

How You Can Stand in the Gap Against Racism

The year 2020 is one most of us could not have envisioned, nor would we have wanted to do so. Before #georgefloyd, #breonnataylor and #ahmaudarbery, I started 2020 addressing racist verbal and physical attacks against Asians and anti-Semitic attacks against Jews. 70% of attacks against Asians have come from African Americans. Anti-Semitic attacks happened when the Hebrew Israelites, an African American religious cult, killed a Jewish rabbi in New York City. Members of the same cult also killed four people in a Jewish kosher deli in New Jersey.

While most of the nation has been focusing on Black, white and blue (police) divisions, the enemy of our souls has been working on driving a wedge between us all. In the midst of combatting the coronavirus, could it be that social distancing has revealed the social distance in our hearts? Many are looking for rays of hope, asking, "How do we heal the divide?"

Much has already been said about the current climate of our nation's racial crisis. Once protests turned into riots, looting, cities on fire and nine police officers being killed during the summer, much of the sentiment and emotional leverage from #georgefloyd were close to being depleted from many Christian leaders.

Since then, everything has been questioned, from systemic racism yesterday to whether or not it exists today. Closer examination has revealed social engineering by left-wing billionaires funding rioters, the Marxist origins of Black Lives Matter (BLM) founders and ancestral worship. This was revealed in the viral video of Abraham Hamilton III on his show, *The Hamilton Corner*. Also hotly debated are how intersectionality and the shortcomings of critical race theory

are informing much of the secular assessment on where we are as a culture.

As a result, many are searching for the nearest exit off the road of racial reconciliation. While we definitely need discernment, we don't need avoidance. Neither do we need more pundits who polarize, or false prophets who anesthetize by pretending nothing is wrong. We need Spirit-filled, intelligent believers at the table to work on healing the divides in our country. We must be emotionally and spiritually intelligent, knowing our battle isn't against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers influencing the situation.

Christians have written many great articles with advice on practical conversation, listening and so forth. Although these are necessary, in this article, I want to focus on how Jesus addressed racism and the reality of the spiritual battle. God is calling the church to stand in the gap and connect to His narrative for releasing healing in our nation. First, I want to share the hope I have because of the miracle of reconciliation in my own life.

Racism in the Civil War

I have hope for healing the racial divide because of a unique story involving my dear friend, Matt Lockett, whom I first met on Jan. 17, 2005. We both had dreams that led us to meet on MLK Day in a prayer meeting at the Lincoln Memorial. Matt and I have now been friends for 16 years but realized we have family heirlooms and artifacts connected to slavery and the Civil War. In my family, we have a 200-year-old kettle pot passed down for generations because slaves used it to muffle their prayers for freedom. Matt discovered six years ago that General Lee's last battle of the Civil War was fought at a house owned by his forefathers. Essentially the Civil War ended in his family's front yard. I thought, *What a coincidence: I have a kettle pot that slaves prayed underneath*

for freedom, and your family's front yard became the answer to their prayers.

In our research, we then stumbled onto an even more significant discovery: Matt's family owned my family during slavery! We were amazed when we realized we met at the Lincoln Memorial, both led by dreams to the place where Dr. King declared, "I have a dream, that one day ... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." This is just the tip of the iceberg of our story, and we tell more about it in a book we wrote together, *The Dream King: How the Dream of Martin Luther King Jr. Is Being Fulfilled to Heal Racism in America*.

While this amazing story gives me hope to continue to pray for spiritual awakening and healing the racial divide, it's also helped me understand there is more going on behind the scenes, both good and bad, trying to influence the direction of our nation. During these times of coronavirus and quarantines, social distancing has revealed the social distance in our hearts. The enemy wants to exploit it, but God wants to heal it.

Racism in Jesus' Day

In Luke 9 and 10, we see Jesus' approach to addressing racism when He personally encounters it in a Samaritan village in Luke 9:51. Jews and Samaritans had 800 years of religious and racial hostility toward each other. Jews normally avoided going through the Samaritan territory for fear of spiritual defilement. When Jesus sought to go through a Samaritan village or neighborhood, it was similar to an African American choosing to go through a white neighborhood in the Deep South in the '50s and '60s.

