this one, point to correlations between diverse community and openness to the plights and perspectives of others (page 29)—but among political factions, it’s unclear how this trend plays out. In fact, both Christian liberals and conservatives are similarly likely to report having friends of other ethnicities (64% conservatives, 69% liberals), as well as of different religions (76% conservatives, 72% liberals) or income levels (78% conservatives, 73% liberals). Liberals, however, are more likely to be representative of racial diversity to begin with—just over half are white (52%), compared to eight in 10 conservatives (80%)—so when they affirm the reality of ongoing challenges for people of color, many may do so from a personal place.

It’s also possible gaps in opinions about the experiences of minorities could have more to do with rhetoric than relationships. Indeed, ideas about systemic racism, white privilege and violence

toward black Americans have long been a lightning rod in the U.S. political climate—with liberals and conservatives often taking different sides. Today, these topics are increasingly charged by the digital nature of political discourse and have been a

near daily talking point during the term of President Trump, whose administration has been accused of racist ideologies and whose approval rating has consistently lagged among ethnic minorities.<sup>8</sup>

It's clear that ideas about politics are difficult to extricate from ideas about race. Churches hoping to bring spiritual healing in either realm may need to foster unity in both.

## POLITICAL IDEOLOGY & IDEAS ABOUT RACISM

- Conservative practicing Christians
- Moderate practicing Christians
- Liberal practicing Christians

I agree (mostly or totally); the effects of slavery continue to be felt today



Ethnic minorities “always” experience undeserved hardships



## A Barna Recap: Support of Black Lives Matter Messages

*By Dr. Heather Thompson Day and Alyce Youngblood, Managing Editor at Barna Group*

This report points to distressing gaps in perspectives of black and white practicing Christians—but they aren’t necessarily surprising. In fact, much of this report’s findings reflect patterns in a 2016 Barna survey of Americans’ views of racism, police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of that study, the U.S. was just three years removed from the event that sparked the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter: the death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman. Subsequent shootings of black Americans spurred street demonstrations and protests of racial profiling, police brutality and discrimination. As of 2016, just over a quarter of all U.S. adults (27%) supported the message of Black Lives Matter. The movement was particularly struggling to gain acceptance from older generations; 45 percent of Millennials supported it, but that number dropped significantly with age (24% Gen X, 20% Boomers, 15% Elders). Overall, 52 percent preferred the counter-slogan to this movement: “All lives matter.”

Even so, more than half of Americans (53%) agreed at least somewhat with one of the central ideas of Black Lives Matter: that police unfairly target people of color. Black Americans were almost four times more likely than white Americans to strongly agree (53% vs. 14%)—perhaps because they were also four times more likely to personally fear police brutality (16% vs. 4% said “absolutely”).

The 2016 Barna poll also looked at other obstacles facing black communities, which secondary sources indicate are many. Looking at wealth alone, a study from Yale showed that “for every \$100 in white family wealth, black families hold just \$5.04.” Michael Kraus, a psychologist behind that research, told the *New York Times*, “I look at the black-white gap, and I’m shocked at the magnitude.”<sup>10</sup> The Barna study suggested black Americans, though, are perhaps less shocked; 84 percent agreed that people of color experience social disadvantages because of their race, compared to 62 percent of white Americans. Black Americans were also 20 percentage points more likely to disagree that racism is a problem of the past

(59% vs. 39%). White respondents, meanwhile, were prone to believe in the presence of “reverse racism,” the idea that white people themselves are victims of prejudicial treatment (71% vs. 46% of black Americans).

### **Black and white Americans agreed that anger and hostility exist between different ethnic groups in the U.S.**

On one telling point, a majority of both black and white Americans agreed: that anger and hostility exist between different ethnic groups in the U.S. today (87% white and 82% black “somewhat” + “strongly” agreed).

### **Where Evangelicals Stood Out**

The 2016 Barna study showed that Americans feel the Church should be instrumental in solving racial divides. Three in four U.S. adults (73%) confirmed “Christian churches play an important role in racial reconciliation.”

This may seem like hopeful news for the Church at large, yet one of the biggest divides in the study was found among faith segments. Specifically, evangelicals were

the group least likely to acknowledge the social disadvantages of black Americans, support the Black Lives Matter message or see racism as a present problem. This was compounded by factors like ethnicity and political affiliation.

Some evidence of common ground: Evangelicals were almost unanimously convinced the Church has a crucial role in racial reconciliation (94%). Yet, as Barna senior vice president Brooke Hempell put it, “This dilemma demonstrates that those supposedly most equipped for reconciliation do not see the need for it.”

What will the Church’s role be? Bringing mercy and justice to bear on the problem of racism is a challenge that has long faced American Christians, and increasingly so since the emergence of Black Lives Matter and the spotlight it has shone, particularly, on police brutality. Daniel Hill, author of the book *White Awake: An Honest Look at Being White*, calls on Christians to first see racism itself as a form of spiritual warfare. “I see the sickness of systemic racism and have no doubt that I contribute to it in ways I’m not aware of,” he writes. “I’m surrounded by sickness, and I am sick. I am in need of the great Physician. It’s the only hope I have to be healthy.”<sup>11</sup>

## 2016 VIEWS OF RACIAL TENSION IN THE U.S.

○ All U.S. adults  
○ Evangelicals

“Churches play an important role in racial reconciliation” (strongly + somewhat agree)



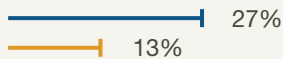
“People of color are often put at a social disadvantage because of their race” (strongly + somewhat agree)



Support the “All Lives Matter” message



Support the “Black Lives Matter” message



“Racism is mostly a problem of the past, not the present” (strongly agree)



*n*=1,097 U.S. practicing Christian adults, April 2016.



## Q&amp;A

**Q** *What terminology, approaches or callings can Christians agree upon in pursuing racial justice, regardless of political ideology or affiliation?*

**“** We start from our initial bond in Jesus. Yes, there are hard things that must be said. The reason we can deal with these hard things is because God has already dealt with the hardest thing: our sin. All of it. In the context of God’s grace, we must engage in truly open and constructive conversation. But there must be awareness and sensitivity for conversations to be productive. There are different roles in the conversation for the community that has done the wrong and the community that has been wronged. Non-whites, especially African Americans, have a responsibility to be open and truthful. But we also have a responsibility to say things in a way that promotes a deep unity of faith. On the white side, there is the responsibility to learn, to listen—to ensure you navigate murky waters carefully. Be sensitive. Don’t interrogate your brothers and sisters of color. Don’t assume you know how people feel. You have a responsibility for honesty and openness too—but it looks different.”

**- Eric Mason**

**“** The starting place is biblical unity in the body of Christ. Society in general plays by a different set of rules. But we have a theological foundation we can work from. Now, we have to share the view that a problem does exist, or we can’t begin, but our theological framework gives us room to try to find a place to begin.”

**- Mark Strong**

**“** To find common ground, we have to ask why there is such a divide. I think much of the breakdown comes from different emphasis on where responsibility lies—in the systemic or the personal. Liberals tend to accent the systemic. Conservatives tend to focus on individuals. We find common ground when we find the truth that is present in both of those emphases. We can talk about personal as well as systemic problems and responses. Jesus is an example of how to restore individuals, but also interact with social, cultural, political norms—the systems that oppress.”

**- Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

**“** When we feel another is morally wrong about an issue, it becomes easy to view them, not just an action or belief, as immoral. The issue then moves from a stated position to a person’s character. Allowing

for disagreement and respect for another's informed opinion matters. How did another informed adult come to their own decision about this issue? We need to find language of common humanity and humility. I must remember that I have been wrong in the past. I have changed positions on numerous issues. I should speak while I remember my own sense of humanness, frailty and short-sightedness, in hope that the other person might someday see things differently than they do today. In my experience, remembering the other person's humanity is almost always best done over a meal, which gives us the universal and human language of common food."

**- Randy Woodley**

“Diverging perspectives held by different racial and political groups (inside and outside the Church) are not primarily based on logic. They're rooted in personal experience, tribal loyalty and biologically based emotional reactions to perceived reality; it helps to think about the 'fight or flight' response as a starting place for what we have to overcome. Our society is at war over a set of profound transitions. Building bridges on common, sacred ground requires us to give people new experiences, create a broader sense of tribe and shift biological

responses by evoking a deeper spiritual response in which the soul overrides our basic fears."

**- Alexia Salvatierra**

**Q** *What are some practical ways that pastors and churches can confront racism or mitigate inequality?*

“Churches can become centers for this kind of work. They can use their space Monday through Saturday to invest in civic education and action through learning sessions and public forums, volunteer hours and small groups focused on some of these issues. It is important to connect the ideas of justice, mercy and compassion to challenges we face today—not just in our personal lives, but in our public lives. Churches don't have to take on all of the burden of this work themselves; just as they partner with others for evangelism or missions work, they can partner with organizations that work to address these issues in the public square.”

**- Michael Wear**

“The Bible, Genesis to Revelation, is about relationship. With God, and with one another. We need to foster organic relationships, to eat and talk, to facilitate real opportunities for people to connect.

There needs to be preparation and groundwork for that. Most people today don't have the relational tools to have meaningful friendships with people who are different than they are."

**- Mark Strong**

"I believe the place we should always begin is education—educating oneself on the ailments, consulting those affected, then moving forward together to empower the affected party to find a remedy. Otherwise, one ends up operating from a place of well-intentioned ignorance or naked arrogance. Either could lead to harm. As you become educated, you will see the myriad practical ways white supremacy continues to negatively impact people of color and communities of color in America. There are conditions, such as, mass incarceration, voter suppression, housing inequality, unsafe drinking water, health inequalities, police brutality, etc. that pastors and churches can target for service and advocacy. Pastors should lead their congregations in partnering with organizations that are already working in these areas, instituting programs that consistently meet physical and other needs of those impacted, and/or developing ways to actively engage the sources of these injustices through non-violent direct actions."

**- Nicola A. Menzie**

**Q** *How do you see the concept of white privilege—its absence or its presence—influence your own life or career?*

"It is rightly traumatic to revisit what was done in the name of white supremacy in our history. Minority communities must know the story in order to survive and help their children survive. They do not have the option to pretend it doesn't matter. As painful as it is, the African American community has learned to pass this memory on in a context of trust in God and patience with suffering. Being white in America means having a lot of 'bubble wrap' over your life that insulates you from feeling pain. If I have lived my whole life in this wrap and suddenly I'm exposed to the truth about what happened on the west coast of Africa, the trafficking of human beings to the United States or the lynchings and institutional injustice that happened in our country, that is traumatic; it's easier to look away. It's hard to come to grips with the fact that there are forces in our lives that have protected us, many of which are invisible to us and operate on our behalf without our ever asking them to. But those forces don't work in the same way for our black or brown neighbors."

**- Andy Crouch**

"Part of coming to terms with our culture's racial realities is becoming able

to recognize the ways in which, through no fault of their own, some people have received a benefit, and how through no fault of their own, others received a burden. We've had an African American president—I wish that I could say, because of that, things have magically changed. Unfortunately, I can't. Just one example: At 15 years old, my daughter was made to feel as if she did not belong—in a condo where she has lived longer than those who looked at her as if she didn't belong. I told her, 'This is not about you. This is about them.' That's vital to understand. There is a tendency to internalize these experiences in a way that diminishes self. I wanted her to understand this is not about her being of lesser value. This is about something deficient in that person. I wanted her to see that not every white person will treat her the way that person did. In situations like that, we must not allow bitterness to fester in our hearts, but have the courage and strength to forgive."

**-Claude Alexander**

“ White privilege is a system that was created for white people to have a 'head start' in all areas of life. It accompanies them through their entire lives. Paired with white privilege is white normalcy, and the two work together for the benefit of white people. Our systems, including justice, legislation, education, economics and

even the way we keep calendars and time, favor white people, who most often fail to see that what is normal to them is not at all normal to people of color. The historical reality is that our nation and its systems were created to accommodate and advance the white, land-owning male. Although some challengers might feel that the system has accommodated people of color into the system, the 'DNA' of the system has already been set, and it will not fundamentally change until a new system is innovated by all types of people, represented and empowered to create it."

**-Randy Woodley**

“ I'm a PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) black pastor; there aren't that many of us. When I graduated divinity school in 1989 there were fewer than two dozen black Americans in the program. As I prepared to pastor a congregation, there were less than 10 churches in our denomination that were African American or consciously thinking about reaching African Americans in the PCA. If I had been a white PCA pastor, almost 2,000 churches would be potential churches for me. But the reality was that most of those churches would never hire an African American. And some who would, I wouldn't want to pastor. Did it affect me in my career? Absolutely. White privilege has had a great impact on me in

terms of my options for ministry. Those who are white usually unconsciously have more power and options in life. They're able to go into places and get into positions unconsciously because of who they are. Not because of anything they've done. They can culturally relate in the same homogeneous way as those who are the historical decision makers."

**- Stan Long**

"For most of our years in the pastorate, we lived as white people in a neighborhood that was almost entirely African American. We saw the inequities of race and class every day—the fallout from redlining, white flight, underfunded schools, lack of city services, few recreational activities for youth and how laws were enforced. I had the unique privilege—for a white person—to often be the only one of my race to feel the disequilibrium, to carry the weight of my race in that neighborhood, whether I wanted to or not. White privilege is real. It paid for my college education. My father, a WWII veteran, finished college under the G.I. Bill and then got VA mortgages. These enabled my parents to live in high-achieving school districts, accumulate capital and pay for college educations for five children. Those benefits were generally unavailable to African American veterans because the law was deliberately crafted to accommodate racist Jim Crow policies. It's not a level playing field. I think white people are

generally unaware of the historical realities—the lingering impact of slavery and Jim Crow, let alone ongoing racial injustices. As whites, we usually don't experience it, so we can choose not to see it."

**- Maria Garriott**

"American novelist and activist James Baldwin said, 'White people are trapped in a history they don't understand.' I was raised as a white country boy, got saved through Young Life in a white suburban high school and ended up planting and pastoring a multiracial / multiethnic church in a majority African American community in Baltimore for 38 years. Yet every day I am still learning something new about my white privilege or ignorance. I must face the reality that our white dominant culture has skewed the story, along with opportunities, privileges and protections. People of a certain race and class have benefited from societal injustices. When made aware of privilege, white people are in danger of sliding into paternalism. But in the gospel there is a leveling. Everybody has privileges and strengths, wounds and weaknesses. We need each other. In Christ, we all possess the honor of being firstborn sons and daughters of God, and we are all called to treat each other with this equal, precious identity. I am free to honestly face the white privilege of my roots because the spiritual privilege of my gospel roots is deeper still."

