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United Church of God, *an International Association*



# **Interracial Marriage**

## *Study Paper*

*Approved by the Council of Elders*  
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All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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God is calling people from different ethnic, social and economic backgrounds to the knowledge of His truth and way of life. Our young people are growing up in a world that is constantly changing. The established truths forming the foundation of moral behavior are increasingly viewed as irrelevant and subject to popular acceptance and fashion. The teachings of the United Church of God, on the other hand, must be drawn from the Scriptures rather than public or personal opinion or ever-changing social custom.

In modern culture as well as within the Church, there are differing views on interracial marriage. Some see it as sin, while others are of the opinion that one should be free to marry anyone from any ethnic or racial group. What do the Scriptures have to say about race relations, and more specifically, what do they say about interracial marriage?

### **Where Did the Races Originate?**

God is the creator of the races. All mankind, regardless of color or characteristics, came from the same original parents.

In the creation account God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27). All mankind sprang from this event, and all have the same original parents. This point is made once again in Genesis 3:20 where Eve is credited with being the mother of all living.

Though thousands of years passed between creation and the New Testament era, the teaching was the same. As Paul was fulfilling his commission, preaching to the gentile world, he reminded a Greek audience, who by tradition saw themselves as a special creation and all other men as barbarian, that in fact all men had a common origin. In Acts 17:26 Paul said, “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.”

Despite the differences that exist between the various races, they are all children of Adam and Eve and spring from a common blood.

### **What Is “Race?”**

While we are all of one blood, all springing from Adam and Eve, we are not all of one race as people commonly think of race. What do we usually think of when we think of different races? The *New Dictionary of the American Language* defines race as “any of the different varieties of mankind, distinguished by form of hair, color of skin and eyes, stature, bodily proportions, etc.” For most of humanity the concept of race is tied primarily to physical characteristics, i.e., skin color, texture of hair and shape of eyes.

While men focus on these qualities, the Bible rarely draws attention to the appearance either of individuals or groups. It talks about the different groups and nations of humanity largely in terms of religious practice, family heritage, geographical setting or language. Rare are the references to skin color or other racial characteristics.

Though incidental to this topical study, since all the candidates were members of one family, it is still instructive to see God's comments to Samuel as he fulfilled the task of selecting David to be king of Israel.

**1 Samuel 16:6-7:** "So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab [David's older brother] and said, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'"

Seeing the mind of God in this account, it is not strange that Scripture devotes very little space to the description of various racial characteristics.

As we move from creation to the time immediately following the Flood when the earth was being repopulated, we come to Genesis 10 and the genealogy called the "Table of Nations." The table concludes in verse 32: "These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood."

Genesis 10:5, 20 and 31 tell us that the descendants of Noah's three sons were divided linguistically ("languages"), geographically ("lands" or "countries") and ethnically ("families" and "nations"). Therefore, nationality, language and geographical boundaries are to be associated with one another as, say, the Chinese who speak Chinese and who inhabit China, when we think of a particular race of people.

It was here following the Flood that God divided men, by language and family, and scattered them across the earth. For more on the "Table of Nations" and other pertinent information, see "Appendix: Interracial Marriage and the Bible."

### **Israel and Its Relationship With Other Nations and Races**

Several hundred years following the Flood and the division of the nations, God selected a chosen people, Israel, and brought them out of Egypt to settle the land promised to their father Abraham. God instructed them about their relationship with the nations around them as they were arriving in the wilderness and 40 years later as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.

How did God feel about their relations with other peoples? God commanded them to have nothing to do with the gods of the surrounding nations, and told them not to go to other nations to learn how to worship. He also expressed deep contempt for the nations

that attempted to thwart Israel's march to the Promised Land. But what about people of other nations who came to them in peace? What about people who chose to become part of Israel and Israel's way of life? What relationships were they to have? Were these people allowed to marry native-born Israelites?

Israel departed from Egypt accompanied by a multitude of people from various backgrounds who, for whatever reason, chose to leave Egypt with Israel. Exodus 12:36-38 gives the following record:

“And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, beside children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock.”

Egypt was the political and economic hub of the world at that time, and people of many different backgrounds and races were drawn to it. It is most likely this same mix existed in the mixed multitude that accompanied Israel out of Egypt.

Israel's relationship with this mixed multitude of people was governed by the words of God spoken later in the same chapter.

