

The Holy Spirit Is Raising Up a Holy Remnant to Fight This Blood-Saturated Injustice

During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, just as in the days of slavery in America, a remnant of whites and blacks labored together. Dr. Martin Luther King addressed this unity in his “I Have a Dream” speech: “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.”

In the days of slavery, former slave Richard Allen preached the gospel as a Methodist circuit-riding companion of former slave owner Freeborn Garrettson. Today, members of a new united remnant are realizing we are inextricably bound to each other in our desire for spiritual awakening and justice for all.

This month, designated Black History Month, moves my heart in a profound way because of a kettle passed down in my family, and a Virginia farmhouse that unites me with my friend in ministry Matt Lockett, a house that once stood between foes in a divided nation. Today, God is using our profound story and shared inheritance to unite the church for spiritual awakening and healing in America.

It takes a book (which Matt and I are working on) to convey all the providential history and layers of meaning in our story. What I am sharing here is just the tip of the iceberg.

Risking Their Lives to Pray

Our story begins with a 200-year-old black kettle, used by my Christian slave forebears in Lake Providence, Louisiana. Used for cooking and washing clothes during the day, this kettle

was secretly used for prayer at night. Forbidden to pray by their slave master, my ancestors were beaten unmercifully if found doing so. However, in spite of their master's cruelty and because of their love for Jesus, they prayed anyway. Sneaking into a barn at night, they carried this cast-iron pot into their secret prayer meeting. As others looked out and kept watch, those inside prayed.

Turning the pot upside down on the barn floor, they propped it up with rocks—suspending the pot a few inches above the ground. Then, while lying prostrate or kneeling on the ground, they prayed in a whisper underneath the kettle to muffle their voices. The story passed down with the kettle is that they risked their lives to pray for ensuing generations.

One day, freedom came. A teenage girl, whose name is lost to history, decided to keep this pot and pass it down along with the story of how others prayed for our freedom. She passed the story and kettle down to Harriet Lockett, who then passed it on to Nora Lockett, who then passed it on to William Ford Sr., then to William Ford Jr.—who then gave it to me, William Ford III.

Though my forefathers only used this kettle to keep their prayers from being heard outside the meeting, it became symbolically—probably without their knowing it—their bowl of intercession.

It is important to understand the dynamics of what happened in the spirit realm. Revelation 5:8b speaks of “bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” before the throne of God. Zechariah 14:20b (NASB) says, “And the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the altar.” This kettle, or “prayer bowl,” caught the muffled prayers on earth, just as bowls in heaven caught their prayers as incense.

And in Revelation 8 when these bowls are released, one of the

manifestations upon the earth is voices. White Christian abolitionists/revivalists like Francis Asbury and Charles Finney became voices for the voiceless. Their sermons, spoken in public, became answers to prayers whispered in private. Along with black revivalists and abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, the white Christian abolitionists awakened the conscience of America to the value of human life, equality and justice. Revelation 8 also says that at some future point, God will add His incense and fire to these prayers, which manifest His judgment or justice on earth. And that is just what He did.

In 1857, many felt a U.S. Supreme Court decision sealed the fate of enslaved African-Americans. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the Supreme Court justices ruled by a 7-2 decision that slaves were the property of their masters—with no human rights or representation in court. But because of prayer and acts of obedience, hearts were changed, and eventually this demonic decree over America was broken. Revival was released, and justice came, setting slaves free. Both prayer and action comforted God's heart.

Today, our generation is also being called to prayer and action, to be voices for the voiceless, releasing revival and justice. Dr. King said in his "I Have a Dream" speech: "for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone." Just as God raised up a unified remnant of black and white during slavery and the civil rights movement, today, He is connecting the past with the future in more ways than one.

Discovering a Divine Connection

As God would have it, as my Lockett forefathers in Lake Providence prayed for years for slavery to end, the last major battle of the Civil War happened at a property called Lockett

Farm just north of Farmville, Virginia. I didn't know about this until about four years ago, when one of my best friends, Matt Lockett, director of Bound4LIFE and JHOP DC, discovered he is a direct descendant of this Lockett family. In other words, since he is a direct descendant, it could be said that over 150 years ago, the Civil War ended in his family's front yard. History records that Lockett Farm was the site of the last battle before Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered three days later—April 9, 1865—at the Appomattox Court House in Virginia.