**- Craig Garriott**

## What Is the Church's Role in Racial Reconciliation?

In the midst of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. expressed hope that the Church would play a significant role in fostering racial reconciliation: “Since the church has a moral responsibility of being the moral guardian of society, then it cannot evade its responsibility.”<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, denominations and groups of churches have issued various responses to racism, including the Southern Baptist Convention's report on its historical ties with slavery and racial inequality,<sup>13</sup> the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter against racism<sup>14</sup> and the multifaith Unity Declaration on Racism and Poverty.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these collective efforts, data show a lack of consensus among individual practicing Christians about what churches should be doing, exactly, to heal racial wounds—if anything at all.

### Christians Disagree on the Problem & the Solution

As detailed on page 37, a previous Barna study of American adults showed a gap between ethnic groups on whether racism is a problem of the past; 59 percent of black respondents and 39 percent of white respondents strongly disagreed.<sup>16</sup>

There was also confusion on whether the Church specifically contributed to that problem. Overall, six in 10 U.S. adults somewhat or strongly disagreed

(62%)—black Americans, however, were more likely than white Americans to view Christian churches as complicit (17% vs. 9%).

If Christians disagree about the current impact of racism as well as its spiritual dimensions, it is no wonder there are varying opinions on the solutions churches should pursue. This Barna study asks, in light of our nation's 400-year history of injustices against black people, how should the Church respond?

### The plurality of black respondents has a clear next step in mind: repairing the damage

Though responses were fairly distributed, and multiple responses were allowed, 28 percent say “there's nothing the Church should do.” A full third of white practicing Christians (33%) selects this option, double the percentage of black practicing Christians who feel this way (15%). Instead, the plurality of

black respondents (33%) has a clear next step in mind: repairing the damage. This is something that a quarter of all practicing Christians (26%) agrees with.

Overall, repentance (16%), restitution (12%) and lament (8%) are other less-popular responses, though there are notable gaps across the board. For example, black practicing Christians are about twice as likely as white practicing Christians to say the Church should pursue restitution (19% vs. 10%). Liberals and conservatives see similar divides, with the former being inclined to hope churches repair the damage (36% vs. 21% of conservative practicing Christians) and the latter feeling churches don't owe a response to the black community (35% vs. 13% of liberal practicing Christians).

A surprising number of respondents—across demographics—says they “don't know” how the Church should respond to historical mistreatment of black Americans (26% overall). This could represent confusion over the specific options provided, which range from the symbolic to the material, or it could simply be a way of saying respondents are unsure what should—or even what can—be done by churches to help with racial reconciliation.

Christians who say that “justice” is a frequent topic in their leaders' teaching are less likely to dismiss the Church's role (24% vs. 40% of practicing Christians who never hear about justice say there is nothing to be done). These respondents may be seeking out faith communities that share their values, or

their church's mission and messaging may contribute to their personal clarity on this point.

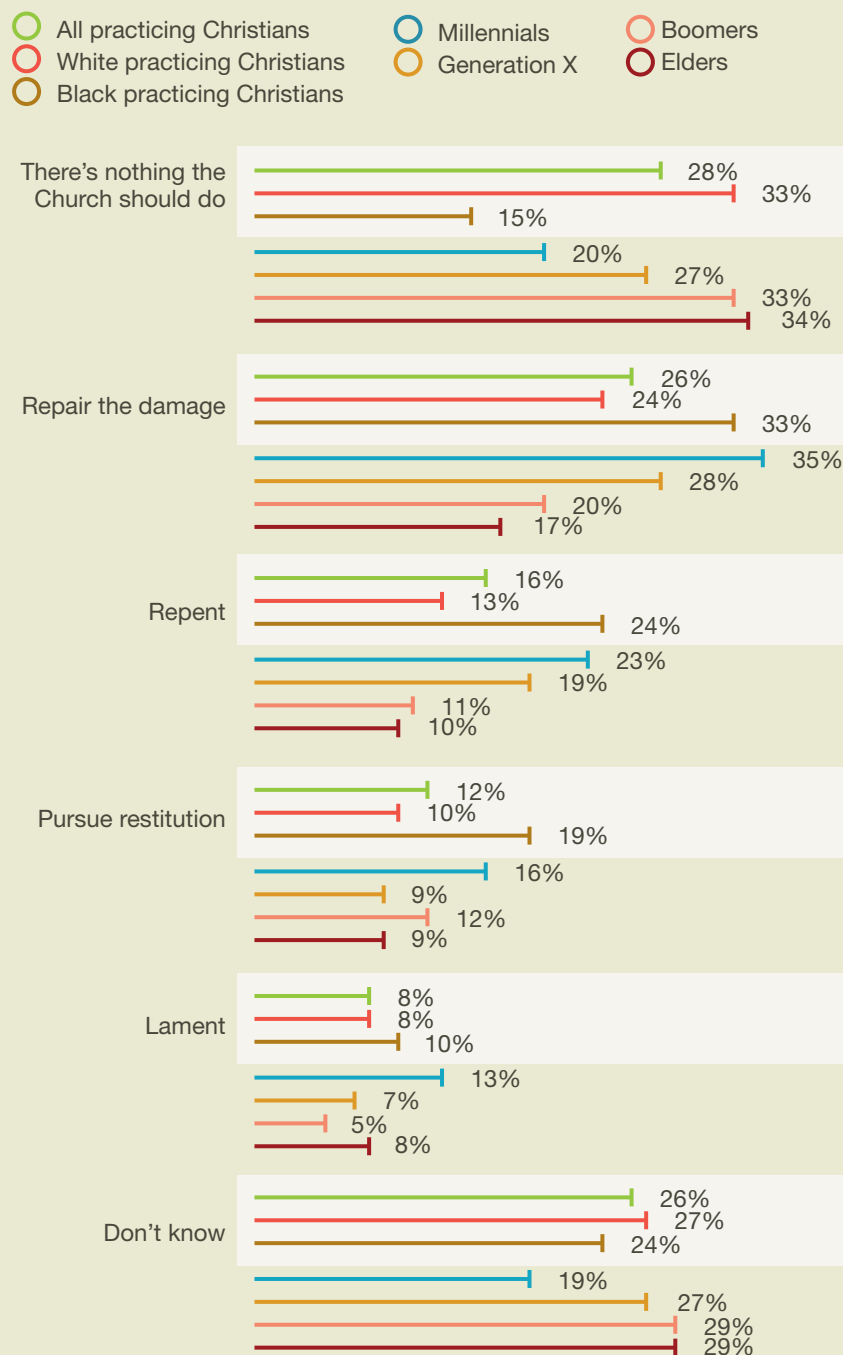
## The Younger the Christian, the More They Want the Church to Do

Older practicing Christians are more likely to say nothing is required of the Church in racial reconciliation (34% Elders, 33% Boomers vs. 27% Gen X, 20% Millennials), while younger generations see a path toward repairing the damage (35% Millennials, 28% Gen X vs. 20% Boomers, 17% Elders) and repenting (23% of Millennials, 19% of Gen X vs. 11% of Boomers, 10% of Elders). Millennials are the least likely age group to say they don't know how the Church should respond to racial injustice (19% Millennials, 27% Gen X, 29% Boomers, 29% Elders).