**Exodus 12:48-49:** “And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

If a gentile converted to worshipping the true God and, therefore, would not turn away the hearts of Israelites, he was treated as a full-fledged Israelite since the circumcised gentile was treated “as a native of the land.” At the time of the writing of this directive the rules would have applied to the mixed multitude that had come out of Egypt with them. Conversely, we see in this and other passages that uncircumcised strangers did not share the same native rights.

What about later directions regarding the peoples of surrounding lands with whom Israel came in contact?

### **Deuteronomy and Marriages With Gentile Converts**

While Exodus records the directions from God to Israel as they were leaving Egypt and entering the wilderness, Deuteronomy addresses the next generation of Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.

In Deuteronomy 21, God addresses marrying women taken captive in warfare with the surrounding nations.

**Deuteronomy 21:10-14:** “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.”

An Israelite was allowed to marry a female (gentile) “prisoner-of-war.” Nothing was said by God about race when giving these directions. There was no need to address her religion since, in the culture of that time, she would be considered as Israelite property, and required to adopt the religion of Israel, thus satisfying the spirit of the demands in Exodus 12:48-49. Such marriages between an Israelite and a gentile prisoner were therefore allowed.

There was no change in the fundamental principle between the earlier instruction of Exodus and the later instruction of Deuteronomy. Exodus stated that a person circumcised was to be treated as a native of the land. Deuteronomy refers to this relationship as being a part of the congregation or assembly of the LORD. Being a part of the congregation of the LORD led to certain rights and privileges.

To “enter into the congregation of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 23:8, KJV) is not just speaking of attending “Church services” with Israelites. This status refers to the rights that were extended to converts after circumcision. These rights included, among other things, the right to marry.

*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* says:

“ . . . To ‘**enter into the congregation of the Lord**’ means either admission to public honors and **offices in the Church** and State of Israel, or, in the case of **foreigners**, incorporation with that nation **by circumcision or by marriage**. The rule was that strangers and foreigners, for fear of friendship or **marriage connections** with them leading the people into idolatry, were **not admissible until their conversion** to the Jewish faith” (Deuteronomy 23:1, 1997 by Biblesoft).

The following passages give other examples using the general principle that foreigners who become a part of Israel are to be treated as equals under the law along with native-born Israelites.

**Leviticus 19:33-34:** “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

**Numbers 15:14-16:** “And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.”

**Ezekiel 47:21-23:** “Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. **They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel;** they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,’ says the Lord God.”

### **Some Allowed Into the Congregation; Others Excluded**

A study of Deuteronomy shows that God allowed some into the congregation of Israel from outside and excluded others. Race was not a factor in determining who was allowed to enter and who was not. The determiner was how the other nation or ethnic group had treated Israel. Notice again Deuteronomy 23:7-8:

**Deuteronomy 23:7-8:** “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.”

The children of Edom were descendants of Esau, the grandson of Abraham, and therefore were brothers of Israel racially. The Egyptians were descendants of Ham, father of the black races. The Hebrew word for Egypt is Mizraim, “the second son of Ham, as well as the name of his descendants and the country where they lived. Mizraim apparently was the ancestor of the Egyptians. In the Old Testament the nation of Egypt is sometimes called Mizraim” (*Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986). They were allowed into the congregation of Israel because Israel had been well treated by them in time of famine, and they had been allowed in as immigrants.

Conversely, Deuteronomy shows that some peoples were not allowed into the congregation or assembly of Israel.

**Deuteronomy 23:3:** “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever.”

These peoples were very close to Israel racially, coming from Abraham’s nephew Lot. Their exclusion was not based on race, but rather the poor treatment they had given Israel while in the wilderness.

The *Soncino Commentary* sums up these passages in this manner:

“Deuteronomy 23:6, explains the exclusion of the Ammonites and Moabites in this manner: ‘6. *thou shalt not seek their peace.*’ Since the Ammonites and Moabites had destroyed their bond of kinship with Israel by their cruel behaviour, Israel is no longer bound by any ties of relationship to seek their well-being as kinsmen.

“Verses 7-8 deal with the Edomite and Egyptian. ‘7. *thou shalt not abhor an Edomite...an Egyptian.*’ These two nations, although they oppressed Israel, were not to be excluded from the community after three generations, because the former was descended from Abraham and the latter gave Israel’s ancestors hospitality in a time of famine. ‘8. *the children of the third generation.*’ i.e. the third generation of an Edomite or an Egyptian who had become a proselyte. Men of other nations, who had not dealt harshly with Israel, may be accepted at once.”

