
I've been thinking about the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. And like you, I'm so troubled by the continuing brutality against black men and women. Why does this continue to happen?

At the risk of sounding overly simplistic, our problem is that we do not value the lives of all human beings equally. As a people, we have agreed that some lives are more valuable than others. By our actions, we have said that not all human beings are created in the image of God.

Read Isaiah 58:1-8

These words were written to the nation of Israel during a time of great spiritual and political struggle. (Remember, Israel is the spiritual ancestor of the church.) The people seem to be *doing* the right things. But they are rebuked because their hearts were not right with God.

- 1) Israel had confused rituals with relationships. What outward actions has Israel practiced (vv. 2-3)?

- 2) What problems does the Lord see in their relationships (vv. 4-5)?

- 3) What kind of outward action ("fasting") does the Lord desire (vv. 6-7)?

- 4) What is the result of this kind of righteousness (v. 8)?

Except for a couple members of the East Main church, the majority of us do not understand what it's like to be a person of color in America. If you're like me, you probably grew up in a white, middle class home. This has been our privilege.

5) What was it like to grow up in your home? What brought you enjoyment? What kind of struggles, if any, did you have?

But there is another side to growing-up in America. There is a problem with certain social systems in America that you and I have been mostly unaware. And we need to educate ourselves about the various ways those who are *not privileged* are being oppressed and exploited.

6) When have you witnessed an act of racism, or experienced it yourself?

I am not condemning us who are white, educated and employed. But I believe with privilege comes responsibility. The churches in America need to take it upon ourselves to speak-out against injustice, and be a voice against oppression.

Prayer: Ask Yahweh to give you eyes to see injustice and ears to hear the voice of the oppressed.

These are books that you might consider reading to learn about the effects of racism today. (Note, most of these are by secular authors and may contain language that is offensive.)

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation, Latasha Morrison

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, Brian Stevenson

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander

Between the World and Me, Ta-Nehisi Coates

Dirty Little Secrets About Black History: It's Heroes and Other Troublemakers, Claud Anderson