

Trayvon Martin: Responsive Reconciliation

As I pondered the recent tragedy regarding **Trayvon Martin**, I couldn't help but to reflect on the feeling I felt when I had to stare down the barrel of a gun being held by a police officer.

There was something very sobering about that moment. I knew that there was a possibility that my life could end as I knew it, and the fact that there was someone else on the other end with his hand on the trigger didn't bring any consolation to the thought. I began to consider the thoughts that possibly went through the mind of Trayvon as his life was stripped away from him.

This type of internal thought is what is polarizing the U.S. as we follow the tragedy of Trayvon Martin. Social media is going haywire with posts from retired grandparents to teenagers weighing in on this case. However, there has been a delayed response from one entity that is well-respected within the aforementioned generational groups: the church.

While several marches have taken place within the city of Sanford, Fla., and rallies ensued calling for the arrest of George Zimmerman, the one voice that was at first silent regarding this matter is the local church. With all the conspiracies that have yet to be substantiated as evidence, racial tension increasing, and the national media driving the public opinion, the church's voice must trumpet the truth loudly and clearly.

Many are wondering what the stance of the local church is. The institution that many people depend upon to receive answers as to how they should live is seemingly in an enigmatic state concerning this issue. I used the term enigmatic because it is

apparent that many are unclear as to the appropriate way to handle this situation. As complex as it may seem, there is a simple answer: Respond!

I had an opportunity to be involved in a private meeting with Sanford city officials, the former police chief and a government official. The one thing that was plaguing the whole situation was their inability to respond with answers to derail the firestorm of media speculation and restore faith in the justice system.

It was evident within that meeting as the conclusion was being made whether or not to release the 911 calls from the incident, that there was concern as to what could possibly happen as a result of it. The possibilities of what could happen were thrown around the room, but we kept coming back to the same conclusion: What is the proper response?

Mayor Jeff Triplett, despite the advice of state attorneys' office and Sanford city attorney's advice not to release the information, made the decision to respond by releasing those tapes and allowing the family to hear them that very day. Frankly, I think that his response was necessary and helped to bring some clarity to the situation.

The church's response is extremely important because it carries major implications. The responsibility to respond quickly is not as important as our ability to respond unified. However, due to the escalation of this matter, as it has become international news. the church has to step up! There must be solidarity in our response or we have allowed the same division that has come as result of the media's slant on this case to make it black/white.

The leadership within the church has a responsibility to come together and provide an undivided response to the matter of Trayvon Martin. If the church intends to be a catalyst for reconciliation in the matter, there cannot be differing

opinions as to how we are to handle this issue.

This situation calls for a meeting of the minds among the local church's leadership to bolster unity and build a bridge of hope for our community. If the leadership can unite around a common goal and respond with solutions that reflect the Heart of God, then—and only then—will we be able to deploy individuals that are effectively equipped to handle this situation and minister reconciliation. We saw that begin last week with a group of Sanford pastors. Now, it needs to continue in every city in the nation where racism lives.

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