The racism Jesus experienced from the Samaritans angered the disciples, which is why they reacted: "Do you want us to call

down fire from heaven and destroy this village?" They basically wanted to send a Molotov cocktail from heaven and burn down the neighborhood. However, Jesus responded, "The Son of Man didn't come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." But, before He said that, He said this: "You don't know what kind of spirit you are of" (Luke 9:54-56). In other words, "You don't want justice, you don't know what spirit you're speaking from. You really want revenge." He revealed they wanted to do more harm than good.

As we've seen from the rioting, looting and killing, many today don't know what spirit is operating through them. The devil is taking advantage and pimping the pain of wounded people to further exacerbate our division with violence. James says, "The anger of man never achieves the righteousness of God" (see Jam. 4:18). However, if you continue to read the next two chapters of Luke's Gospel with this event in mind, you realize that Jesus does confront the racism in Samaria.

In Luke 10, He releases 72 to preach the gospel, and many return and report that "even the demons are subject to us through Your name." Jesus replies, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:17-18). I believe Jesus is referring to spiritual breakthrough over the region. While the 72 were taking a towel to the earth with the cleansing power of the gospel, a sword of intercession was delivering a breakthrough in the heavens.

Then, in the midst of that open heaven, a Jewish lawyer, who despised the Samaritans so much that he refused to say their name because he didn't want to defile himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29b). Jesus replies, "Oh, let me tell the story about a racist Samaritan." We all know that's not what Jesus said, but He could have. He had just experienced racism from the Samaritans. Jesus didn't ignore what happened to Him, but knowing He was in a spiritual battle, He chose to change the narrative. Amid the open heaven, after taking a towel to the earth and releasing a

sword to the heavens, Jesus basically tells a biased person the story of a good police officer, or a good Black man, or a good white man, or a good Asian man, or a good Jewish man. In other words, while the heavens are open, Jesus tells the story of a good Samaritan to destigmatize the very people the Jews hated.

As the Lord departed, He made sure in His commands to preach the gospel that the disciples went to Samaria before going to the uttermost parts of the earth. I believe God is releasing similar strategies to change the narrative and destinies of people and regions. It's time for the church to change the narrative and destigmatize people considered irredeemable by the "cancel culture."

Racism in the Community

One blueprint God has given me for engagement on this issue is 2 Timothy 2:24-26, which says, "The servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but must be gentle toward all people, able to teach, patient, in gentleness instructing those in opposition. Perhaps God will grant them repentance to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."

The application of this Scripture came alive years ago when I had a run-in with racism from a family in my neighborhood. After a healthy confrontation and resolution with most of the family members, one of them continued to ignore us and drove or walked by me as if she couldn't see me. Eventually, I stopped going out of my way to say hello and became just as chilly and hard-hearted as she was. One day, her toddler children were playing with my toddler children. As I walked onto the playground, the oldest toddler shouted, "I'm ready to leave right now!" Her grandfather replied, "But we just arrived; let's stay a while longer." To which the little girl screamed while staring at me, "I want to leave right now!" Angry, with clenched fists, she ran to her grandfather and

then turned around to face me. Suddenly, her eyes rolled into the back of her head. She slumped to the ground and began sliding on the playground like a snake.

Being analytical, my second thought was, "I wonder if she is dehydrated or having an epileptic fit?" However, my first thought was right. I heard the Holy Spirit say, "That's the demon of racism and division in this family, and it's affecting the next generation. Use the authority I've given you."

I wanted to say to her grandfather, "Has this ever happened before?" but the first thing out of my mouth was, "In the name of Jesus, stop it and come out." Immediately the girl sighed, stopped writhing and fell unconscious. Her grandfather couldn't lift her, so I picked her up and carried her home. When I knocked on the door, her mother, who had previously ignored me, asked, "What happened? Is she all right?" and I said, "Just let me lay her down." She became conscious once I laid her down, and I walked out. The family later told me they took her to the doctor and found nothing medically wrong with her.