Age may factor into these responses to the history of racism based on how much history one has individually witnessed. Older

## THE WAY FORWARD

How do you think the Church should respond to the African American community now because of this 400-year history? (Multiple responses allowed)



n=1,502 U.S. practicing Christian adults, April 12–May 2, 2018.



generations who lived through the civil rights movement, particularly older white respondents, may have a greater sense that the evils of systemic racism have been largely resolved, perhaps through initiatives like desegregation, the Civil Rights Act or affirmative action. Boomers and Elders are also more likely than younger peers to place primary responsibility for helping people who face discrimination on themselves, as Christians, perhaps communicating a generational tendency to see individual rather than systemic solutions to societal ills.

### **Millennials are the least likely age group to say they don't know how the Church should respond to racial injustice**

Conversely, younger generations—which the data show are defined by more liberal views and more diverse identity and community—may feel more closely acquainted with present prejudice and structural inequality in education, politics or the workplace (the latter of which Boomers and Elders are now vacating). Thus, Millennial and Gen X Christians might be more motivated to look to the Church as an instrument of change on a community level, rather than looking only to interpersonal relationships as a long-term solution in racial reconciliation.

## (Most) Pastors Are Willing to Play a Part

Pastors appear more emphatic than practicing Christians not only about the reality of racial inequality, but also about the Church's role in addressing it.

The gap between pastors and parishioners begins with perceptions of the minority experience. Pastors are more likely to observe frequent hardships for non-white Americans: 53 percent answer quite affirmatively (19% “always,” 34% “usually”), 10 percentage points more than practicing Christians (43%). In turn, two-thirds of pastors (65%) agree that the effects of slavery continue to be felt today, a conviction held by half of practicing Christians (50%).

There are notable gaps when splitting pastors by denomination, implying other theological or cultural divergences. For instance, we find that 90 percent of

the pastors of mainline churches believe communities still feel the ripple effects of slavery, while only 57 percent of pastors of non-mainline churches share this belief.

**There are notable gaps when splitting pastors by denomination, implying other theological or cultural divergences**

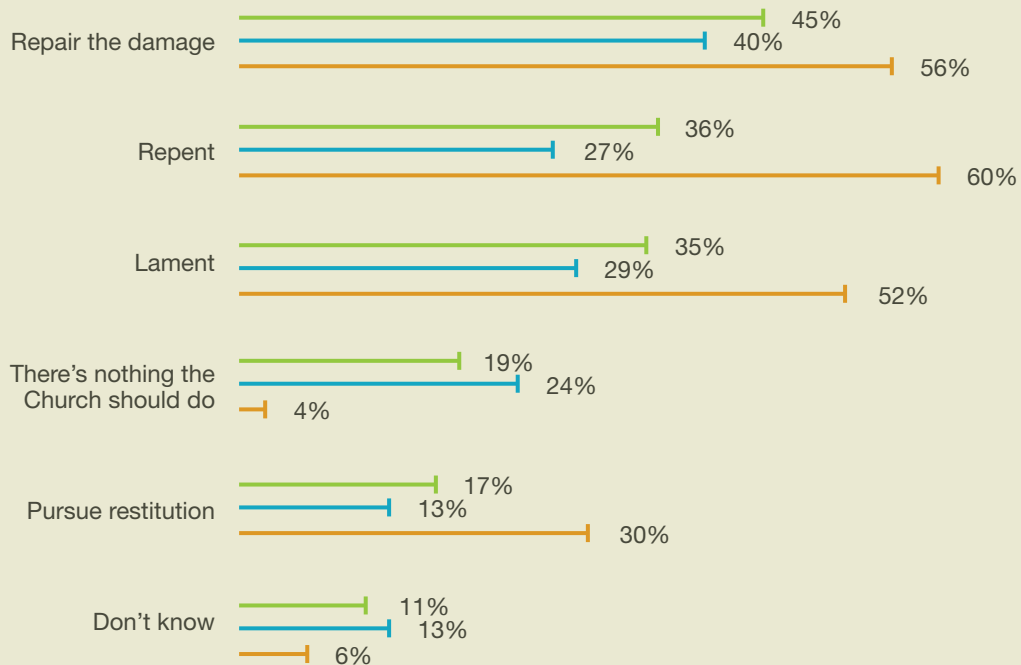
The percentage of pastors who see the continued impact of the history of slavery makes a relatively sharp decline as the focus moves from churches in

urban areas to churches in rural populations (76% urban, 72% suburban, 59% small town, 55% rural). Interestingly, the primary race of a pastor's congregation produces no significant contrast in these discussions. Whether leading white, non-white or

multiethnic churches, the majority of pastors agrees that the history of slavery and hardships facing minorities must be considered in our present context.

## DENOMINATIONAL DIVIDES ON THE CHURCH'S ROLE

How do you think the Church should respond to the African American community now because of this 400-year history? (Multiple responses allowed)



n=515 U.S. pastors, April 24–May 24, 2018.

The *personal* race of the pastor, however, produces some distinctions. Non-white pastors (62% of whom, in this study, are black) are more than twice as likely as white pastors to see the consistent presence of undeserved hardship for racial minorities (39% vs. 17% say “always”). In contrast, white pastors are four times more likely than non-white pastors to offer a more reserved response (47% vs. 12% say “sometimes”).

Nearly every black pastor (97%) affirms that the effects of slavery remain with us, while the percentage drops to 63 percent among white pastors. The remaining 37 percent of white pastors are divided between those who believe slavery no longer has an effect on our society or its people (24%) and those who say they are just “not sure” either way (13%).

How should the Church respond to the black community in the U.S., given the tragic history of slavery? According to pastors, actively. Alongside their primary goal of repairing the damage done (45%), they are drawn to spiritual solutions such as repenting for (36%) and lamenting (35%) historical racism. Seventeen percent say churches should provide some kind of restitution. On all counts, pastors are ahead of practicing Christians in choosing these as next steps for the Church. It’s possible that, given their vocation, pastors are more likely to esteem the Church’s leadership in championing this response, while congregants could be open to other institutional responses first, alongside the Church’s impact.

