



**IS EVERYONE  
A RACIST?**

**What is God's Heart on ...**

Prejudice, Anger, Forgiveness, Identity & Self Image



| **Hope for the Heart**



# Hope for the Heart

Dear Friend,

The times are tense these days, to say the least. It seems like every day our newsfeed is filled with heated arguments, division, hostility, and even acts of violence over the issue of racism. There seems to be no end in sight and no clear answers on how to move forward. Is there hope for change . . . for peace?

*Yes!*

In these divisive times, we need to look to God's Word—not just to find answers and solutions—but also to help process our emotions and to remind ourselves of who we are in God's eyes. That is why this resource contains biblical truths on the topics of Prejudice, Anger, Forgiveness, and Identity & Self-Image. We hope this resource will help you navigate the issue of racism and equip you to help others as well.

Thank you and God bless,

The Hope for the Heart Team

*“For he himself [Jesus] is our peace,  
who has made the two groups one  
and has destroyed the barrier,  
the dividing wall of hostility.”*

(Ephesians 2:14)

# PREJUDICE

## *How to Be a Barrier Breaker*

### What Is God's Heart On Prejudice?

If you could hear Jesus praying, what do you imagine He would be praying about? Would it be to end all of the pain and suffering in the world? Or to right all of the wrongs that have been done? The truth is, we don't have to guess.

Hours before He was betrayed, arrested, beaten, and crucified . . . Jesus was praying. As the Son of God, He could ask for anything and it would be done. Yet considering what He was about to face, it is remarkable that Jesus prayed for unity (see John 17:20–23). He prayed that the unity of the church would be a signpost to the world—pointing to His reconciling work and God's love.

Pride and prejudice, therefore, have no place in the Christian life, and they must be fought with humility and unity that is rooted in Christ. Prejudice is no minor sin or small issue to overlook. It's an affront to the character of God, who shows no partiality or favoritism. It's an affront to His creation, as He made all people in His image—equal in value, dignity, and worth. And prejudice is an affront to God's plan, because Jesus came to love, reconcile, and unite people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

*"I am praying not only for these disciples  
but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.  
I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one . . .*

*May they experience such perfect unity  
that the world will know that you sent me  
and that you love them as much as you love me."*

(JOHN 17:20: 21, 23 NLT)

God created all people in His image.

*"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them"* (GENESIS 1:27).

God does not favor one people over another.

*"For God does not show favoritism"* (ROMANS 2:11).

God brings peace and unites people together through Christ.

*"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility"* (EPHESIANS 2:14).

God sees prejudicial behavior as sinful.

*"But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers"* (JAMES 2:9).

God understands the pain of prejudice.

*"He [Jesus] was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem"* (ISAIAH 53:3).

God extends the free gift of salvation to all through Christ.

*“There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone”* (1 TIMOTHY 2:5–6 NLT).

God wants us to do good to all people.

*“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”* (GALATIANS 6:10).

God wants us to live peacefully and humbly with others, regardless of their status or position.

*“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation”* (ROMANS 12:16 CSB).

God wants us to spread the good news of Jesus to all nations.

*“It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent’”* (LUKE 24:47 NLT).

God will fill heaven with people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

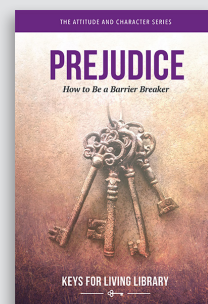
*“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’”* (REVELATION 7:9–10).

## Go Deeper

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# ANGER

## *Facing the Fire Within*

### What Is God's Heart on Anger?

Forest rangers who care for and protect national parks occasionally say they have to “start a fire to stop a fire.” These backfires help deprive the main fire of fuel and better enable forest rangers and firefighters to contain the blaze. God can work for our good in much the same way.

Anger, like fire, can be dangerous. If not kept in check, it can get out of control, damaging and destroying our lives and relationships. But just like fire, anger can be used for good purposes.

The Bible reveals the wisdom of God's counsel on anger.

*“To God belong wisdom and power;  
counsel and understanding are his.”  
(JOB 12:13)*

**Anger** is a God-given emotion. God Himself experiences anger.

*“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (EXODUS 34:6–7).*

**Anger** itself is not a sin but what you do with it can lead to sin.

*“In your anger do not sin” (EPHESIANS 4:26).*

**Anger** can propel you to action—to correct an injustice.

*“He [Jesus] looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, ‘Hold out your hand.’ So the man held out his hand, and it was restored!” (MARK 3:5 NLT).*

**Anger** can be learned behavior, so be careful whom you befriend.

*“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared” (PROVERBS 22:24–25).*

**Anger** can lead to abusive language.

*“You must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (COLOSSIANS 3:8).*

**Anger** can lead to fighting.

*“An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin” (PROVERBS 29:22 NLT).*

**God wants** you to be slow to anger.

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (JAMES 1:19–20).*

**God wants** you to refrain from anger.

*“Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil” (PSALM 37:8).*

**God wants** you to deal with your anger quickly.

*“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (EPHESIANS 4:26).*

**God wants** you to free yourself from anger.

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (EPHESIANS 4:31).*

**God wants** you to talk to Him about your anger.

*“In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free” (PSALM 118:5 NLT).*

**God wants** you to be saved through faith in Christ so you do not experience His anger.

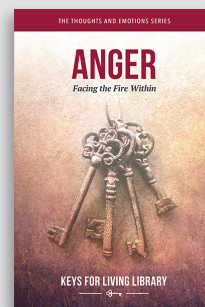
*“God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:9).*

## Go Deeper

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# FORGIVENESS

*Releasing You Is Freeing Me*

## What Is God's Heart on Forgiveness?

For many, the thought of forgiveness can be outrageous at first. The pain and damage caused by others can leave long-lasting wounds and lingering consequences. Forgiving can sometimes seem unthinkable, unfair, and impossibly wrong.