There is no record of race being a factor in determining who could and who could not become a part of the congregation of Israel as a proselyte. The conversion of gentiles to the way of God was a positive event that would give them equality under the law along with native-born Israelites and would impact every aspect of their life in the community. This does not mean that God was trying to promote marriages between native-born Israelites and these gentiles. He merely gave the general principle of equality under the law for Israel to implement. To “enter the assembly of the LORD” does not always include the issue of marriage.

### **Leviticus 19:19 Mixing Livestock, Seed and Linen**

“You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your *livestock breed with another kind*. You shall not sow your field with *mixed seed*. Nor shall a garment of *mixed linen and wool* come upon you.”

Does interracial marriage contradict this passage? This passage is explicitly about animals, seed and clothing. There is no mention of human beings or marriage. In addition, God created only one *mankind*, from which every race has its origin. All *mankind* is made in God’s image. Interracial marriage occurs *within* mankind and is not being referred to in Leviticus 19:19.

### **The Church's Attitude Toward Race in Modern Times**

The example of both Old and New Testament Scriptures shows an acceptance of people from all walks of life who come to embrace the religion of the God of Abraham. These proselytes of Old Testament times and converts to the New Testament Church were supposed to be treated with respect and as equals before God. As is stated in Acts 10:34-35, "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'"

As the brethren of the Church, we are to take our lead from God and treat people of all races and cultures with dignity, civility and honor. To disrespect or practice any form of prejudice based upon race or ethnicity is to dishonor God and His creation.

While Scripture teaches that respect should be shown to members of all races, what about marriage between the races in the Church?

When searching the Bible for teachings on the subject of interracial marriage, we simply do not find that the Scriptures speak either for or against it. Since the Scriptures choose not to take a stand on the matter, what then should our conduct be? Our personal view of this sometimes emotional subject usually springs from our upbringing, our personal attitudes or our cultural background. However, these should not be the basis for making a proper determination.

### **Interracial Marriage—Considerations**

The Bible does not speak for or against marriage between the races, nor does it imply the practice is a sin. The Scriptures however do exhort an individual to seek one in the faith to marry, and they do condemn interreligious marriage (Ezra 10:18-19; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Paul's observation on another matter may bear consideration concerning interracial dating and marriage. Paul pointed out, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful" (1 Corinthians 6:12). What may be permissible may not be wise. The idea that an interracially married couple can go anywhere or live happily anywhere they wish is, sadly, a myth. There are areas of the world where interracial marriage brings about strife and hardships for the couple, their children, as well as their extended families. There are hate groups who incite acts of violence against people who date or marry one of a different race or culture. Of course, the United Church of God teaches that there should be no prejudice against individuals who have chosen to marry someone of a different race nor should there be any prejudice against their children.

Most people in the Church prefer to marry within their own race, and rear a family racially and culturally similar to them. The majority of parents desire their children to marry within their race, not because they are racist, but in part because they



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desire their grandchildren to be racially similar to themselves. Even couples who marry within the same race, but have different cultures, can face unique challenges in marriage. When couples of two different races are married, those challenges may increase to yet another level.

Every newly married couple faces challenges, and the fewer those challenges are, the better the chance for a successful and fulfilling marriage. It has been shown that compatibility in core areas such as spiritual belief, religious practice, family customs, general approach to life, child rearing practices, handling of finances, etc., increases the probability of happiness and success in marriage.

Though there are no two people totally alike in every area, the potential for a successful marriage is greater when a couple has many things in common. Members considering marriage to a person of a different race are asked to consider the wishes and opinions of their families before making a decision. A marriage not only brings two people together, but their extended families as well. Potential conflict and uneasiness should not be ignored or minimized.

The couple considering an interracial marriage should not be quick to label a family or even other members of the Church as being prejudiced or racist because they may not be in agreement with the couple's decision. The couple must remember that the subject of interracial marriage is often a sensitive and emotionally driven issue. Likewise, given that God permitted marriages between Israelites and gentile converts, those who are married interracially should not be treated as though God is frowning upon their marriage.

While interracial marriage is not defined in Scripture as a sin, the ministry would be remiss if it did not point out the tremendous challenges and potential risks inherent in interracial marriage. The role of the ministry is to serve and protect the flock of God, and therefore it has the responsibility of pointing out potential trouble spots in any premarital counseling, whether they are financial, spiritual, cultural or racial in nature. But the decision to marry or not to marry remains with the couple and their families.