More reluctant response options draw lower percentages of pastors—but perhaps not low enough to disregard, given pastors’ potential role in leading churches toward racial reconciliation. One in five

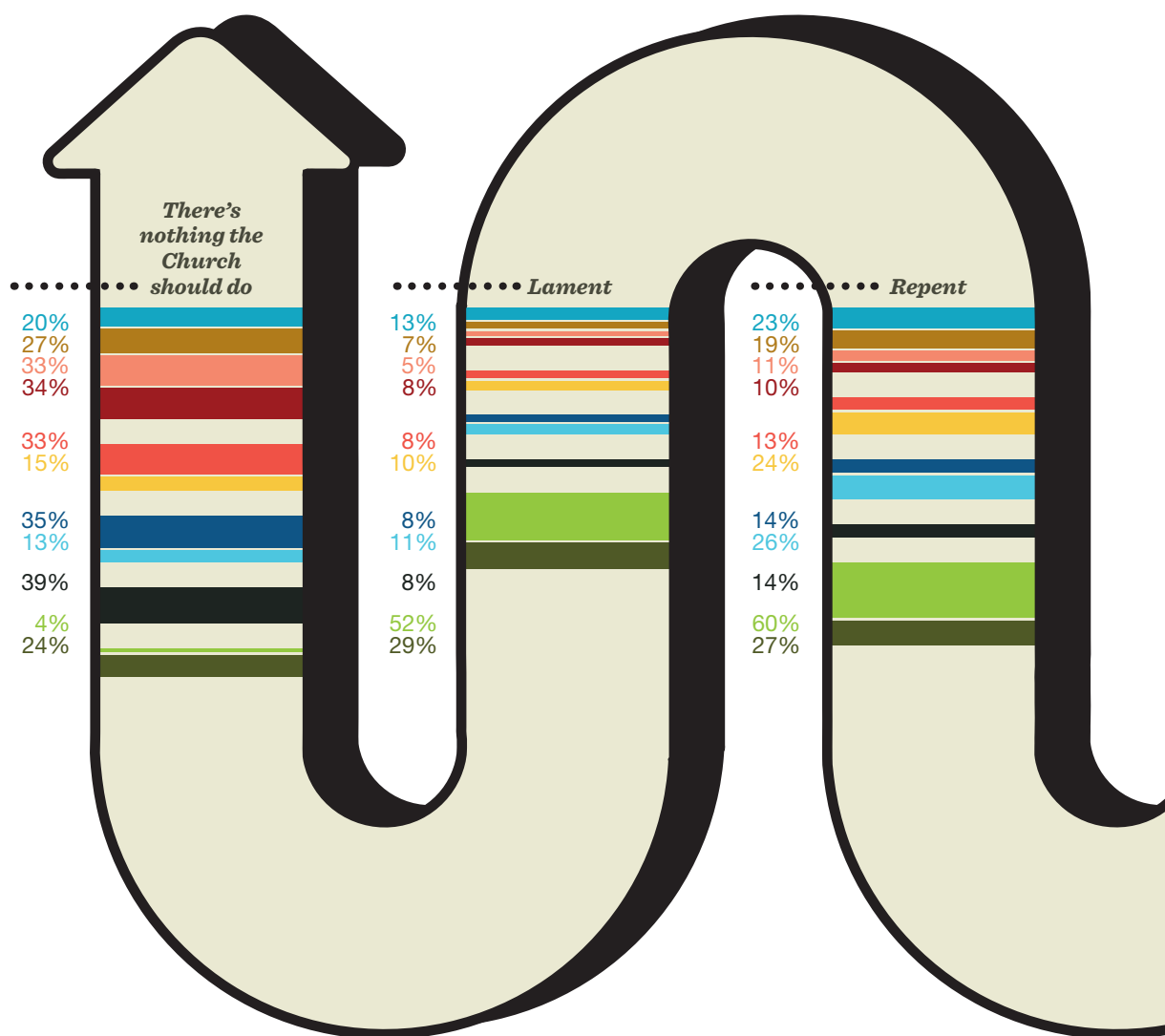
(19%) believes there is nothing the Church should do, while one in 10 (11%) concedes they don’t know what to do.

Here, too, a pastor’s denomination is correlated with their preferred solutions. Non-mainline pastors are particularly likely to say churches don’t need to act (24% vs. 4% of mainline pastors), while mainline leaders are especially keen on repenting (60% vs. 27% non-mainline pastors) and providing restitution (30% vs. 13%) as a church.

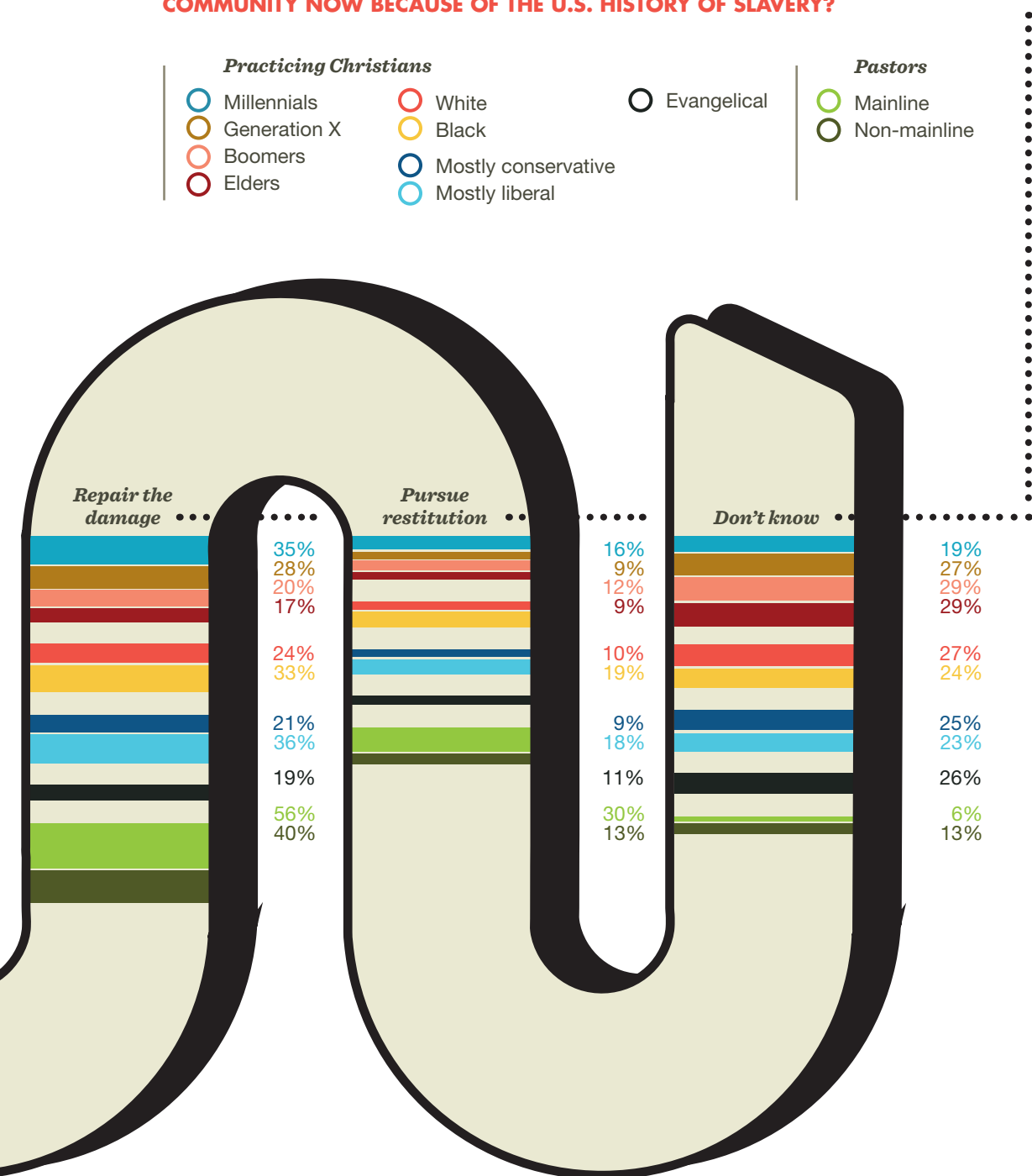
Curiously, although a plurality of black pastors (45%) thinks churches can play a part in repairing race relations, nearly four in 10 (39%) say there is nothing the Church should do, something only one-fifth of white pastors (19%) believes. It’s possible that black pastors, thinking of their own ministry, feel the impetus should be on white leaders and churches to pursue amends or reconciliation. This mindset might also be behind black pastors being less inspired toward lament (15%), which 37 percent of white pastors say should be the Church’s response.

