

# Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation

## Part 1

**Thesis:** We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression, especially of black people.

**Text:** Isaiah 1:17; 58:5-12; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-40; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 18:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Romans 12:9-21

I want to share what I am thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation. We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression, especially of black people.

I want to start with 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, because I believe in Jesus, in his leadership, and in his power to reconcile all things to God, including heaven, earth, and people. It is through the help, hope, and leadership of Jesus that we can work effectively toward racial unity and reconciliation.

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view [or after the flesh]. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:14-21 NIV).*

Summary: Christ's love compels us. We no longer regard others from a worldly point of view. We are changed. We are new creations in Christ. And, we are part of his new creation work in the world through his reconciling ministry and message. This revelation in Jesus is foundational to working for racial unity and reconciliation.

**This is what I currently think and believe.**

1. **I believe that we need to acknowledge that there is systemic injustice in our nation against blacks.**
  - a. If you don't know that there is systemic injustice and racism in our country against blacks for 400 years, **then please get informed.** Before you ask a person of color about their experiences, please do the work to educate yourself. Then, ask questions within relationships that feel safe and do so respectfully.
  - b. **Here are some resources to help you get informed.**
    - i. Doug Stringer of Somebody Cares America recently hosted and recorded a [conversation](#) where several African American Pastors shared their experiences with and understanding of racism and systemic injustice in our nation. It was profound and humbling.
    - ii. Here is a short video on [Systemic Injustice](#).
    - iii. This article captures the heartbeat of many black people: [What I Wish White People Understood About Being Black in America](#).
    - iv. [Missiologist Ed Stetzer](#) posted a 5-part series on what it is like to be a minority in America. Here is the link to the start of that series: [Race, Gospel, and Justice: An Interview with Esau McCaulley, Part 1](#).
    - v. [Bryant Lee posted on Facebook](#) about his experience with racism and social injustice. Bryant is a pastor, a husband, a father, a decorated veteran, a follower of Jesus, a past Moderator of the Union Baptist Association, and someone I know and have worked with. What he experienced should never happen one time to a person, let alone four times. (I have included this post as an addendum to my sermon notes if you need it.)
  - c. We need to get informed.
  - d. We need to learn.
  - e. We need to listen.
    - i. By the way, there are skills for listening well.
      1. If you listen in order to correct or debate, that is not listening well.
      2. If you get defensive or think about what you are going to say before the person stops sharing, that is not listening well.
    - ii. Listen to what Dr. Mark Henry, Superintendent of CFISD, shared recently: "Something I have shared with our graduating seniors this week is that for those of us who have not experienced discrimination, the most important thing we can do is listen to others. Just because we haven't experienced discrimination

doesn't mean it doesn't exist. I don't need to tell you how you should think; I need to listen to how you feel."

- f. We need to care about what has happened in the past and what is happening currently.
- g. We need to express love and support for our black brothers and sisters.
  - i. Ask them what they need to hear from you or what you can do for them. That is loving well.
  - ii. Don't make assumptions about what they need.
  - iii. Don't bombard them with a thousand questions and comments without getting informed first.
- h. **The prophets of the Old Testament stood up and held up a mirror to the people of God.**
  - i. **They said:** "This is wrong. We have to stop oppression. We have to stop injustice. We have to treat others lovingly and righteously."
  - ii. *Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause (Isaiah 1:17 ESV).*
  - iii. *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 ESV).*
- i. **Jesus and the writers of the New Testament told us how to show up well in our spheres of influence and in our culture (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-40; Romans 12:9-21).**
  - i. *Luke 10:25-37 NIV.*
    1. Pay attention: open our eyes and see others around us.
    2. Have pity and compassion for others.
    3. Go to where others are hurting and in need.
    4. Care for others as you can.
    5. Provide transportation or other needs as you can.
    6. Take responsibility to help as you can.
    7. Support ministries and organizations (inns) that provide care and love (like SomebodyCares.org).
    8. Follow through and follow up.
  - ii. *Matthew 25:31-40 NIV.*
    1. We are called to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need.
    2. To work for the common good.
    3. And to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's intended design.
  - iii. *Romans 12:9-21 NIV.*

