

We Haven't Cried Yet

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.