

## FINDING HOPE - A DIALOGUE ON RACE & FAITH

Scripture used: [John 11:32-44 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon joined Pastors John and Gary to have a much-needed conversation about race, and what it means to follow Jesus today. With America in crisis, we are tempted to despair. This is the same despair that Lazarus's sister Mary felt. But when we consider Jesus and look to Him for answers, we can see a way forward. In fact, we, as Jesus followers, are a critical part of the way forward. Jesus commanded the community to remove the stone from Lazarus' grave, and then the grave clothes. In this way, the community participated with Jesus in making a new reality that seemed impossible only a few moments before, and this is the church's opportunity now! The pastors discussed the problem of systemic racism in America as another problem that only God can address. Racism is not merely about individuals, although those stories are the most tragic. Racism also seeps into every part of life. It is deeply rooted in all aspects of our society. It is a sin that cannot be shut off like a light switch, and we can no longer ignore it. Our nation is ready to confront this evil in all its forms, as evidenced by the diversity of people protesting. It is now our responsibility as a church to lead the way, and that begins with conversations. Listening to each other is the first step to developing real solidarity, and taking the necessary action to build a more just, equal, and free America.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **We must listen to each other.** All three pastors modeled the behavior of Jesus during their conversation. They acknowledged each other's pain. Each of them shared personal stories. Pastor Gary explained how important it is for all of us to remember there is "no condemnation," as Paul writes in [Romans 8:1 \(NLT\)](#). We are all broken, and must feel safe enough to share those stories of our pain. The church should be the perfect environment for those conversations.
- 2) **We must learn from each other.** Each pastor brought a different perspective to the scripture. They all emphasized different points, and came to understand Jesus more completely as a result. In particular, Pastor Hurmon's reminder that Jesus shared the pain of many African-Americans. He was brutally beaten by the police, wrongly convicted of a crime He didn't commit, and finally killed by the state.
- 3) **We must lament with each other.** Pastor Hurmon explained to the other pastors, who are both white, that his experience is fundamentally different than theirs. At least three or four times a week he will have racially-tinged encounters with people around Palo Alto. That is a burden for him and for his family. The other pastors did not try to rush Pastor Hurmon through this story, but instead walked with him in his pain. This is the same way Jesus walked with the crowd to Lazarus' grave.
- 4) **When we act as a church, we can overturn today's reality.** Jesus faced a dead man and brought him back to life. This is the most obvious example of God's triumphant, life-giving power. We can be used as instruments of that same power. The systemic racism in America is a deep-rooted sin. It can seem impossible to get rid of it. But all things are possible through God.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - When we are confronted with people who are suffering, Jesus offers us a model for engaging them. He was not defensive because He recognized there was trauma and pain behind all the accusations that were flung at Him. How does this example inspire you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - We can't move forward without learning more from each other. What is one fear that is standing in the way of you pursuing a conversation with somebody about race?
- 3) **DO** - With the [Connect4Challenge](#), NBCC encourages all of us to have conversations about race. This form of listening leads to powerful learning and lamenting. Then we will be equipped to take God-inspired action to heal our community and our nation, starting with our own spheres of influence, where we are empowered to begin to make a difference through our relationships, influence, and leadership.