

Why Was I So Blind?

How had I not seen this before? Why was I so blind to the pain around me until now?

I woke up feeling heavy with what is happening in our world. Injustice. Racism. Hatred. Fear. Defensiveness. Arrogance. Violence. ***We are hurting, grieved, and weary. We long for justice, mercy, and change but aren't seeing it.*** In short, we are suffering. As individuals and as a nation.

One of my deep convictions is that God has a redemptive purpose in all our suffering. He uses our pain in incredible ways – to draw us to himself, to change us, and to encourage others. One day we will see how the hardest and most painful things in our lives, our deepest wounds, have produced something unimaginably glorious. I am convinced that our suffering is never for nothing and that God is using it in a thousand ways we may never know.

In the face of all this turmoil, it's easy to forget that God is sovereign and that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father's will. *Joni Eareckson Tada says, "God permits what he hates to accomplish what he loves." I must keep that in mind as I look at my suffering and the suffering around me. Even in our anguish, God is accomplishing something good.*

Yet that knowledge doesn't mean we can just sit and wait. **As I have been praying about my response to the unjust killings, the inflammatory and painful reactions on all sides, the rampant feelings of isolation and desolation, there are three things I am trying to do. Listen, lament, and repent.**

I need to listen more carefully.

Jesus says, "take care how you listen" (Luke 8:18 NASB), which can mean listening empathetically, hearing the hurt behind people's actions, and not presuming we understand their perspective. It means being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry (James 1:19). Personally, I am slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to become angry.

Ann Voskamp says, "Anger is contagious, and so is grace." I wrote an entire post [{link}](#) about that statement as I see my desire to be heard and understood and how often I am unwilling to listen and understand others. In most arguments, I am convinced of my rightness and can barely see that the other side has any valid points.

As I've been listening, I've been convicted about my lack of involvement regarding the racial unrest in our country. As a child of Indian immigrants, I felt I didn't need to enter the discussion because no one accused me of "white privilege." Since it didn't affect me directly, I had the luxury of sitting back and not "seeing" the widespread injustices to African Americans. I readily dismissed news accounts because media sources give us information colored by their own agendas and perspectives. *But now I'm leaning in, and I'm listening to new voices. I'm asking friends about their experiences. We're having more conversation around our dinner table over the subject of race than we've ever had. I'm asking God to open my blind eyes.*

I believe that black lives don't simply matter – black lives are infinitely precious. And I understand, finally, that we must acknowledge that preciousness specifically and not make the blanket statement that "all lives matter." Of course, all lives matter. That's indisputable. But African Americans are wondering, 'Do you care about what's happening to me? Do you see me? Do I matter?' And we as a nation, and especially those who love Christ, need to respond with a resounding YES to our African

American brothers and sisters who are asking whether we support them, see them, and care about the wrongs they are enduring.

I recently read this comment: “Do all lives matter? Most definitely, YES. However, if there are a number of houses on a street and one of them is on fire, that is the house that matters.”

The recent unjust killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor and many others are not the crux of the issue but rather the tipping point of a long history of slavery, oppression, and systemic racism in our nation. While we may have made progress, there is much work yet to be done. We need to recognize that these killings are not isolated incidents but are just the headline examples of a larger, more pervasive problem. I am grateful for voices like Shai Linne [{link}](#) who have bravely shared their stories so we can begin to understand the issues on a deeper level.

We all need to educate ourselves and to listen. To listen to the voices of people who think differently than we do. And offer grace because we will all fail, misspeak and make mistakes in this conversation.

In addition to listening to others, I am crying out to God for myself and on behalf of everyone who feels marginalized, misunderstood, and unheard. I am lamenting.

Lament is the biblical response to suffering and pain, expressing helplessness without succumbing to feelings of hopelessness. It is pouring out our complaint to God over what seems unjust and often unthinkable. It’s asking God to act on our behalf. And it is trusting that God has purposes behind our pain. *Mark Vroegop says, “Lament enters the complicated space of deep disappointment and lingering hurt. And it boldly reaffirms the trustworthiness of God.”*

While I’m explicitly lamenting the racial injustice in our country, I realize there are millions of others around the world who are hurting too. Some have watched loved ones die, others are unemployed and overwhelmed, still others have lost dreams and lost hope. I am lamenting with you as well. But this post is about my need to lament with the black community.

We collectively cry out, “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you... for he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted. Be gracious to me, O Lord! See my affliction from those who hate me... Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail.” (Psalm 9:9-10, 12-13, 19)

Even as we lament, God is calling us as individuals and as a nation to repent. Our foe is Satan and not each other. He wants to divide the church. He wants to divide us racially. He wants to divide us politically. Satan wants us to hate, to murder, to be enraged, and to feel smug, mistrusting, and self-righteous. God calls us to love, unity, and compassion which should result in an outpouring of action as people see our faith working through love.

This is a gospel issue. It is a wake-up call to the church because as believers we need to lead the way in loving others. Our love needs to be genuine. We need to hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good. We must outdo one another in showing honor and not be lazy in our efforts as we serve the Lord while remaining constant in prayer. (Romans 12:9-13)

None of us is without sin. All of us need to examine our hearts. Have our words and thoughts incited hatred and anger? Have we justified ourselves and our positions? Have we prayed for those we disagree

with? Have we assumed the worst in others and the best in ourselves? Do we believe the problem lies with other people instead of our own hearts?

Repentance begins with us. With me. I am asking God to search my heart. To show me if there are grievous ways in me. To lead me in truth. I am asking the Lord, "What am I not seeing?" and then asking him to give me sight. **Repentance involves change and is evidenced by fruit.** I'm convicted that I need to act on what God is showing me. I readily admit I have a long way to go, and I'm just beginning. I've been apathetic and lazy. Now I'm reading black writers. Trying to understand the issues I've long ignored. Speaking up against racism when I have the opportunity.

Mordecai's words to Queen Esther about speaking up for the Jews when their lives were threatened are applicable today. **We cannot keep silent, for perhaps God has called us for such a time as this (Esther 4: 14)**

No matter the color of our skin, our political leanings, our beliefs about our rightness and righteousness, we all need to listen, lament, and repent. Listen to others. Cry out to God. Consider our own sin. Make a step towards change. Ask God for revival. Trust that God is using our suffering for good. **We do not grieve as those without hope, for our hope and help is in God, the maker of heaven and earth.**

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God." (Psalm 42:11)