## Ministry Time:

1. **This message is hard for some of us to hear.**
  - a. Some of us are experiencing guilt, fear, and/or pain.
  - b. Some of us who have experienced our own trauma are getting triggered again because of the abuse, harassment, or oppression we have experienced.
  - c. Some of us are angry and just want to do something to fix things.
2. **This sermon today is only part 1.**
  - a. I have 10 more points to share about what I am currently thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation.
  - b. I plan to share some of the beliefs which are sustaining me, informing me, and helping me to live in faith, rather than in hopelessness and despair. These beliefs help me to live in the hope-filled presence of the Lord rather than in despair.
  - c. I will also address the question: What can we do going forward?
3. **Right now, I ask you to hold up your heart to the Lord.**
  - a. Ask the Lord to touch you.
  - b. Ask the Lord to help you.
  - c. Ask the Lord to speak to you.
  - d. Ask the Lord to protect you from despair and hopelessness.
  - e. Ask the Lord to protect you from launching out and doing your own thing out of compulsion rather than out of calling.
  - f. Ask the Lord to help you see what he sees and to feel what he feels and to pray as he leads (Matthew 9:35-38).
4. **Finally, I ask you to check out some resources I included in my sermon notes to help you get informed.**
  - a. I want to especially ask you to take the time to listen to the [conversation hosted by Doug Stringer](#).
  - b. Let's spend this week in the presence of the Lord, in prayer, in listening, and in learning.
  - c. Take time to reflect on the passages of Scripture which I shared with you in this message.
  - d. We will come back next week and talk more about where we go from here.

[Bryant Lee](#)

May 30 at 1:20 AM

Editors note: [Bryant Lee posted on Facebook](#) about his experience with racism and social injustice. Bryant is a pastor, a husband, a father, a decorated veteran, a follower of Jesus, a past Moderator of the Union Baptist Association, and someone I know and have worked with. What he experienced should never happen one time to a person, let alone four times.

I'm up, can't sleep, every time I close my eyes, I see him, pleading, begging "I can't breathe, I can't breathe". Then I picture myself there in the same position he was in, however I see it though the different seasons of my life.

I see myself back in the elementary school playground chasing friends in a tag you're it school yard game. Then without warning I see him (police officer) asking us what are you boys doing, I speak up playing tag officer and within seconds I'm on the ground uttering the words "I can't breathe".

I see me as a teenager leaving the park after a baseball practice, bat, ball and glove in hand, when they (the police) pull up next to me and ask where are you going, where have you been, before I can respond I on the ground thinking did I say something wrong, did I have a wrong look, what did I do this morning that ended up with me saying "I can't breathe"?

I see myself in full military uniform with all my medals to include two bronze stars, on one lapel of my dress coat is the insignia of the United States, my chest out, head up, shoes shine, a proud member of the United States Armed Forces. I can see them (police) in my rear-view mirror, I check my speed, then I see the lights, so I pull over, I'm thinking here we go again. They call from the load speaker roll down the window and stick your hands out of the car, they flank the car, then ask, is this your car, do you have insurance, can we search it, will you step out of the car? I ask questions why did you pull me over and just like that there I am staring at the ground saying "I can't breathe"!

It's early Sunday morning, I got up with my mind on Jesus, I will admit I was driving a little over the speed limit, but it's Sunday morning, Praise is in the air and Kirk is singing, I just wanna be happy, I see them drive by my heart races, then I see them make the u-turn, I just pullover thinking you caught me speeding headed to church. I'm dressed in my usually shirt, blazer and slacks, my bible on the dash, here they come, do you know how fast I clocked you; yes sir that's why I pulled over, those few words sparked something and before I know it there I am on the ground saying "I can't breathe"

You see each time I dose off I see Brother George Floyd, saying I can't breathe, I can't breathe and every time I see him, I see me.

Why this post, why now because all we want is to be treated like human beings created in the image of God, and what do we want them (police) to hear when you encounter us is this "LET US BREATHE"!

**A friend of Bryant's posted:**

Mentally walking a mile in someone else's shoes in times like these can provoke heartfelt compassion, which is what I want to act and speak from. Most of us can't influence the rioting and unrest that is happening and may well continue. So what can we do? Ignore clowns, haters, and bots on social media, exercise caution and wisdom in what we ourselves say online, refuse hopelessness and jadedness, and love the real people in front of us. For those with the heart to do so, we can also advocate for righteousness, justice (including the racial justice/reconciliation issues we have in our country,) and peace in Jesus name. Micah 6:8.

## Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation

### Part 2, 6'14'20

Last Sunday, we began looking at the issue of racial unity and reconciliation. I am sharing what I am thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation. We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression (Isaiah 1:17 ESV, Micah 6:8 ESV), especially of black people.

Since last Sunday, I have been honored and privileged to have several conversations with members as we processed together what they are hearing, what they are learning, and what is getting stirred up in them. We are all learning so much about ourselves and about racial unity and reconciliation. And, we know from Scripture that it is important to walk in the light with others (1 John 1:7-9) and to seek godly counsel (Proverbs 15:22). **I so appreciate the spiritual practice of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit through dialogue.**

We began this series by looking at 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, because I believe in Jesus, in his leadership, and in his power to reconcile all things to God, including heaven, earth, and people. It is through the help, hope, and leadership of Jesus that we can work effectively toward racial unity and reconciliation.

Then, I shared the first point in my message on what I currently think and believe.

1. **I believe that it is important to acknowledge that there is systemic injustice in our nation against blacks.**
  - a. I shared **some resources to help us get informed** about the systemic injustice and racism in our country against blacks for 400 years.
  - b. We talked about what we could do.
    - i. We can get informed.
    - ii. We can learn.
    - iii. We can listen.
    - iv. We can care about what has happened in the past and what is happening currently.
    - v. We can express love and support for our black brothers and sisters.
  - c. **We looked at the prophets of the Old Testament who stood up and held up a mirror to the people of God.**

- i. They said: "This is wrong. We have to stop oppression. We have to stop injustice. We have to treat others lovingly and righteously."
  - ii. *Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause (Isaiah 1:17 ESV).*
  - iii. *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 ESV).*
- d. **We also looked at what Jesus and the writers of the New Testament told us how concerning how to show up well in our spheres of influence and in our culture** (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-40; Romans 12:9-21).

Now, I want to share part 2 of *Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation*. This is what I am currently thinking and believing.

2. **I believe that we need to be part of the solution and work with blacks against racism and social injustice** (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8).
- a. I read a post by someone who expressed some ways to be an ally and partner for change. I found parts of it helpful and informative. Here is a summary of that post.
    - i. Listen more, talk less. You don't have to have something to say all the time.
    - ii. For one out of every three opinions/insights shared by a person of color in your life, try to resist the need to respond with a better or different insight about something that you read or listened to as it relates to their shared opinion. Try just to listen and sit with someone else's experience. When we respond, we don't want to come across as condescending. We want to listen to others without correcting or lecturing.
    - iii. Being an ally is different than simply wanting not to be racist. Being an ally requires you to educate yourself about racism and systemic injustice in this country. Read Michelle Alexander's [The New Jim Crow](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates' [Between the World and Me](#), Claudia Rankine's [Citizen](#), Latasha Morrison's [Be the Bridge](#), and other books and articles that illuminate oppression and structures of injustice. Then, humbly share with others what you are learning and what you are becoming aware of in your own life or context. (See Addendum 1 to Part 2 for more resources.)

- b. [Here is a helpful video](#) from Dr. Tony Evans about what is going on and how we can be a part of the solution.
  - c. [Here is an encouraging video](#) about racial repentance and reconciliation. It has gone viral and has been picked up by the media, reaching millions of people. [Tre9](#) is a rapper, pastor, and minister of the Gospel. Tre9 is a part of our pastors' prayer group. He is being used of the Lord to reach people for Christ through **Hip Hop Hope Missions** based in Houston. He is working with black pastors and others to engage in **"Praytests," which are prayer walks and prayer rallies to demonstrate for racial unity and reconciliation.**
  - d. [Here is an encouraging post](#) by my friend, Steve Capper, who is Vicar (Pastor) of Lord of the Streets Episcopal Church in Houston. Steve shared a post of a friend who shared a post from [Caroline Crockett Brock](#) that has gone viral. **This post talks about the power of listening, learning, and partnering through conversation.** (See Addendum 3 to Part 2.)
  - e. So, let's seek to be part of the solution and work with blacks against racism and social injustice (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8).
3. **I believe that we need to ask the Lord to search our hearts first, before we point the finger anywhere** (Psalm 139:23-24; Luke 6:41-42).
- a. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV).*
    - i. **The truth is, we need the help of the Lord and others to help us see. "I don't know what I don't know."**
    - ii. **The Lord comes with grace to change, not with condemnation, hopelessness, or despair** (Romans 7:21 – 8:4; Hebrews 12:1-13).
  - b. **Jesus invites us to start with humility and self-awareness, rather than judging others** (Luke 6:41-42).
  - c. So, let's ask the Lord to search our hearts first, before we point the finger anywhere (Psalm 139:23-24; Luke 6:41-42).
4. **I believe that we need to love God and love others like Jesus told us to do.**
- a. *Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV).*
  - b. *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another**" (John 13:34-35 NIV).*
  - c. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life** for his friends (John 15:12-13 NIV).*

