

2 Faith Forerunners Who Heeded the Spirit's Call to Break Racial Strongholds

God is a natural communicator—a Creator who calls His creation to come near.

From the beginning, He has been speaking. His message has gone forth, from His own mouth and through the mouths of His messengers.

Throughout time God has raised up those who will point to Him, testify of His works and speak about what's to come. He has a purpose for each person He's made. God also has plans for each people group, showing each one distinct aspects of His character so that together we would corporately form a body, reflecting Him as we invite others into the family from within our like groups and without.

This is true of all the diverse groups throughout the earth, including the black community in the United States.

From Harriet Tubman to Richard Allen to Stuart Greaves, history is rich with black members of the body heralding the worth of Jesus.

God has sent out His messengers directing them to move from one location to another, from the comfort of their homes to far-flung places across the earth. They have gone out to proclaim truth, drawing on the Lord's strength as they trust Him, even in the face of opposition and difficulty. These ones He's selected and prepared have been anchored in the Lord—receiving their worth, value, identity and calling from God alone.

As we see in the Word, God can use various types of people to

speak His message. Some messengers have been reluctant like Jonah. Others have been radically encountered and unable to contain their news, like the woman at the well; others have been fearful and despondent, but drawn into obedience like Elijah, or untrained and young like David.

But all had a clear understanding that they had truth to share. They were propelled with a clear mandate of what they are called to and the role they play in God's divine plan.

The Mandate Is Clear

Abraham was clear about what the Lord had called him to and prepared for him.

Now the Lord said to Abram: "Go from your country, your family, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you, and in you all families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram, and terror and a great darkness fell on him. Then He said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will live as strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. But I will judge the nation that they serve, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace and you will be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation, your descendants will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:12-16).

Jesus knew His identity, His purpose and what He needed to accomplish during His time on earth.

As He stated in His own words: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), and "I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

And just as God has been clear as to what He called Israel to do, their role and purpose in the earth, He also has a plan for every people group He's created.

Even before the foundations of the earth were set, there's been a holy conversation going on among the Trinity about the family they would have.

And we know, based on the Word of God, that Jesus will have a diverse family reigning with Him in the age to come.

Then I looked. and there was a great multitude which no one could count, from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:9-10).

Jesus was clear about what He came to accomplish. He knew why He came to the earth and what needed to be done. His time, energy and focus were all aimed at accomplishing the will of the Father. And when He encountered hardship, embarrassment, brutality, falsified evidence and even an unfair trial that resulted in His death, He was able to fulfill what was prophesied about Him through this moment of humiliation and mocking without regret.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and who

shall declare his generation? For He was cut out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people He was struck (Is. 53:7-8).

In the midst of the difficulty Jesus experienced during His 33 years on Earth, He was able to look beyond those moments to what was to come—when He would receive all the nations as His inheritance—and accomplish the will of His heavenly Father.

From the Word, it's clear to see the Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever and is able to work through any heart surrendered to Him at any time. Whether it's using a shepherd to defeat an imposing threat, a wayward woman to galvanize a town, or an emotionally unstable prophet to bring about righteousness, God is able.

Surrender Knows No Color

The black community has a rich history of willing messengers who, like Jesus, have been undeterred in the face of opposition, oppression and even violence. They, too, focused on the will of the One who sent them and maintained a heavenly perspective, refusing to allow life's atrocities and obvious sinfulness to become insurmountable stumbling blocks.

Richard Allen (1760–1831) was the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Although he was born into slavery in Delaware and separated from most of his family at a young age, he heard the gospel at the age of 17 and made the decision to give his life to Christ. He began preaching, but slave owners sought to silence him because they feared a rebellion from their slaves. But when his increased work ethic was attributed to his conversion, his own owner allowed a preacher to visit the plantation and share the gospel with everyone. Richard's owner was so struck by the preacher's message that he began to believe slavery was wrong, and he allowed every one of his slaves to buy their freedom.

Richard purchased his freedom at the age of 20 and began preaching in different cities on the East Coast, with many flocking to hear his teachings. Due to others' efforts that prevented black church members from meeting for worship, Richard founded Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, the first fully-independent black denomination, in 1794.

Zilpha Elaw was born in 1790 into a free family near Philadelphia. But when she was only 12, her mother died. Two years later, her father died leaving Zilpha an orphan. She was adopted into a family with very little interest in the things of God.

One night, after taking the Lord's name in vain, Zilpha had a dream that an angel announced that the end had come and God's judgment was coming. She was so shaken that she immediately had a desire to know where she stood with God. Through a series of Methodist camp meetings, Zilpha received salvation, and her calling to preach the gospel, which she resisted for several years because she felt unqualified. After a time of extreme sickness, she relented to her calling to preach the gospel, although she was concerned that being a black woman would hinder her effectiveness.

However, her concerns were proven to be unfounded when the Lord used those two factors to draw many to Himself through Zilpha as she traveled throughout the Northeast and the Southern states, despite threats on her life and the possibility of being enslaved. Although she experienced personal battles with illness and the jealousy of fellow believers and even her husband, Zilpha continued to serve God, valuing her relationship with Him above all else.

With diverse talents and giftings and a history of strong faith in Jesus, despite injustice, the black community is still positioned to be used by God in mighty ways.

For Richard and Zilpha, the purpose of what needed to be

accomplished was clear, making it less painful to place even the most challenging moments of life into the category of a light and momentary affliction that actually helped prepare them for the eternal weight of glory awaiting them (2 Cor. 4:17).

Which forerunners from the black community challenge you to conform your life to Jesus' will?

With all that is occurring in the nation at this time, we at the International House of Prayer of Kansas City are looking forward to the opportunity we have as a family to speak to matters that are close to God's heart—unity in the church and loving the body well—as we host the Stand Conference to address and champion the prophetic destiny of the black community. [Learn more »](#)

Fia Curley serves on the NightWatch at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, participating in prayer, worship and intercession from midnight to 6 a.m. She enjoys blending her passion for prayer, worship and journalism as she labors with the Lord to see His goodness revealed to families, government leaders and immigrants from non-Christian nations.