



Faith Forum

CALLED TO BE FREE:

A Conversation on Racial Healing through Spiritual Formation

Session 3: “The Fruit of the Spirit is Love” with Dr. Jerry Taylor

8/20/23

Mic Biesboer: Jerry Taylor asked that I pray for energy on his behalf. Three sessions and half a day is a lot for anyone, so we appreciate Jerry and are grateful that he committed this time to be with our church family. As we all know, time is a sacred commodity, especially when you are a busy person and a lot of faith communities are asking you to join them. I know Jerry just came from Dallas, I believe. We were talking last night that you are about to head to New York soon, and you're all over the place. Special thanks to his wife for sharing him. That's one of her gifts, I think.

In addition, today is not the only day of Faith Forum. In fact, we have three more weeks of Faith Forum. A reminder to all of us is that Faith Forum is not a place in which we solve the world's problems. Faith Forum is an ongoing conversation. If there's any place that can have difficult conversations about real topics and issues that are happening in today's society and culture, it should be church. The church is equipped with wisdom. We have a compass that's found in Jesus Christ. Because of our orientation, our anchor into God, we have the ability, the rootedness to be able to have conversations. So we see this as an ongoing conversation.

No matter where you have entered in today, we find that where you are is a normal place to be. And that's because each of us are on this journey of trying to identify what in the world we are doing in a world like today. So that's why Faith Forum was created; it's for us periodically, once or twice a year, to have very meaningful conversations about topics that many of us are already having. But for some reason, we neglect them in the context of faith community. So rather than have those on social media or around lunch tables with other people or awkward conversations at Thanksgiving dinner tables, why not talk about it as disciples of Christ?

Next Sunday we will have a panel discussion. The folks that are invited to the panel next Sunday participated in what has been called a bus tour. Dr. Jerry Taylor referenced the Amarillo Six, so what

happened was six of us heard about Jerry Taylor offering a bus tour hosted by the Carl Spain Center. We decided to commit ourselves for a week. We did not know what to expect. In fact, I kept thinking about the facts. What happened was that it was the “who” that changed my life. Jesus was the “who” in the community I participated with at this event. There'll be a few of us that want to speak towards that. Not necessarily to give you a day-by-day tour guide, but more importantly to share what we discovered—we are not experts—but what we have discovered when we intentionally pursued a conversation like racial relations. We're still not there yet, but I think you'd be blessed to hear people's testimonies, from their perspective. This trip just happened to be a catalyst for that.

One more disclaimer. We realize that in four weeks again, we're not going to fix everything. Hopefully, this is just a motivation and trigger to pay attention to how we understand people and the way that God loves and works through a variety of people, cultures, races, socioeconomics, whatever it may be.

We long for your Spirit, oh God, your Spirit that calls to your new creation. We long for your Spirit, oh God, that calls us to bear fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We long for your Spirit, oh God, that draws us near to each other in greater unity. We long for your Spirit who navigates through the storms, through the grievances, the hurts and the pains, the hate, the troubles and sorrows, and the trauma that exists in the world around us. Oh Lord, we long for your Spirit. God, if there's anything that we hear today, it's that your Spirit has been made available and known to us. It's through your Son Jesus' name we pray.

Dr. Jerry Taylor: Thank you, Mic. The passage that we will focus our attention on this afternoon is Galatians 5:22-26. I want to express my appreciation to each of you for your commitment to be here on this day through all three sessions. We are now embarking upon the third and final session for the day. We appreciate you for investing time and energy into this very, very important subject matter that we have embarked upon here. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. And since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking, and envying one another."

The fruit of the Spirit is love. In the closing verses of this section, Paul highlights the profound nature of the fruit of the Spirit. He outlines qualities such as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control as the tangible manifestations of a life that is lived in harmony with the Holy Spirit. However, within the context of today's world, it's disheartening to witness the absence of these very virtues particularly in the realm of race relations.

The prevailing spirit among Christians regarding the topic of race often seems discordant with the work of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace, and other such virtues are regarded by some as being too soft and too ineffective. The face of societal changes and the desire for power and influence can lead some to forsake these essential qualities for a more aggressive stance. There is a dangerous shift occurring in our country today among some Christians who view humility and compassion as weaknesses. And they have decided to replace these virtues with tactics and strategies that mimic the very forces that they seek to combat and destroy.