- d. **It is unloving to treat others differently because of their skin, money, or position. It is unloving to prejudge others or to minimize others, especially if they don't think, feel, or believe like you.**
  - e. So, let's grow in our capacity to love God and love others like Jesus told us to do.
5. **I believe that we need to watch and pray, and not give up and not lose faith** (Luke 18:1, 7-8; 21:36; Mark 13:32-22).
- a. *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1 NIV).*
  - b. *And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7-8 NIV).*
  - c. *Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36 NIV).*
  - d. *"Concerning that day and exact hour, no one knows when it will arrive, not the angels of heaven, not even the Son—only the Father knows. 33 **This is why you must be waiting, watching and praying**, because no one knows when that season of time will come" (Mark 13:32-33 (PassionNTPsa).*
  - e. So, let's commit to watch and pray, and not give up and not lose faith.
6. **I believe that we need to fight the good fight of faith** (1 Timothy 6:12).
- a. By laying down our lives to love and serve others, putting them and their interests ahead of our own like Jesus did for us (Philippians 2:1-17).
    - i. What does this look like for you?
  - b. By doing what the Lord said in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).
    - i. What is the Lord asking of you in your spheres of influence?
  - c. **What are some other ways that you can fight the good fight of faith vs. giving up, withdrawing, or ignoring personal responsibility?**
7. **I believe that we need to be a part of the solution and not the problem.**
- a. We are a part of the problem when we don't listen.
  - b. We are a part of the problem when we deny what is going on in our nation.
  - c. We are a part of the problem when we pre-judge others.
  - d. We are a part of the problem when we disconnect from or attack people who don't think, feel, and believe like us (having an "us vs. them mentality").
  - e. We are a part of the problem when we vent on social media and attack others out of our anger, pain, or fear. People often say things on social

media that they would never say to someone's face in a civil conversation.

- i. **Balance:** I am grateful that social media is giving a place for people to be heard without being shut down first. That is something helpful. We are hearing people share who have never had a voice.
  - f. We are a part of the problem when we are inconsistent in applying our beliefs and standards.
    - i. Consider how you want to show up as your best self in difficult conversations and work on being that person.
  - g. Let's learn ways to be a part of the solution and not the problem. What does that look like for you?
8. **I believe that we need to get help to deal with our own pain, trauma, and fears as they surface in this season** (1 John 1:7-9; James 5:13-16; Luke 24:32).
- a. In the midst of all the grief and pain in our culture from the pandemic and the racial unrest and protests, people's stuff is getting stirred up. People are being reminded about their own pain, trauma, wounds, injustices, and injuries which they have experienced.
  - b. When are stirred up and when our pain surfaces, we don't listen well. We interpret and filter what is going on around us through the lens of our own pain, wounds, and trauma.
  - c. Pastor Steve Meeks say, "If your pain is not transformed, it will be transmitted."
  - d. **What can you do as your own pain, trauma, and wounds surface in this season?**
    - i. Walk in the light with God and with others about your own pain, trauma, and fears which are getting stirred up (1 John 1:7-9; James 5:13-16).
    - ii. Ask the Lord to touch you and to bring healing and wholeness to your heart. Jesus is anointed to heal our hearts and to bring wholeness to our lives (Luke 4:18; 24:32).
      1. God can heal our hearts (Jeremiah 18:1-8 Ezekiel 11:18-21; Jeremiah 32:37-41).
      2. And, God wants to heal our hearts (Isaiah 61:1-7).
    - iii. Turn to God in prayer and get prayer from others, asking the Lord to bring healing, wholeness, and health to your life (James 5:13-16).
    - iv. **Have conversations with pastors, counselors, coaches, and therapists who can help you process in Christ to wholeness.**
  - e. Let's get help to work on our own pain, trauma, and fears as they surface in this season.