## CHRISTIANS ANSWER: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

When asked how the Church should respond to America's past history of slavery and discrimination, practicing Christians are divided. A plurality of white practicing Christians says there's nothing the Church should do, while a plurality of black practicing Christians desires for the Church to repair the damage. Similar divides are represented between conservatives and liberals and non-mainline versus mainline pastors. One area of agreement, unfortunately? The second highest answer for nearly everyone: "I don't know."



## HOW DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH SHOULD RESPOND TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY NOW BECAUSE OF THE U.S. HISTORY OF SLAVERY?



n=1,502 U.S. practicing Christian adults, April 12–May 2, 2018; n=515 U.S. pastors, April 24–May 24, 2018.

## Q&amp;A

**Q** *Do you feel that a multiethnic vision for the local Church is the best solution moving forward? If so, what are healthy, redemptive methods of building integrated congregations? If not, how can monoethnic churches participate in bridging racial divisions in the Church?*

**“** One thing our church learned early is that to be a successful multiethnic church, you cannot make being a multiethnic church your main goal. You have to make Christ’s gospel the main goal.”

**- Stan Long**

**“** Multiethnic churches have an important role to play and can model a redemptive community in a powerful way. They will have their own culture, practices and dynamics, and there will be a great diversity even within multiethnic churches of what that looks like. With that said, monoethnic churches also serve a crucial role—particularly for racial minorities—and have made a contribution to the overall witness and vibrancy of the American Church. We do not necessarily need to uphold one model as ultimate or perfect. It’s OK to have a multitude of different ways of doing church that all share a through-line

of obedience to Christ and a commitment to growing in likeness to him.”

**- Michael Wear**

**“** The multiethnic question is a both / and. I don’t think one model is superior. But I know that all these communities are called to be in covenant relationships with people who are different than them, to avoid worshipping God in our own monocultural images. It takes different kinds of churches and communities to more fully reflect the full treasure of God. The tremendous gift of monoethnic churches is for immigrants and minorities. We need to have a strong category for the amazing work of the immigrant church in the U.S., whether the praying Korean immigrant church, the Latino church that is offering sanctuary or the black church. I get nervous when people rush to the multiethnic vision without truly understanding what a haven, what a place of integration those monoethnic churches are for people of color or for marginalized people.”

**- Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

**“** I do think multiethnic congregations should be our goal, because of the New Testament’s teaching about the Church as

a microcosm of the Kingdom. If we're going to be a genuine witness to God's Kingdom, the divisions that exist in our society, including racial and class differences, ought to be transcended as much as possible within churches. That's not to say it's easy. We don't want to simply have more white evangelical churches with some peripheral ethnic diversity on the margins that doesn't change the ministry or culture of those churches. Multiethnic ministry means multiethnic leadership, not just a multiethnic consumer base. With this in mind, we should be developing key leadership from within minority communities. Because the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow kept Christian universities and seminaries segregated for so long, we need to be proactive. If the future of evangelicalism is to be multiethnic, the Church needs to focus on the next generation's leadership."

**- Russell Moore**

**Q** *Where are there remaining barriers to diverse community? How do we overcome them, and how can churches help?*

**“** Where you live can be a major barrier. If you live in most parts of Wyoming, for example, you're not going to have a lot of cross-ethnic friendships just down the street. But that doesn't mean you can't still be a learner. You can still be intentional. Christian faith mandates we get out of our own culture. Jesus took his disciples into

cross-cultural environments in hopes of knocking down doors, despite the disciples not wanting those doors knocked down, because getting involved in cross-cultural environments is on the heart of God. We don't stop at the boundaries of our ethnic group. To me, moving toward these friendships mean you're overcoming your fears. Learning how to forgive. How to be forgiven."

**- Stan Long**

**“** The Church needs to press toward following the suffering Jesus, the Jesus who took up his cross. Real discipleship is transformation and always has an element of death to self. If you don't have a truly Christian foundation of becoming less so that others might become more, you will end up in relationships that are cross-ethnic only in name, but really are just people of different colors who have the exact same social location that I do, who aren't empowering me to grow, who can't be part of our larger call to follow Jesus at the expense of who we thought we were."

**- Nikki Toyama-Szeto**

**“** The most powerful new experience I know for transforming or expanding our core orientations is intimate peer relationship with someone on 'the other side.' These happen most easily for Christians in hands-on experiences of joint mission. For example, bringing immigrant and non-immigrant pastors together to talk about



pastoral concerns, bringing members of immigrant and non-immigrant congregations together in teams for prison visitation with youth in detention. It's really important to start as hands-on and physical as possible, not with public policy advocacy but with baking classes, soccer games, Bible studies and sitting in court rooms together. After we know each other in this way, the next step is to discover a common identity (with common authorities and mutual investment). People often try to do this before they have had experiences which change their perspective and it doesn't usually work—but after perspectives have begun to shift, then people have church together and share the Word, sacrament, study and healing prayer.”

**- Alexia Salvatierra**

“ One of the difficulties is that it's not just churches that are divided by ethnicity and by class differences, but entire communities. I know of churches that would like to be more multiethnic, but geography and the way society is so segregated right now make it difficult to overcome the barriers. Even though I believe in the importance of cross-ethnic personal friendships, I don't talk about that much, simply because it tends to reinforce the misconception many white evangelicals have that these issues are strictly personal and have to do with the attitudes of one's heart rather than bigger systemic issues in our culture and churches. Although such

relationships are important, if they become the focus, there are many people who will conclude that if we simply have other people over for dinner in our homes, we'll solve the problem.”

**- Russell Moore**

“ The barriers to cross-ethnic or interracial friendship are legion. The chief apostle Peter caved to the cultural religious pressures of his day, causing him to withdraw from fellowship with Gentile believers. He had to be publicly rebuked by Paul (Galatians 2:11). How much more should we expect our union with culturally different believers to be a struggle? If leaders issue exhortations and appeals for diverse people to be united without grounding them in the encouragement of the unity Christ has already accomplished, they will only create a legalistic church empty of power. Our common reconciliation in Christ must first be affirmed and celebrated before it can be applied in our relationships.”

**- Craig Garriott**

**Q** *What should the Church's next steps be?*

“ The Church plays a pertinent role in helping its congregants grapple with what most of the general population already agrees on regarding America's history of slavery. The years of racial segregation that followed aided a nation in its mistreatment of populations of color. This legacy

is still being felt across the country. What happens in the larger construct of our nation must also have ripples within the microcosm of the Church. Pastors and church leaders have a responsibility and the opportunity to restore the image of a loving God within their communities—a God who shows compassion for the vulnerable and is always near to the brokenhearted.”

