



Harding University  
**Scholar Works at Harding**

---

John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence

John Allen Chalk

---

2-18-1971

From/To: H.E. Steele (Chalk's reply filed first)

H.E. Steele

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/hst-chalk-personal>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Steele, H. (1971). From/To: H.E. Steele (Chalk's reply filed first). Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/hst-chalk-personal/3290>

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the John Allen Chalk at Scholar Works at Harding. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence by an authorized administrator of Scholar Works at Harding. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@harding.edu](mailto:scholarworks@harding.edu).



February 18, 1971

Mr. H. E. Steele  
1295 Homer Street  
Memphis, Tennessee 38122

Dear Harry:

Your letter of February 7 saddened me. However, I can't honestly say that I was surprised. The developments following the forum are similar to those that I see occurring all over the country, and not just in regard to the subject of race relations.

I think your experiences since the forum bear out the problem we have culturally. Simply because spiritual principles are recognized, and even given lip service, the fact remains that most of us within the church are culturally dominated. I mean by that that our attitudes and actions are those superimposed upon us by the larger culture outside, rather than created by a thrilling, personally dynamic daily relationship with God. I think you have seen that. It is not at all surprising that the Vance Avenue brethren, including Brother E. L. Yelladell, would appear so distant. I do not think this is deliberate but I do think it is clear evidence of their cultural insulation. We simply can't expect them to move in unfamiliar territory where, for the most part, they are not welcomed.

I think what this does mean is that your best service as a committed Christian is the kind you mentioned in your letter. Your getting a black secretary, the work you are doing with a black young man on probation, your continued visits to black churches is your answer. I am not sure, Harry, what it's going to take to break down these walls.

I carry a burden just as heavy today as the one I have for the racism in the church and that is our spiritual deadness. Everywhere I go I see churches either dead or dying. Our people simply do not have a thrilling, daily-refreshed, vital relationship with God. They do not know what it is to be consciously under the Lordship of Jesus and to have God's Holy Spirit living in them. These are truths clearly taught on every page of God's Word. Yet, we have been content with being in "the right church" and knowing intellectually what the Bible says without really experiencing a personal relationship with God.

C  
O  
P  
Y



Page 2, Mr. H. E. Steele

I think our responsibility first is to be committed Christians personally and individually, to continue to work at our own relationship with God and to deliberately place ourselves under the rule of Jesus every day. Second, our responsibility calls for any work or any contribution that can change "the structure" so that it is more New Testament in its nature and content. I think those are the things you are doing, and what I have to say is, do not become too discouraged but realistically realize that the battle will be lifelong and difficult. I pray that Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3:14-21 is a reality in your life today and in the days ahead.

Your brother,

John Allen Chalk

JAC:lc

C  
O  
P  
Y

H. E. Steehe  
1295 Homer St.,  
Memphis, Tenn. 38122

February 7, 1971

Dear John Allen:

Almost four months have passed since our forum on race relations and I wish I could say that I feel it has changed things for the better. It almost seems as if it went the other way and solidified both sides into a determination to go their separate ways.

Many things are rather hard to understand: For one thing, none of the papers would give it any publicity, even Christian Echo, which constantly runs articles which say, in effect, that nothing is being done and that all white people are alike. I even met Brother Hogan personally and then wrote him full details. Nevertheless, he was no different from others.

After the forum was over, the elders at Vance Avenue were to call a followup meeting and I even reminded Brother Yelldell of this, but it was never called. We visited Vance Avenue two or three times and also had the Yelldell family as our guests at Macon Road and then to our house for a snack afterwards (Sunday night when Nekomis was not preaching), but have not even heard from them since, even though this has been around two months ago. There does not seem to be any communication at all now, or at least I have not heard of any recently. Of course, when the forum was over, I asked our elders to write the elders at Vance Avenue when they settled up the finances and thank them, etc., which they did. No mention since.

I will continue my personal efforts to try to improve conditions in this terribly important area where we are all being so un-Christian, but as far as church activity along this line, there seems to be little use at this time. I will have a black secretary ~~March 1st~~ March 1st. She is a highly-qualified lady who has been with our company some time and passed over for promotion before because of her race. She is most grateful and I know will do a good job. I also have a little black boy who is on probation from Juvenile Court and I have been working with him for several months and I believe he is going to turn out alright. I will continue to visit the "black" churches from time to time. All of this is not much, but, like the forum, maybe it will help someone a little.

I hope to see you again one of these days and, again, my thoughts and prayers are with you. I hope you will always continue to go straight down the road your Christian principles tells you to go regardless of any consequences and I know all will be well. Again, I felt you did a fine job at our forum. Haven't had anything from Jack Evans. Write me a few lines when you have time.

Your friend, *Harry*

(over)

J.A.

You can tell from this letter that I do not have anyone to talk to about this matter. I had hoped the forum might put me in touch with a few kindred spirits.

Jf.