9. **I believe that we have to learn to live in the tensions of life right now.** (See addendum 2 Part 2 graphic.)
- a. Specifically, we need to learn how to embrace **both/and** thinking, rather than resorting to **either/or** processing or falling into the ditch of **right/wrong thinking**.
  - b. **Living in the tensions of life is hard work.** We prefer to process in ways that take us to an easy answer or to an extreme.
  - c. **Jesus calls us to walk on the narrow way** (Matthew 7:14), which I believe is bordered by ditches on both sides.
    - i. It is human to go from one extreme to the other, to over correct or under correct, and to end up in a ditch. **I want us to be aware of this tendency and to call us to live a balanced and whole life that is able to experience the power of living in the creative tensions of life.**
    - ii. There is healthy tension in balance, like the gymnast on the balance beam. **Living in balance is not a place of compromise but of emotional maturity to live in the tensions of life.**
    - iii. Example of tension: see the graphic in *Addendum 2 to Part 2* of my sermon notes.
    - iv. Example of tension: We have made progress in our culture dealing with systemic injustice and racism; and, we have a long way to go.
  - d. **Hold in tension this reality: evil and good are coming to full maturity at the same time as we approach the end of the age** (Isaiah 60:1-2; Matthew 13:24-30).
    - i. This tension is hard to deal with, but it is our reality according to the Lord.
    - ii. Things are getting worse and worse, better and better, faster and faster (Isaiah 60:1-2).
    - iii. The wheat and tares are coming to full maturity at the same time at the end of the age (Matthew 13:24-30).
  - e. **What does it look like for you live in the tensions of life right now?**
10. **I believe that racism and prejudice are wrong.**
- a. Pride and superiority are sins (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-7).
  - b. *Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35 NIV).*
  - c. *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28 NIV).*

- d. *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10 NIV).*
  - e. **I wonder if we take time to ask the Lord if there is any racism or prejudice in us, and to help us to root it out as we discover any vestiges of those things in our lives.**
11. **I believe that change, healing, and reconciliation are possible because of Jesus.**  
Let us partner with Jesus in his ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14-21) ...
- a. For the sake of Jesus, who purchased men, women, boys, and girls for God from every tongue, tribe, language, and nation (Revelation 5:9-10).
  - b. For the sake of the world that is groaning for the true sons and daughters of God to be revealed (Romans 8:18-23).
  - c. For the sake of our nation which belongs to God and has such high ideals.
  - d. For the sake of our brothers and sister who have experienced injustice and trauma for 400 years.
  - e. For the sake of our children who need a future where things are different and better.
  - f. **Today, I declare that change, healing, and reconciliation are possible because of Jesus and his work in this world.**

**Action:** In my sermon notes, I have included 4 addendums that are helpful or thought-provoking resources. I invite you to check out those notes and resources.

Next week, I will share **some of the beliefs which are sustaining me, informing me, and helping me to live in faith**, rather than in hopelessness and despair. These beliefs help me to live in the hope-filled presence of the Lord rather than in fear or discouragement.

And, we will consider the question: **What can we do?**

**Ministry Time:**

**Addendum 1 to Part 2**

This addendum is a resource from Lone Star College for some of its educators. It is a resource for educating yourself. Then, share with others what you are learning.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author/ Organization/ Production/etc.</b>	<b>Type of Source</b>	<b>Subject Matter</b>
<a href="#"><u>White Rage</u></a>	Carol Anderson	Book	Injustices in African American History
<a href="#"><u>13th</u></a>	Netflix	Documentary	Racial Inequality with US prison system
<a href="#"><u>White Fragility</u></a>	Robin DiAngelo	Book	Understanding Racism as a practice
<a href="#"><u>"Cultural Identity Theory and Education: What we have learned about selves and others"</u></a>	Luis Urrieta	Journal Article	Cultural Identity Theory
<i>Waiting for Superman</i>	Paramount (Available on Prime)	Documentary	Racial inequities in education
<a href="#"><u>A Class Divided</u></a>	PBS	Documentary	Discrimination and inequity (Walking in someone else's shoes)

Addendum 2 to Part 2

Living in the Tension of Both/And vs. Either/Or



Jim Herrington

19 hrs · 🌐



One of the big challenges that we face in dealing with any complex issue is being able to hold tension. Holding tension is physically uncomfortable but it's possible and you can get better at it with practice.