Later that night, I was in tears, but I wasn't sure why. My spirit was grieved, and I prayed for answers. I was prompted to read 2 Timothy 2:24-26. Then I heard this rebuke from the Lord, "William, every time you played by the devil's rules and chose to not overcome evil with good by just saying hi to that mother, you were empowering the racist spirits that are destroying that family and affecting the next generation. You're not the Republicans' bondservant or the Democrats' bondservant. You're My bondservant, and you don't have the option to respond the way the world does to this issue if you want to use My power and represent My kingdom."

Beloved, our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against demonic powers and principalities in the unseen realm. Our job, according to 2 Timothy 2:24-26, is to be kind to all,

bear fruit, speak the truth and not be quarrelsome in person or on social media. We also have to be “able to teach,” meaning we need to study and be well-versed, instructing others without being condescending. As believers, we can empower or disempower demonic forces influencing many people through our forgiveness, repentance and conduct. Our goal is not to win arguments but hearts. We must shift the narrative by standing in the gap.

Racism Subject to Christ

A spiritual father of mine recently said this to me: “Today, if you want to draw a crowd, all you have to do is draw a line.” In our polarizing times, this is the fastest way to surround yourself with those who consider themselves radical right or radical left.

While both of those groups would consider themselves “radical,” the truly radical place in our nation is the radical gap. It is not a place of compromise or double-mindedness, but a conviction that believes righteousness and justice are still the foundation of God’s throne. Those in the radical gap are firmly planted on a Venn diagram of right and left ideals, values and truths that align with God’s kingdom and are rooted and grounded in love. Those in the radical gap are reaching out for healing to both extremes while God hangs on to them. While the right and left hurl attacks at each other, those in the radical gap take shots from both sides. Perhaps this is why God is looking not for those who will stand to either side, but for those who will “stand in the gap” (Ezek. 22:30b). Many will visit there, but few are willing to stand there and stay.

Those who intercede from this place of prayer and action don’t stand alone, and God is using them to keep our nation from tearing apart at the seams. It takes courage, tenderness and strength to handle the tension and vulnerability in the gap. God will use those who know how to steward the tension and

vulnerability to save this nation.

I mentioned earlier how the last battle of the Civil War happened in the front yard of a house owned by the family that once owned my ancestors in slavery, and how I became friends with one of the descendants, Matt Lockett. In our book, *The Dream King*, we write how in God's irony, Lockett's farmhouse, the house that unites Matt and me, is the same house that stood between a divided nation. History records that the Confederate Army was in front of the Locketts' farmhouse, and the Union Army was in the back. The house stood between these armies, and though riddled with bullets, it is still standing today. Historians say that after the Southern army surrendered, the Lockett house was set up the next day as a hospital for both Confederate and Union soldiers. Its floorboards were stained with the mingled blood of both sides, as former Black slaves worked with white nurses to heal the wounds of brothers who had been fighting against each other.

It is a picture of intercession, a house of prayer, standing in the gap for the nation in the middle of conflicts where brothers are still divided along class, ideological, political and racial lines. Once again, God is raising up a house that stands between the living and the dead, to use our intercession to stop the plagues of culture (see Num. 16:46-48).

Matt and I believe it's no mistake that we met first in a prayer meeting on MLK Day at the Lincoln Memorial and have been sitting at the table of brotherhood ever since. Today, he and I endeavor to stand united in the house of prayer, to heal a divided nation once again. Now God is using us to call believers of all races to join in prayer and intercession, because only a united church can heal a divided nation.

What's also interesting is that Matt later learned that one of his ancestors was a revivalist and an abolitionist who fought against slavery. Matt realized he had generational blessings

of freedom and generational curses of bondage, all in the same family. It's not only true in his family, but yours too, and in our nation. We have good or bad generational storylines or narratives we can perpetuate. God is asking America, "What storyline do you want to be a part of? The healing or the hurt? The blessing or the curse?" Together, let's connect to God's narrative to heal our land.

Read more about racism at [. {eo}](#)

Will Ford *is the co-author with Matt Lockett of The Dream King: How the Dream of Martin Luther King Jr. Is Being Fulfilled to Heal Racism in America. Based in Dallas, Ford is founder of Will Ford Ministries and Dream Stream Co.*

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