

BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

“Racism is still with us. But it is up to us to prepare our children for what they have to meet, and, hopefully, we shall overcome.”

Rosa Parks

Question: Share your thoughts about the recent events in Charlottesville in one short phrase.

- "I condemn the forces of white nationalism, white supremacy and anti-Semitism that divide our country today and I also condemn those who seek to politicize it all for their political gain" - Samuel Rodriguez
- "I saw bodies in the air as a car drove into a crowd of people. I saw all the symptoms of racism, anti-Semitism, and hate coming out into the open like a cancer destroying the body it infects. And I heard a great deal of silence. I have, myself, watched in silence too often — whether in public or in private, and God help me, I repent and I will try to do better." - Elizabeth Wartick
- "A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed — what gospel is that?" Oscar Romero
- "To be wounded by the suffering of others is a gift of the Holy Spirit." - Gregory Baum
- "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." -Nelson Mandela
- "Most Christian 'believers' tend to echo the cultural prejudices and worldviews of the dominant group in their country, with only a minority revealing any real transformation of attitudes or consciousness. It has been true of slavery and racism, classism and consumerism and issues of immigration and health care for the poor." - Richard Rohr

Question: What are the biblical and theological grounds that white supremacists are trying to stand on? How might you counter such claims theologically and biblically? What might you say to white people who believe that racism is not a problem today?

- “The very start of the Southern Baptist convention — the largest, protestant, white, religious organization in the world — started over the issue of slavery.” - Pastor E. Dewey Smith Jr
- “It is ironic that America, with its history of injustice to the poor, especially the black man and the Indian, prides itself on being a Christian nation.” - James Cone
- “Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Question: What can churches do to address and own racism, past and present, particularly predominantly white congregations?

- “Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world. Let us not tire of preaching love. Though we see that waves of violence succeed in drowning the fire of Christian love, love must win out; it is the only thing that can.” - Oscar Romero
- “Racism is a much more clandestine, much more hidden kind of phenomenon, but at the same time it's perhaps far more terrible than it's ever been.” - Angela Davis

Question: Discuss this quote from James Baldwin: “I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.”

- “The core of liberation theology is profoundly “theological” - that is, rooted in the very nature of God. You see, there's an immediate relationship between God, oppression, liberation: God is in the poor who cry out. And God is the one who listens to the cry and liberates, so that the poor no longer need to cry out.” - Leonardo Boff
- “If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world.” –Kofi Annan

More Questions

- What can an individual do to confront systemic racism? For example, due to redlining practices in the United States, white families were able to generate and pass on wealth through homes and property values. This housing disparity has led to a continued wealth difference between black and white families in the United States. What can an individual do to deal with and fight this systemic problem?
- Do you feel that it's better not to talk about racism because it is too divisive? Or do you imagine that we have to talk about it (and address it) because it is, what Jim Wallis has called, "America's original sin"?
- Discuss this quote from Lisa Sharon Harper: "When talking about the gospel, my white evangelical friends tend to leave stuff out. In the evangelical worldview, if it's gospel, then it's essential. If it's not gospel, then it's extra-curricular. So, exploitation of people and voter disenfranchisement of people and breaking up families through mass deportation is extra-curricular. And facing down the colonizing spirit in the white church is, well, extra-curricular."
- What theological questions has the last week raised for you?

More Quotes

- Now, there are certainly bad people on all sides, but there are not "many sides" to this issue—this was a gathering of the alt-right and, whether you supported now-President Trump or not, there is no question they have been emboldened by his election...So, as a white evangelical, part of a demographic category who disproportionately supported President Trump, let me start by saying this movement is antithetical to the gospel. It is an abomination to all that we stand for, and it must be condemned on every level of leadership in the Church. There is no room for waffling. We cannot sit in silence hoping this will pass." - Ed Stetzer
- "White Christians will inevitably ask, "But what do we do?" This question perpetuates the problem. People of color did not create white supremacy; white people did. To ask a racial minority how to solve a problem they

didn't create and one under which they suffer only adds to their burdens."