It doesn't have to be this or that. It can be this and that. 🤝 This graphic doesn't reflect all the possibilities but the graphic demonstrates holding tension.

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT'S OK  
TO BE ALL THREE**



## Addendum 3 to Part 2

### A Powerful and Hopeful Conversation about Racism 5'30'20

#### Steve Capper

June 2 at 7:32 PM ·

My dear friend from high school, Sue Micetic, posted this on her page. I found it powerful! Thank you, [Sue Micetic!](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/carolinecrockettbrock/posts/10221533891152250>

#### Caroline Crockett Brock

May 30 at 3:14 PM ·

I am a 45 year old white woman living in the south, and today was the first time I spoke frankly about racism with a black man.

When [Ernest Skelton](#), my appliance repairman, came to the front door, I welcomed him in. As this was his second visit and we'd established a friendly rapport, I asked him how he was feeling in the current national climate. Naturally, he assumed I was talking about the coronavirus, because what white person actually addresses racism head on, in person, in their own home?

When Ernest realized I wanted to know about his experience with racism, he began answering my questions.

What's it like for you on a day-to-day basis as a black man? Do cops ever give you any trouble?

The answers were illuminating.

Ernest, a middle-aged, friendly, successful business owner, gets pulled over in Myrtle Beach at least 6 times a year. He doesn't get pulled over for traffic violations, but on the suspicion of him being a suspect in one crime or another. Mind you, he is in uniform, driving in a work van clearly marked with his business on the side. They ask him about the boxes in his car--parts and pieces of appliances. They ask to see his invoices and ask him why there is money and checks in his invoice clipboard. They ask if he's selling drugs. These cops get angry if he asks for a badge number or pushes back in any way. Everytime he is the one who has to explain himself, although they have no real cause to question him.

Ernest used to help folks out after dark with emergencies. Not anymore. He does not work past dinnertime, not because he doesn't need the business, but because it isn't

safe for him to be out after dark. He says "There's nothing out there in the world for me past dark".

Let me say that again. Ernest, a middle aged black man in uniform cannot work past dark in Myrtle Beach in 2020 because it's not safe for him. He did not say this with any kind of agenda. It was a quiet, matter of fact truth.

A truth that needs to be heard.

When I asked Ernest what ethnic terms he gets offended at, he said that the most offensive term people use is 'boy'. Ernest has a bachelors in electronics and an associates in HVAC. He is not a 'boy', and the term 'boy' in the south implies inferiority in station and status. He came to Myrtle Beach and got a job at Hobart. The supervisor repeatedly used the term 'boy'. Ernest complained. After several complaints Ernest was fired.

Ernest says most white people are a little scared of him, and he's often put in a position where he has to prove himself, as though he's not qualified to repair appliances.

After getting a job for 2 years at Sears appliance, Ernest started his own company, one he's been running for several years. He is the best repairman we've had, and has taught me about washer dryers and how to maintain them myself, even helping me with another washer/dryer set and a dishwasher without charging me. I highly recommend his company, Grand Strand Appliance.

I asked Ernest what he thought of "black bike week" in Myrtle Beach, where thousands of black people come with bullet bikes and trash our town. He says it hurts black people in our city, and he disagrees with the NAACP coming in to sue businesses that close on black bike week. He hates working that week.

Ernest doesn't have hope that racism will change, no matter who the president is. His dad taught him "It's a white man's world", and he's done his best to live within it. When I asked him what I could do, he said, "everyone needs to pray and realize we're all just one country and one people".

I am a 45 year old white woman living in the south. I can begin healing our country by talking frankly with African Americans in my world---by LISTENING to their lived experience and speaking up. I can help by actively promoting black owned businesses. That's what I can do today. Let's start by listening and lifting up. It's that simple.

[#listenandlift](#)

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Edit: I asked Ernest if I could take his picture and post our conversation on facebook. He thought it was a great idea. As he left my house an hour later, he looked me in the eye and said, "If you ever march, or have a meeting on this topic, or want to change things in Myrtle Beach, I'll stand with you."

What a great idea. Let's begin standing together.

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Edit: 1pm EST on 6/1. Ernest just called me and we had one of the sweetest moments, both laughing and crying about the response to this post. He started the conversation by saying, "Caroline, I don't know if I should kill you or kiss you--my phone is ringing off the hook!"