Since there is no scriptural recommendation for, nor prohibition against, interracial marriage, the Church considers race one of the major factors to be taken into account when determining the couple's marital compatibility. The decision to marry should come after wise counsel, and thoroughly weighing all factors to determine whether a given marriage should be encouraged or discouraged.

## **Appendix: Interracial Marriage and the Bible**

The “Table of Nations” tells us the source of the many diverse families. It does not (nor does any other scripture) address the variations in physical characteristics in humans today. The Bible does not deal with the modern physical features of races, except occasionally in regard to stature. To use the term *race* in a biblical sense is to refer to lineage, not to physical characteristics.

Dealing with lineage, let us address the question from a biblical perspective—is interracial marriage a *sin*?

We begin with the premise that all people living today are descended from the peoples, tribes or nations listed in Genesis 10, the “Table of Nations.” The table taken to the second generation is as follows:

<b>Japheth</b>	<b>Ham</b>	<b>Shem</b>
Gomer	Cush	Elam
Magog	Mizraim	Asshur
Madai	Phut	Arphaxad
Javan	Canaan	Lud
Tubal		Aram
Meshech		
Tiras		

Looking at the Bible and other biblical sources (such as Bible dictionaries and commentaries), the following can be concluded:

Among the descendants of Japheth, Madai is the father of the Medes and Javan is the father of the Greeks. Next are the descendants of Ham. Cush is associated with Ethiopia; Mizraim is clearly Egypt in the Bible. Phut is associated with Libya. Some of the descendants of Canaan are the Jebusites, Amorites and Hittites.

Among the descendants of Shem, Asshur is Assyria, Lud is Lydia and Aram is Syria. Arphaxad is ancestor to Abraham; therefore his descendants include the Hebrews, the Ishmaelites, the Midianites and the Edomites. The Moabites and Ammonites are descended from Abraham’s nephew Lot.

We can certainly speculate about the descendants of other individuals, but the identities so far will suffice for our topic.

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The next chart sheds further light on the descendants of Japheth, Ham and Shem.

Japheth	Ham	Shem
Medes	Ethiopian	Assyrian
Greeks	Egyptian	Israelite
	Libyan	Ishmaelite
	Canaanite	Midianite
	Amorite	Moabite
	Hittite	Ammonite
	Philistine	Edomite
		Syrian

With this chart in mind, we present a brief list of the “interracial” marriages, betrothals and relationships found in the Bible.

One might consider a marriage between any two of the three main lines, such as between Hebrew and Egyptian (Shemite and Hamite) or Hebrew and Oriental (Shemite and Japhethite) as an interracial marriage, rather than a marriage between two nationalities of the same main line such as Hebrew and Moabite (both Shemite), though the Bible itself appears indifferent to this kind of distinction. All nationalities in the list are Hebrew where the nationality is not cited.

1. Genesis 16:3-4: Abraham conceives Ishmael through Hagar (Egyptian).
2. Genesis 21:21: Ishmael takes an Egyptian wife.
3. Genesis 26:34: Esau takes two Hittite wives.
4. Genesis 28:9: Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael.
5. Genesis 34: Jacob’s sons pretend to give their sister, Dinah, to a Canaanite prince.
6. Genesis 38:2: Judah takes a Canaanite wife.
7. Genesis 41:45: Joseph marries the daughter of an Egyptian priest.
8. Exodus 2:21: Moses marries Zipporah (Midianite).
9. Numbers 12:1: Moses marries an Ethiopian.
10. Numbers 31:18: Hebrews allowed to retain Midianite virgins after attacking and slaughtering the Midianites.
11. Deuteronomy 21:10-14: Hebrews permitted to marry virgin captives (of any lineage) from any future conquests outside Canaan.
12. Joshua 6:25 and Matthew 1:5: Salmon marries Rahab (Canaanite).
13. 2 Samuel 3:3: David marries Maacah (Geshurite, one of the unconquered peoples east of the Jordan) who becomes the mother of Absalom.
14. 2 Samuel 11:3: Bathsheba marries Uriah (Hittite).
15. 1 Kings 3:1: Solomon marries Pharaoh’s daughter (Egyptian).
16. 1 Kings 11:1-3: Solomon had many foreign wives and concubines.
17. 1 Kings 16:31: Ahab marries Jezebel (Phoenician).