– **Heather Thompson Day**

“ It starts with a common knowledge. Right now, African Americans have an experiential knowledge of race dynamics whites will never have. But there is a historical knowledge we both can have. It starts with getting more people to know basic history, then should progress into relationship. Through relationship, I can share my experience, and you may begin to feel something.”

– **Claude Alexander**

“ I find the biggest problem is not white evangelicals rejecting the reality of these issues, but rather them not thinking about them at all. They hear about them in political debates and from the outside culture, but they don’t have these issues called to their attention in the context of obedience to Christ. That’s unfortunate, because I’ve seen the most change happen in churches where there is clear teaching on these issues. Initially, there will be push-back to anyone who’s preaching on racial injustice. Many pastors feel that, then just

quit. But if they’ll continue, usually there’s major change in those congregations.”

– **Russell Moore**

“ It is a fallacy to believe that white supremacy is an evil waged only against people of color; God’s children of European descent also are ensnared by this evil. An excellent place to begin on a path toward peace is white Christians choosing to get educated about the history of race and the nature of white supremacy from the pulpits, seminary classrooms, conferences, home groups and other places they trust.”

– **Nicola A. Menzie**

“ Reparations, a solidly biblical model of reconciliation, has very rarely been practiced, I think because it would allow people of color to feel good and white people to feel bad. More must be done in reconciliation than expressions of words, however sincere. Forgiveness is not something I can demand from a person whom I have wronged or from a group whose oppression I have benefitted from. Forgiveness is something in my own spiritual walk for which I must take responsibility. Forgiveness from a person or a group wronged may come to that person or that group more easily when it is accompanied by actions. We cannot continue to ignore reparations as a vital component of reconciliation, especially when it comes to reconciliation with Native Americans and African Americans. What that will look like will take time to

hone, but it must include: education from people of color to white people; confession and lament by the white people to the people of color; restitution by the white people to the people of color; and the work of memorializing the actions taken, which must be done by both parties. Forgiveness must be allowed to work through its own spiritual processes. This is where the offended's pastoral care can be given to those they will forgive."

**- Randy Woodley**

"We need education in addressing racial reconciliation, especially for white Christians. In the past, as the dominant culture, we haven't had to understand or interact sensitively with other cultures to survive, but non-dominant cultures (African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and others) had to be culturally bilingual. That's no longer true in our multiethnic world. We must acknowledge, repent and be proactive about justice. We need to be willing to stay in the room and have these hard conversations. Because I believe that I'm more sinful than I can understand, I shouldn't be shocked when someone points out my blind spots. And because Jesus knows and has covered all my sin, I don't have to cower in shame, denial or self-hate. The bedrock principle of racial healing is our unity in Christ. Developing cultural intelligence helps us recognize our own cultural blinders. We have much to learn from those who are

different from us racially, ethnically, socioeconomically and in other ways. Our culture is so deeply rooted, we often fail to see it. Relationships with others from different backgrounds can help us develop a more biblical worldview. Culturally diverse friendships can challenge us to live according to Kingdom values, not cultural preferences."

**- Maria Garriott**

"During my career as a pastor, I've been part of a number of racial repentance and reconciliation services. 'Hug a black guy, hug a white guy,' that kind of thing. But it's not a one-and-done kind of thing. One-time events won't be enough. We've done them tons of times. Churches need to preach on racial issues and return to preach on them again and again. This is part of spiritual formation, and like other formation issues—prayer, discipleship, generosity—it demands emphasis and regular, strong teaching. That can help change the racial bias that is in the heart of churches and Christians."

**- Mark Strong**

"We need the repentance that comes with spiritual revival. When God's people gather in prevailing, humble, united, Kingdom-centered prayer that seeks the exaltation of Christ alone and shows forth in an outpouring of love towards others, unity, peace and the advancement of the gospel in the world are its fruit. Starting from a

place of weakness and defeat is a good beginning. The theology of being and doing Church as a reconciling, beloved community is not too hard to see and understand. But it is impossible to apply. We need a gospel greater than our sin. Only when the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes bigger than our cultural comforts and idols, only when his call to being spiritually and visibly united in the world is greater than our cultural controls, pride, anger and offenses, only then, according to Jesus, will the world know he was sent. Our unity that Christ accomplished on the cross is a miracle the world longs to behold.”

**- Craig Garriott**

“ When Psalm 51 says, ‘My sin is ever before me,’ the psalmist is saying he sees the wide effects his sin has caused. That’s why it is ever before him—this one sin spread like a pandemic. You can’t sin and control its spread. When white people think back on their ancestors’ sin, it is key that they understand old sins still have huge effects, besides their own personal sins of omission or commission regarding race. In order to humbly move forward, you must see how all the sin of racism is ever before us.”

**- Eric Mason**

## CONCLUSION

### Facts & Truth: A Prayer for a Hopeful Future

As I reflect on this report, my mind drifts back to April 12, 1860, when Jefferson Davis, the senator from Mississippi and future president of the Confederacy, laid his cards on the table and remarked, “This Government was not founded by negroes nor for negroes” but “by white men for white men.” Bristling against the “erroneous” idea of equality among the races, he pronounced the “inequality of the white and black races” was “stamped from the beginning.”<sup>17</sup>

Jefferson did not speak only for his fellow Mississippians—his bold declaration belied a truth in the souls of most of our white kin, below and above the Mason-Dixon. This great American sin would prompt the Bard of Harlem, Langston Hughes, to imagine a day in which he was no longer relegated to the “kitchen” of this country, but could boldly step out of inferiority and exclaim, “I, too, am America.”<sup>18</sup> And it was Jefferson Davis’ honesty which prompted the great Harlem writer, James Baldwin to mutually confess a hundred years later that “to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.”<sup>19</sup>

This matter of race nips at our heels to this day. Its presence is so pervasive and so thoroughly enmeshed within our culture, it becomes difficult to even explain its omnipresence outside of egregious atrocities. It

would be like trying to point out water to a fish.

As a black man, I have felt the stinging effects of our racialized society by some of our modern-day Jefferson Davises. I have also felt the flames of rage as James Baldwin describes. And I have found that neither posture is a tenable path forward.

This research provided by David Kinnaman and my friends at Barna Group is a beautiful gift to our world. Statisticians are akin to doctors who hold X-ray reports to the light and reveal the nature of our collective body. They deal with reality, with facts. This particular set of statistics reveals some facts both encouraging and troubling, when it comes to the Church’s pres-

**“The fact is race is still a reality which divides us. The truth is Jesus came to give us the ministry of reconciliation.”**

ent participation in racial justice. And while I am grateful for facts, as a Christ-follower, I am reminded that Jesus is the truth. Facts deal with reality, but truth navigates the complexities of that

reality and points us toward a hopeful future.

In other words: The fact is race is still a reality which divides us. The truth is Jesus came to give us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

The fact is many may choose to circumvent the uncomfortable nature of race. But the truth is Jesus chose to do the countercultural thing and take his Jewish band of followers directly into Samaria for a conversation with a marginalized minority (John 4).

The fact is reports like these can cause us to wonder if things will ever change, if this mountain is too high to scale. But the truth is that Jesus will do exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20–21).

