

TWO PRAYERS FOR REFLECTING ON INJUSTICE

BY STEVE BROWN

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LEARN TO DO GOOD.
SEEK JUSTICE.
HELP THE OPPRESSED.
DEFEND THE CAUSE OF ORPHANS.
FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS
OF WIDOWS.
ISAIAH 1:17

The juxtaposition of two separate events – in the same week – is just mind-boggling.

The first event took place on Monday, May 25, 2020. That Memorial Day evening George Floyd had his neck pinned to the ground by a police officer's knee for nearly nine minutes.

Despite his own breathless pleas and the fervent calls of bystanders, George Floyd died in the street. The images were gut-wrenching, heartbreaking and horrifying. They seared into our minds like a nightmare. The second event took place a few days later. On Sunday, May 30, two NASA astronauts arrived at the International Space Station. Humans successfully arriving in space has always been momentous in my mind. But this trip involved the first commercially built and operated American spacecraft. This milestone highlights the imagination, innovation and ingenuity of humankind.

So, what's going on? Despite humanity having the intelligence, vision and fortitude to reach outer space, there are some deep, deep problems here in the everyday on planet earth.

The murder of another African-American marks the tip of an ugly iceberg. The iceberg is racism and injustice. These evils are not just embedded into structures and systems of American society. They are also embedded into the fabric of our world.

A wide range of deep emotions have engulfed society, and I have felt many of those same profound emotions. In trying to connect my feelings with my faith, I've been drawn back to two simple, powerful and dangerous prayers which were shared regularly by a married couple who were special mentors in my life. These



prayers invited God to stir deep reflection as well as mobilize active response in the midst of difficult situations.

THE FIRST PRAYER IS, 'LORD, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO LEARN?'

This prayer is about being led more by Jesus. It starts with followership, which takes a learning posture and requires humility expressed through careful listening and deep reflection. Ultimately, it seeks to be submissive to what the Lord is seeking to say, highlight and correct. The goal is that we might live and lead more like Jesus.

My response to this prayer is still incomplete and ongoing. But I believe God wants me to learn some significant lessons like:

- Whenever I look into the eyes of another human being, I look into the eyes of a person God created in his image. He created that person with great love and value – love and value so great that Jesus died for them. Therefore, I need to treat every person God has created with great love and great value.
- That the sins of racism and injustice are ugly. They cause deep pain, real harm and break trust. They are offensive to God. Though sometimes blatant, these kinds of sin can also be very subtle and hidden.
- This type of sin needs to be exposed and rooted out in our world, in systems, in structures and in me.
- I don't know what I don't know about racism and injustice. But I need to know more of what I don't know, even if it makes me deeply uncomfortable.
- Knowingly and unknowingly, I have perpetuated racism and injustice through privilege, actions and inaction.
- Jesus broke down barriers of racism and injustice. He was also a master bridge builder set on reconciling all people.
- There are tangible and practical actions I can take to stand with people facing racism and injustice. There are also things I can do to stand against injustice and to influence change.
- Ultimately, the message of the gospel is necessary to truly change human hearts.
- The grace and power of God, the truth of God, redemptive community and action are needed to further change my heart and our world.

THE SECOND PRAYER IS, 'LORD, HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO RESPOND IN ORDER TO HONOR YOU?'

Notice the focus of this prayer. Ultimately, it's about being submissive to the Lord. It's about bringing God

honour and glory, even when it may be uncomfortable or hard. Responding to this prayer is about living and leading more like Jesus with the desire to lead more to Jesus.

Again, my response is still incomplete and ongoing. It needs to be tangibly lived out in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. However, it is framed around:

- **Listening and Learning** I need to humbly and directly listen to my brothers and sisters of colour. I need to hear their stories, their hearts, their hurts, their hopes and their ideas for change. I'm also making sure that my reading list includes articles, podcasts and books on racism and injustice.
- **Lamenting** This means crying out to God with all the emotions injustice stirs. It means godly sorrow, confession and repentance. It means calling on God to bring change and justice. It means trusting in God to reconcile all people and things to himself.
- **Living and Leading Differently** Change needs to start with me. More pointedly, change needs to happen in me. With God's help and redemptive community, I need to see that any and all barriers to justice are broken down in my own heart and mind. I also need to be a catalyst for breaking down barriers that impact my team and organisation. I need to follow Jesus' example in being a bridge builder. I need to advocate for justice and against racism, because doing so honours God.

May God be honoured in my response each day going forward.

May these two simple, powerful prayers help guide you as a Jesus-centered leader who develops others who live and lead with Jesus at the center.