As friends, we were amazed by our uncanny “Lockett” coincidence. But as more was revealed in the months to come, we discovered we are connected to the same Lockett family.

You read that correctly. We've learned that several ancestors in Matt's family owned many, many slaves. After a year and a half of research, empirical evidence reveals that Matt's family of Locketts in Virginia owned my family of Locketts in Louisiana, who, according to U.S. Census records, originated in Virginia.

As this profound history unfolded, we wept together. This revelation blew our minds! Our connection is more than a coincidence, and the prayers of my slave forefathers were literally answered in the front yard of the same Lockett family who owned them—the same Lockett family of one of my friends, Matt Lockett. Though we've served in a national ministry together—I was one of the first Bound4LIFE board members 13 years ago—none of this was revealed to us until Matt's discovery of Lockett Farm four years ago. I've always known I was a son of former slaves, but it wasn't until 2013 that Matt learned he was a son of former slave owners.

About a year after this initial discovery, we learned that God was answering prayers for freedom and the ending of slavery on Matt's side of the Lockett family as well. Matt found out that another Lockett in his family line was one of Francis Asbury's

circuit-riding preachers—a revivalist and abolitionist who stood against slavery. In light of Matt's ministry and impact today, it is no coincidence this Methodist revivalist is part of his family heritage. Nor do I consider it a coincidence that for 13 years, I've been friends with a descendant of those same Locketts—contending together for revival as a new breed of abolitionist.

What's even more astounding is that we first met on Jan. 17, 2005, Martin Luther King Day, at a prayer meeting at the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. King said, "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." We have wondered if Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech wasn't merely poetic, but rather prophetic. Perhaps God had my family kettle come from a town called Lake Providence to show that all our destinies are more tied together than we realize, and the lake of His providence is way deeper and wider than we know.

When God gets this detailed in revealing history, you can't help but notice His signs and begin to wonder—and ponder. One question we've been pondering is: Why was this hidden from us until now? Perhaps it is because God knew racial tension and unrest would be rife in our nation now. Ferguson, Missouri; Charlottesville, Virginia; and other hotspots are only manifestations of the wounds God wants to heal—and will heal—through a unified godly remnant.

Another key question is "What is God saying to us all in this?" I don't have all the answers, but I believe He is saying He is serious about us connecting with the past to empower an awakening that will shape our nation's future. He also is revealing that life is precious, nothing "just happens" and no one is a mistake. Just as God addressed innocent bloodshed during slavery, He also wants us to deal with the issue today, which is the injustice that connected Matt and me years ago. On MLK celebration day in 2005, Matt

heard me speak for the first time about a new revival and justice movement, which included the unborn, and ever since, we've been praying for a revival that will end abortion, before we even knew our shared family history.

Uniting as One Voice

The God who wept over Walter Scott and Philando Castile is the same God who shed tears over five police officers killed in Dallas, Heather Heyer killed in Charlottesville and more than 60 million babies aborted in America. Will ending abortion fix all of our social ills? No, but can we truly solve any problem in our communities while abortion still exists? When we devalue people we cannot see and make them optional, inevitably it is easier to devalue some of the people we can see until they become marginal.

The answers, of course, lie in the church. The church was also the answer during slavery and the civil rights movement. A new remnant of Christians of all races working together on abortion and other issues, such as systemic poverty, education and mass incarceration, must pray for spiritual awakening. We must be voices for the voiceless in our day.

In God's irony, Lockett's farmhouse, the same house that unites Matt and me, is the same house that stood between a divided nation. History records that the Confederate Army was in the front of Lockett's 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 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 celebration 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.

In December 2017, Charlottesville clergy asked us to participate in a prayer meeting for healing the community. Not far from there stands Lockett Farm, which has a memorial stone in the front yard that reads: "April 6th, 1865, Here Lee Fought His Last Battle." Our families' 200-year-old kettle in hand, we went back to the spot where the prayers underneath the pot were answered. We built an altar there and prayed. Though we prayed tears of joy in thankfulness, we also prayed for another laying down of arms. Our earnest prayer is that America would unconditionally surrender to the God of providence.

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Will Ford III shares a prophetic dream that stresses racial reconciliation in the church and in the nation. Check it out at .