He doesn't have a FB profile, so he's coming over later so I can help him set one up. He's been absolutely overwhelmed, as have I, with the response. We're going to be sitting down together to read your comments. They mean so much. In addition, the Myrtle Beach city manager has contacted me and I'm getting all of us together to be sure this doesn't happen in our city any longer. THANK YOU WORLD.

Edit 6/2 9am. Just got off the phone with Ernest and the local news. They will be interviewing us today, and it will be on the local news in Myrtle beach tonight. I'll post it on my page later.

This is how we change our country. Normal folks. One town at a time. ♡

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Caroline Crockett Brock



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The advertisement features a dark background with images of various household appliances including a refrigerator, a microwave, a stove, and a washing machine. The text is in white and yellow, providing contact information and a website for Ernest Skelton III.

**Addendum 4 to Part 2**

## [We Haven't Cried Yet](#)



George Floyd

**Published** 6'10'20

**Author** J. Lee Grady

**Posted in** [Fire in My Bones](#)

This past weekend, a group of black, white and Latino Christians gathered in the central downtown square in LaGrange, Georgia, where I live. We met to address the pain and anger people are feeling in the aftermath of George Floyd's tragic death in Minnesota.

Our Christian mayor spoke. Then we heard a short message from the chief of police, who is also a Christian. Then a dozen pastors—black and white, Baptist and Pentecostal—shared from their hearts about the ugly sin of racism.

My 34-year-old daughter, Margaret Grady Turner, who is an ordained minister, stood on the platform toward the end of the event. Her voice quivered during most of her brief message. An uncomfortable hush came over the crowd when she talked about the awkward challenge of raising an adopted black son in the United States today.

"Racism means to me that my black son was scared to be alive this weekend, and my white son wasn't," Margaret said.

She also told us that the American church has some unfinished business. "We haven't cried yet today. It might be time to allow the Holy Spirit to break our hearts," she said. "If we can't get together and cry about this, there is something deeply wrong." ([You can watch Margaret's full message here.](#))

Margaret's message helped me determine how I, as a white man, should respond to the racism that has been a part of my culture since before I was born. I've felt helpless, especially because I didn't know what to say to my African American friends who've felt fear when they were pulled over by cops or experienced discrimination on the job. The Holy Spirit showed me where I have to start if I want to be a part of the healing in my nation.

Have you wondered what you can do to help the situation? Shedding tears is the best place to begin. "We have to *lament* and *repent*," Margaret told us.

Lament? That's a foreign concept in the modern church. In some cultures grieving is viewed as crucial, but in America we rush everything—even the mourning process. We are quick to tell people to "move on" and "get over it" when they experience loss. We are uncomfortable with the feelings of sadness and anger that loss brings.

And yet we have a book in the Bible called Lamentations. Honestly, I don't enjoy reading it because it's so negative. Jeremiah describes Israel's sins—and the horrible consequences. Then the prophet actually commands the people to cry. He says: "Let your tears run down like a river day and night; Give yourself no relief, Let your eyes have no rest. ... Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord" (Lam. 2:18b-19a, NASB).

Did you know that God actually commands us to cry? Lamentation allows God to download His emotions into our hearts. Unless we lament, we can't repent. Tears have the power to soften our arrogance and neutralize our bad attitudes.

George Floyd's death in Minneapolis triggered many different reactions. We've seen peaceful protests as well as riots, looting and destruction of property. We've seen policemen shot, elderly protesters pushed to the ground, protesters zapped with tasers and small businesses burned to the ground. But in all the newscasts I've watched over the past two weeks, I haven't seen too many tears.

There are many things we can do to address racism. We need to have honest conversations. We need to change laws. We need to address past mistakes. We need to make reforms.

But if we do these things without first lamenting, our words will sound cheap and hollow. We will still address the issues with anger, superiority and self-righteousness. Only if we break up our fallow ground first will we be able to speak with God's tone of voice.

When my daughter Margaret spoke on Sunday, she said: "We are all here because we think that racism is wrong and we think that injustice is wrong. But we need to sit in that lament, because through our mourning the Holy Spirit leads us to movement."

Too often we try to bring change before we ourselves have been changed. Please cry first. Cry for George Floyd. Cry for Ahmaud Arbery. Cry for Breonna Taylor. Cry for all black families that have lost loved ones because of racism or injustice. Cry for our divided nation.

Let God marinate your heart in His love. And then, with a heart that is full of compassion, go out and work for justice and healing.