I do not say these things to diminish the fine work of this Barna report. Oh, no, vision begins with reality—but hope hangs at a much higher altitude. Did we not see this with our beloved Dr. King, who on the eve of his demise prophetically declared how he had been to the mountaintop, and that while he may not get there with us, we would get there?

As you reach the end of these pages and begin to contend with the truths surrounding these realities and what they mean for you and the Church, I want to offer this prayer:

*Oh, Father, I do not pray for optimism, but for hope. Optimism is tethered to the vicissitudes of circumstances. Hope is anchored to Jesus. If Jesus can conquer death, racism is nothing for him. I thank you for the X-ray of this report. May we not lose heart. May we refuse the path of denial and the path of vengeance and unforgiveness. Instead, may we tread the way of love. Love resists passivity or colorblindness. Love, Father, is the garment Jesus wore. Love refuses to become bitter, and love resists thinking one is better. Help us to go the way of love, Father.*

Amen.

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**Bryan Loritts** serves the Abundant Life Christian Fellowship of Silicon Valley, California as the senior pastor. He is the award-winning author of six books, including *Saving the Saved*, which was given the Christianity Today Award of Merit, and his newest release, *Insider Outsider*. Bryan cofounded Fellowship Memphis in 2003 and later founded The Kainos Movement, an organization committed to seeing the multiethnic Church become the new normal in our world. He is the privileged husband of Korie and the graced father of three sons, Quentin, Myles and Jaden.



# Travel *The Mercy Journey* with Your Church or Organization

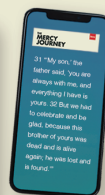
Scripture mandates that the people of God are to “love mercy” (Micah 6:8). Jesus once instructed a group of listeners to “go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’” (Matthew 9:13).

God desires his people to be living expressions of his mercy on earth. How can we honor his instruction? Where does mercy fit into our understanding of the gospel? How can we embrace mercy so it overflows into our actions, conversations and relationships?

New data from Barna Group show that the Church at large lacks consensus in answering these questions. Informed by these findings, Barna and The Reimagine Group have produced a comprehensive suite of tools that will help you lead your church, family or team to a deeper awareness and embrace of mercy—in your hearts, homes, churches and communities.

Shaped by the insights of ministry experts and practitioners, these tools include:

- Sermon development outlines created by a teaching pastor
- Small group discussion and leader guides
- Presentation slides and note-taking templates
- Customizable promotional images for social media, digital communications and print materials
- Video interviews with key faith and business leaders
- Weekly email templates to reinforce and encourage content engagement among your group
- *The Mercy Journey* workbooks for business leaders and families



To get access to these tools and deepen your experience, visit [www.barna.com/mercyjourney](http://www.barna.com/mercyjourney)

This holistic toolkit—the first of its kind from Barna—will maximize your ability to lead your church to embody the whole gospel.



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## GLOSSARY

### Faith Segments

**Practicing Christians** are self-identified Christians who say their faith is very important in their lives and have attended a worship service within the past month.

**Evangelicals** meet nine criteria, which include: having made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today; believing that, when they die, they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior; saying their faith is very important in their lives; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent on church attendance or denominational affiliation, and respondents are not asked to describe themselves as “evangelical.”

**Nominal Christians** identify as Christian, but have not made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and do not believe that,

when they die, they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.

### Generations

**Millennials** were born 1984 to 1998.

**Gen X** were born 1965 to 1983.

**Boomers** were born 1946 to 1964.

**Elders** were born before 1946.

### Ethnicity

Ethnicity is based on respondents’ self-descriptions of their ethnicity. Those who describe themselves as Hispanic plus another ethnicity are coded as Hispanic only. Barna usually segments the population by the three largest ethnic groups:

White / Caucasian

Black / African American

Hispanic / Latino

There are not always adequate sample sizes to report on all of these groups.

### Denominations

**Mainline** includes American Baptist Churches, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, United Church of Christ, United Methodist and Presbyterian Church, USA.

**Non-Mainline** includes Protestant churches not included in mainline denominations.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on quantitative surveys of 1,007 U.S. adults, 1,502 U.S. practicing Christian adults and 600 U.S. senior pastors of Protestant churches. Among pastors, Barna oversampled to include more perspectives of black pastors (100 respondents total). Interviews were completed online and by telephone between April and August 2018. The rate of error is +/- 2.3 percent for practicing Christians, 3.9 percent for pastors and 2.9 percent for the general population, at the 95 percent confidence level.

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

**Barna Group** is a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian Church. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than one million interviews in the course of hundreds of studies, and has become a go-to source for organizations that want to better understand a complex and changing world from a faith perspective. Barna's clients and partners include a broad range of academic institutions, churches, nonprofits and businesses, such as Alpha, the Templeton Foundation, Fuller Seminary, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Maclellan Foundation, DreamWorks Animation, Focus Features, Habitat for Humanity, The Navigators, NBC-Universal, the ONE Campaign, Paramount Pictures, the

Salvation Army, Walden Media, Sony and World Vision. The firm's studies are frequently quoted by major media outlets such as *The Economist*, BBC, CNN, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News, *Huffington Post*, *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

**[Barna.com](http://Barna.com)**

**The Reimagine Group** was formed in 2011 to provide a variety of video, books and study guide resources to help Christians grow and mature. Inspired by Jesus' words to his followers in Matthew 5, Reimagine has helped thousands of Christians to look at the deeper heart issues in life and "reimagine" generosity, stewardship, mission, overcoming fear, mercy and many other topics.

In 2018, Reimagine released *The Generosity Pivot*, building the case for the Church to adopt a more holistic, relational approach to generosity. Reimagine's founder and chairman, Jack Alexander, has written two books: *The God Guarantee: Finding Freedom from the Fear of Not Having Enough* (2017) and *The God Impulse: The Power of Mercy in an Unmerciful World* (2018).

**[TheReimagineGroup.com](http://TheReimagineGroup.com)**

# HALF OF PRACTICING CHRISTIANS SAY THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY STILL IMPACTS THE U.S.

August 2019 marks 400 years since European colonists purchased and enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia. In the span of those four centuries, the United States' history of injustice toward black Americans has been tumultuous. Discussions about both the problems behind and solutions to racism tend to produce their own divides—but, Barna data shows, many believe the Church has a meaningful role to play in reconciliation. This study asks pastors and practicing Christians, “Where do we go from here?”

Produced in partnership with The Reimagine Group, this special report assesses the nation's reputation of racism, past and present. Through articles, infographics and commentary, Barna offers:

- New data revealing pastors' and Christians' opinions about what—if anything—the Church should do about racial divisions
- Analysis about how views diverge by race, age, political ideology and denomination
- Insights from a panel of scholars and faith leaders, including: Claude Alexander, Andy Crouch, Heather Thompson Day, Craig Garriott, Maria Garriott, Stan Long, Bryan Loritts, Eric Mason, Nicola A. Menzie, Russell Moore, Alexia Salvatierra, Mark E. Strong, Nikki Toyama-Szeto, Michael Wear and Randy Woodley

Whether it represents a starting point or simply a next step for your church, *Where Do We Go from Here?* is intended to bring context to important conversations and contribute to a broader understanding of race relations in our present moment.

Learn more about *The Mercy Journey* collection at [barna.com/mercyjourney](https://barna.com/mercyjourney).



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