This next list deals with prohibitions of marriage in ancient Israel because of the difference in religion.

1. Exodus 12:48-49: A stranger, regardless of race, if he accepts God's way of life and is circumcised, can partake of the Passover, and be considered a part of God's people.
2. Exodus 34:12-16: Israelites are to make no covenants with the Canaanites, including marriage, lest the following result: "Your sons might marry those foreign women, who would lead them to be unfaithful to me and to worship their pagan gods" (Exodus 34:16, TEV).
3. Deuteronomy 7:3-4: Israelites are forbidden to marry the Canaanites for religious reasons. "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods."
4. Joshua 6:25 and Matthew 1:5: Israelite marries a Canaanite who accepts the true faith. This is the example of Rahab and Salmon.
5. Joshua 23:12: Israelites are forbidden to marry any of the Canaanites who may survive the occupation of the Promised Land.
6. Ezra 10:18: This is a condemnation of the marriages between Jews and their pagan wives, rightly called interreligious marriages. This must be understood in light of Ezra 9:10-12, "For we have forsaken Your commandments, which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons...'" (See Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:3-4; 12:30-31.)
7. Nehemiah.10:30: The people vow not to marry pagan foreigners.

The above list of prohibitions against these marriages shows that the reason, where expressed, is to protect the religious purity of the descendants of Abraham. Eventually, any stranger of whatever race, upon accepting the true faith and becoming circumcised, was fully integrated into Israelite society.

There is nothing in the New Testament indicating that racial intermarriage is a sin. From what we have been able to discover, the subject is not addressed at all.

Nonetheless, some have asked whether the section in Acts 17:26-27 deals with intermarriage relations. The passage reads, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." We find Paul explaining to the Athenians the following biblical truths:

1. The Athenians, who thought they were superior to other men because the first humans allegedly originated from Athenian soil, were actually of the same

origin as other men, having all descended from the same bloodline of the first pair of humans. Thus, there is no such thing as the superiority of a specific race.

2. God is in charge of the rise and fall of nations according to His divine purpose and not by chance. He is carrying out a divine master plan here on earth.
3. God has established where nations would dwell, including the Athenians, according to His will. This would include the migrations of different peoples until they settled down where God ultimately had determined it.
4. One of the reasons for establishing boundaries among nations was so they could eventually be brought the gospel, as Paul was doing with the Athenians, according to God's timetable.
5. Paul mentions God established geographical boundaries that identify the people living within them, but he does not address the intermarriage of people in this section, only God's purpose in calling mankind from their different lands.

From this passage in Acts, we therefore cannot conclude that geographical boundaries that identify the nations do somehow become racial boundaries that prohibit interracial marriage.

**Summary:**

1. God created the different "racial" groups.
2. All "racial" groups come from the three sons of Noah.
3. Scripture indicates that God divided humanity by language, geography and family.
4. The biblical idea of race deals with family and not physical features.
5. Scripture does not teach against "interracial" marriage.
6. Scripture does teach against interreligious marriage because it led Israel away from God. (For more information on the subject of "Marrying Outside the Faith," please see the study paper by the same name. This paper is available on the Church's Web site [www.ucg.org/papers](http://www.ucg.org/papers).)

We see an example of concern about marrying a foreign wife when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac in Genesis 24:3-4: "... and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

We later find Isaac and Rebekah greatly displeased when Esau took a wife from the Hittites (Genesis 26:34-35), and Aaron and Miriam upset about Moses marrying a Cushite, while not being particularly concerned with him marrying a Midianite (Numbers 12:1). In each of these examples, we find family involvement and preference in marital matters. There is no scriptural evidence that skin color was the defining factor in any of these cases where marital customs and practices were being entered into.

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Genesis 11 describes the time when God separated family groups from each other. Humanity stated, "...Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (verse 4). Apparently humans wanted to remain unified and reside in one area, yet God saw that this would not be good. "Indeed, the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6). Technological development, accompanied by spiritual rebellion, would likely have caused an exponential increase in human suffering and death.

So God separated peoples from each other by giving various families different languages. God said, "'Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city" (Genesis 11:7-8). God used language to forcefully separate mankind, and to hinder the "progress" they would have otherwise made. Rather than separating peoples to prevent interracial marriage, this scripture shows God separated peoples to prevent communication and cooperation that encouraged sinful pride, vanity and rebellion against God.