However, forgiveness is at the heart of God's character, the heart of why Jesus came, and the heart of your healing, growth, and freedom. Choosing to forgive others is not about letting them "off the hook" or ignoring the pain and damage that's been done. Forgiveness is about walking in God's grace, living in freedom, and moving forward with hope. Forgiveness is a difficult process, but God is with you every step of the way to help you and heal you.

*"For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you."  
(Isaiah 41:13)*

**God wants** us to forgive each other because He has forgiven us.

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (EPHESIANS 4:32).*

**God wants** us to forgive others in the same way He forgives us.

*"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (COLOSSIANS 3:13).*

**God wants** us to see unforgiveness as sin.

*"If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (JAMES 4:17).*

**God wants** us to get rid of unforgiveness and have a heart of mercy.

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (MATTHEW 5:7).*

**God wants** us to do our part to live in peace with everyone.

*"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (ROMANS 12:18).*

**God wants** us to overcome evil with good.

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (ROMANS 12:21).*

**God wants** us to be ministers of reconciliation.

*"God . . . reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19).*

**God wants** us to forgive others so we will not become bitter.

*“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many”*  
(HEBREWS 12:15).

**God wants** us to forgive others so we will accurately reflect the character of Jesus.

*“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”* (EPHESIANS 5:1–2).

## How to Forgive

Think about forgiveness as *releasing* your offender. When we don’t forgive, it’s like we’re holding onto bitterness, holding onto the pain, and holding onto the offender. When we forgive, we release our resentment, our pain, and our offender into the hands of God. Forgiveness is difficult, but it is possible by God’s grace. His grace helps you heal from past wounds and empowers you to forgive. So when you find yourself struggling to forgive, reflect on God’s grace and He will help you walk in the freedom of forgiveness.

*“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*  
(Hebrews 4:16)

## Prayer to Forgive Your Offender

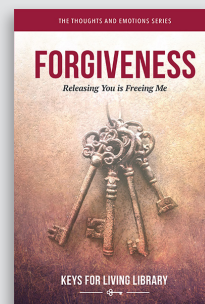
*“Lord Jesus, thank you for caring about how much my heart has been hurt.  
You know the pain I have felt because of ( list every offense ).  
Right now I release all that pain into your hands.  
Thank you, Lord, for dying on the cross for me and extending your forgiveness to me.  
As an act of my will, I choose to forgive ( name ).  
Right now, I release ( name ) to you and refuse all thoughts of revenge.  
I trust that in your time and in your way, you will deal with ( name ) as you see fit.  
And Lord, thank you for giving me your power to forgive so that I can be set free.  
In your precious name I pray. Amen.”*

### Go Deeper

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# IDENTITY & SELF-IMAGE

*Knowing What's True about You*

## What Is God's Heart on Your Identity?

Paul had it all—born into the right family, educated by the best teachers, and held the top status job and position in his culture as a religious teacher, a Pharisee. He said, *“I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault”* (Philippians 3:5–6 NLT).

His identity was wrapped up in where he was born, who he knew, and what he did. But that all changed when he met Jesus. Paul continues, *“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”* (Philippians 3:7–8 NLT).

As Paul compared his past identity to his identity in Christ, there was no contest. He even says about his former accolades and accomplishments: *“I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him”* (Philippians 3:8–9).

When you are *“found in him,”* everything changes. The identity you receive in Christ far outweighs any other identity you may have. Your gender, your family, your age, race, culture, school, job, accomplishments, status, and hobbies may all reveal important aspects about you—but they are not where your ultimate identity is found. Your identity is to be rooted in Christ.

*“Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.*

*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him.*

*Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught,  
and you will overflow with thankfulness.”*

(COLOSSIANS 2:6–7 NLT)

### **You are loved.**

*“God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people”* (1 THESSALONIANS 1:4 NLT).

### **You are chosen.**

*“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes”* (EPHESIANS 1:4 NLT).

### **You are accepted.**

*“Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory”* (ROMANS 15:7 NLT).

### **You are redeemed.**

*“But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you . . . he who formed you . . . ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine’”* (ISAIAH 43:1).

### **You are precious.**

*“You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you”* (ISAIAH 43:4 NLT).

### **You are forgiven.**

*“You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins” (COLOSSIANS 2:13 NLT).*

### **You are cleansed.**

*“But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 CORINTHIANS 6:11 NLT).*

### **You are renewed.**

*“Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 NLT).*

### **You are empowered.**

*“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 PETER 1:3).*

### **You are gifted.**

*“In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well” (ROMANS 12:6 NLT).*

### **You are useful.**

*“We are God’s handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (EPHESIANS 2:10).*

### **You are blessed.**

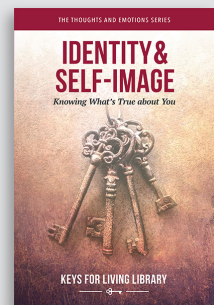
*“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ” (EPHESIANS 1:3 NLT).*

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# 4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, *there is hope*. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will accept His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,  
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future.’”  
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

## God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (John 3:16–17).

What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (John 10:10).

## The Problem: *Sin*

What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (Romans 7:18–19 NLT).

What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *“Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God”* (Isaiah 59:2). Scripture also says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

## God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .”* (Acts 16:31).

## Your Part: *Surrender*

Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (Matthew 16:24–26).

Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you’ve humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

*“God, I want a real relationship with you.  
I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go my own way instead of your way.  
Please forgive me for my sins.  
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.  
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.  
Change me from the inside out and make me the person  
you created me to be.  
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”*

## What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me  
has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”*  
(John 5:24)

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