- Jemar Tisby

- "In the "lynching era," between 1880 to 1940, white Christians lynched nearly five thousand black men and women in a manner with obvious echoes of the Roman crucifixion of Jesus. Yet these "Christians" did not see the irony or contradiction in their actions." - James Cone
- Racism is a much more clandestine, much more hidden kind of phenomenon, but at the same time it's perhaps far more terrible than it's ever been. - Abraham Joshua Heschel

Some well-known figures and voices

- "I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows." - Martin Luther King Jr.
- "The scars and stains of racism are still deeply embedded in the American society." - John Lewis
- "From my point of view, no label, no slogan, no party, no skin color, and indeed no religion is more important than the human being." - James Baldwin
- "Hating people because of their color is wrong and it doesn't matter which color does the hating. It's just wrong." - Muhammad Ali
- "But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in darkness." -1 John 2:11
- "People know about the Klan and the overt racism, but the killing of one's soul little by little, day after day, is a lot worse than someone coming in your house and lynching you." - Samuel L. Jackson
- "We have made enormous progress in teaching everyone that racism is bad. Where we seem to have dropped the ball... is in teaching people what racism actually is." - Jon Stewart

A final thought - from Susan Bro, mother of Charlottesville victim Heather Heyer

My child's famous Facebook post was, "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention." She paid attention. She made a lot of us pay attention. Oh my gosh, dinner with her we knew was going to be an ordeal of listening. And conversation, and perhaps disagreement. But it was gonna happen.

And so my husband would say, "OK, I'm going to go out in the car and play my video game for a while." And so we'd sit and we'd grill. And she and I would talk. And I would listen. And we would negotiate. And I would listen. And we would talk about all the stuff. We talked about politics, we talked about anything that caught her eye that she felt was fair, unfair. She'd talk about her feelings about the office and how things were going. I mean, she just talked. The girl loved to talk. And she was single, so there was nobody listening at home, so Mama got a lot of it. And that was wonderful.

You never think you're gonna bury your child, you never think to take those pictures. They asked me for pictures for this, and I struggled. I had pictures from her childhood, but I had to go to Facebook to find pictures of my child, because we were always together. I saw her a couple of times a month at least and we would text each other fairly often, and we would Facebook message at bedtime, "I love you. You doing OK?" "Yep, I love you."

So I have no regrets on that part. Take pictures of the ones that you love because you don't know when they're not going to be there.

But here's what I want to say to you today: This could be a storm in a teacup and it could all be for nothing. I could have said, "Let's not do this publicly, let's have a small, private funeral." But you know, that's not who Heather was.

Anybody who knew Heather said, "Yep, this is the way she had to go. Big and large." Had to have the world involved, because that's my child. She's just that way. Always has been, and will continue to be.

Because here's the message: Although Heather was a caring and compassionate person, so are a lot of you. A lot of you go that extra mile. And I think that's the reason that what happened to Heather has struck a chord. Because we know that what she did is achievable. We don't all have to die, we don't all have to sacrifice our lives.

They tried to kill my child to shut her up. Well guess what? You just magnified her.

So here's what I want to happen: You ask me, "what can I do?" So many caring people, pages and pages and pages of stuff I'm going through, I'm reading pages and pages and pages of how she's touching the world. I want this to spread. I don't want this to die.

This is just the beginning of Heather's legacy. This is not the end of Heather's legacy. You need to find in your heart that small spark of accountability. What is there that I can do to make the world a better place? What injustice do I see?

And you might want to turn away — "I don't really want to get involved with that. I don't want to speak up. They'll be annoyed with me. My boss might think less of me." — I don't care. You poke that finger at yourself, like Heather would have done, and you make it happen. You take that extra step. You find a way to make a difference in the world.

My child had a high school education; my child was no saint. She was hard to raise, because everything was a negotiation — not kidding — but you know what? She was a firm believer in whatever she believed. And let's do that. Let's find that spark of conviction, let's find in ourselves that action. Let's spread this. Let's have the uncomfortable dialogue.

It ain't easy sitting down and saying, "Well why are you upset?" It ain't easy sitting down and going, "Yeah, well I think this way, and I don't agree with you, but I'm gonna respectfully listen to what you have to say." We're not going to sit

around and shake hands and go "Kumbaya." And I'm sorry, it's not all about forgiveness. I know that's not a popular trend.

But the truth is: we are gonna have are differences. We are going to be angry with each other. But let's channel that anger not into hate, not into violence, not into fear, but let's channel that difference, that anger, into righteous action.

Right now, down the road, there's a blood drive going on in Heather's name. Right now, there are people who are here willing to listen to one another and talk to one another. Last night in New England, they had a peaceful rally in Heather's name to have some difficult dialogues. If you ever want to see what one of those dialogues looked like, look at her Facebook posts. I'm telling you, they were rough sometimes, but they were dialogues, and the conversations have to happen. That's the only way we're gonna carry Heather's spark through.

So remember in your heart: If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention. And I want you to pay attention, find what's wrong, don't ignore it, don't look the other way. You make a point to look at it and say to yourself, "What can I do to make a difference?", and that's how you're going to make my child's death worthwhile.

I

'd rather have my child, but, by golly, if I got to give her up, we're gonna make it count."