

LOOSING LAZZARUS

LESSON 5

JESUS PRAYED,
SO I MUST PRAY!

SEVEN WAYS TO DECONSTRUCT PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL RACISM FROM JOHN 11

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Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." John 11:41 - 42

Growing up, my family had a tradition that Saturday mornings were reserved for cleaning the house. Seven people lived in my house and each of us had specific chores to do. The beauty of it all is that my parents would blast soul music throughout the house from the stereo. This music served as a melodious backdrop while we worked. When I heard Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Jackson 5, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, and the Temptations, I swept the floors with dancing in my feet and a smile on my face.

Saturday mornings took on a slightly different twist when my parents became committed followers of Jesus. In addition to playing Motown, my folks started playing gospel music. Andre Crouch, Walter Hawkins, and James Cleveland were incorporated into the soundtrack of our Saturday morning ritual. One song in particular made a lasting impact on me as a boy. It was called "Prayer Will Fix It Every Time" by The Revival Temple Choir. The lyrics say:

"I've learned to pray in and out of season, for any time, for any reason. Prayer is the key, faith unlocks the door. If you believe it shall be done. He'll hear every word you say. While you're calling Him, He's on His way. Prayer will fix it every time."

The soloist went on to sing,

"I see one witness. Come here Lazarus. You laid in the grave. You stayed there. But one day Jesus came by. He looked up and He said, 'For the benefit of those, standing around, I'm gonna call Lazarus. Lazarus, Lazarus, Lazarus!' Look at Lazarus! He got up from the grave and went walking downtown! O' prayer! Prayer will fix it!"

Great things happened when Jesus prayed. Lost people came into the kingdom. Hungry people got fed. Demons were cast out. Sick people became well, and dead people were raised from the dead. Jesus prayed bold prayers to a great God, and so should we.

One proof that God sent Jesus was found in the fact that His prayers were answered. The Bible tells us that when we pray according to God's will, He hears us. And we know that if God hears us, He grants us the petitions we are asking of Him (*1 John 5:14 - 15*). Prayer is probably the most underutilized resource in the church today, especially when we think about asking God to bridge and heal the racial divide in this country. It seems that we are more prone to complain than we are to pray. If we're honest, how often does God hear us pray about justice—which is biblical?

How often does God hear us pray about unity—which is biblical? How often does God hear us pray about reparation and restoration—which are biblical? How often does our Father hear us pray for His racially diverse and unified kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven?

How often do we pray prayers of national repentance over the sins of institutional racism that are then accompanied with fruit in keeping with repentance? How often does God hear us confess our own sins of prejudice, bias, and racism? How often does God hear us confess the sins of our ancestors and ask for forgiveness when it pertains to the reality of racial difference in America?

How often does God hear us cry out for justice to run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream? How often does God hear us cry out for the scales of justice to be rightly balanced in our nation? If righteousness exalts a nation, how often does God hear us petition Him for righteousness to exist within all branches of our government?

Not only that... How often does God hear us ask for police reform and better training in our local police departments? How often does God hear us petition His throne for arrests AND convictions in cases involving police brutality and the unnecessary, unjust murders of unarmed black civilians?

How often does God hear us ask for our churches and Christian institutions to be racially diversified in top levels of management and decision-making as a display of His kingdom? How often does God hear us cry out to Him for our under-served neighbors and their neighborhoods to be economically empowered and no longer gentrified?

If we really want things to change, we have to change how we pray. We serve a God who can raise the dead, but we have to pray like Jesus prayed and ask Him to do it.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01.** Why should we be like Nehemiah and Daniel and confess the sins of our forefathers in prayer when we didn't commit the sins they committed?
- 02.** If you are white, was it hard for you to hear Dr. Williamson say that white people typically benefit presently from the past sins of racism? Why or why not?
- 03.** Do you believe it is possible for one's whiteness to ruin his or her witness? Explain.
- 04.** Approximately ten years after Pentecost, Peter finally had his "now moment" when he realized that God was no respecter of persons (*Acts 10:34, NIV*). When did you have your "now moment" and what kind of fruit has it produced?
- 05.** What kind of bold prayers can you pray to a big God to see Him do great things in our society concerning overcoming the evil of racism with good?