The irony is that when we adopt the methods of darkness to battle darkness, we inadvertently become part of the darkness itself. As Christians, we face a fundamental choice. Will we allow our inner nature to

be transformed by the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus producing the fruit of love, peace and self-control? Or will we succumb to the allure and the power and the tactics of the world yielding to divisive behavior? Paul's reminder is that we belong to Christ and that our old nature has been crucified with its desires. It speaks to the transformative power of the gospel which we now must ask ourselves, "What gospel have we been converted by?"

There are many gospels in the world today as it was during the time when Paul wrote the letter to the churches of Galatia. He said that there was such a thing as a perverted gospel. And it is possible to have obeyed a perverted gospel which will produce a perverted form of Christianity that has nothing to do with the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If we have been converted by a perverted gospel, we'll most likely meet Him on that day crying to Him, "Lord. Lord." And He will say, "Depart from me. I do not know you." So we have to examine the faith that we have to make sure that faith is rooted and grounded, an unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ that it is not rooted in some perverted form of a cultural gospel of race. And even though race is in the word grace, we must not pursue allegiance to race and to disgrace.

So we must make this commitment to allow the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit of love. And by living in step with the Holy Spirit, we manifest the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. The flesh counteracts the fleshly desires that lead to conceit, provocation, and envy. These very qualities—love, joy, peace, and self-control—are essential in the realm of race relations. We cannot be successful in the realm of race relations without exercising these virtues. They enable us to engage in difficult conversations and enable us to bridge wide divides. As Christians, we must reflect on whether our actions obstruct the work of the Spirit, quench the work of the Spirit in producing these fruits within us. But we must ask the question, "Am I a freeway for the Holy Spirit to have a free expression of the fruit that is seeking to manifest through my individual life into the collective life of the church?"

The pull of the flesh with its worldly, ego-driven desires poses a constant challenge to living in accordance with the Holy Spirit. Again, I will say that this is a critical junction. We must decide as the church of the living God whether we'll shine forth with the fruit of the Spirit regarding the realm of race relations, and maybe even in our political discourse the call to love, to display joy and peace, and to demonstrate self-control even amidst contention. These are not just religious ideals, but practical necessities fostering understanding and reconciliation. As we grapple with the complexities of race relations, nobody in their good mind would pretend as if this is an easy topic. But as we grapple with the complexities of race relations, we must strive to overcome the allure of worldly power acknowledging the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

By yielding to the Spirit's work, we can embody the virtues of love, we can embody the virtue of peace, we can embody the virtue of humility and create a space where conversations on race are guided by the principles of the kingdom of God rather than by the divisive tactics of this fallen and corrupt world. We are called to be the sheep of His pasture. We are called to be under the lordship of the chief Shepherd. We have been called to take on His very nature, which is the nature of a lamb, the nature of a dove, not the nature of a goat. A goat is hardheaded and will fight with a stop sign that isn't even trying to argue. The nature of a goat is to be the most stubborn thing on the planet. And it runs head on with another goat. It seems as if it gets joy out of butting heads with other goats. Well, Christ has not given us the nature of a goat. He has given us the nature of sheep and the nature of doves. And we are called to make peace in the world.

Jesus is the chief Shepherd. He is expected to lead and guide His sheep into green pastures. Jesus never engaged human beings with the nature of a wolf. Wolves are clever. They know how to disguise their ferocious appetite by putting on the wardrobe of a sheep. We as Christians must make sure that we never ever yield to the seductive temptation to disguise a wolf-like nature by an external appearance of being a humble lamb or a humble sheep. We are called to be sheep and not wolves. Wolves fight for themselves. Wolves defend themselves. But sheep must be defended by a shepherd. And if we're fighting to defend ourselves against the evil forces of this world, we are sending a message to the Shepherd that, "We no longer need your staff. We can handle this on our own." I think we all can see what trouble the church has gotten itself in because sometimes we feel as if Jesus is dragging His feet to straighten the world out.

I have concluded that only He had enough sense to create it and only He has enough sense to straighten it out. So I take that off my shoulder and put it on His. I said, "Lord, you sure got your work cut out for you. I'm willing to be used by you. But you're the supervisor. I'm just on the team with everybody else, but you're running this." Brothers and sisters, I know that sometimes it seems like evil is winning and we get tempted to use some of the tactics on ourselves even as the church tries to overcome evil. But Paul has already told us we cannot overcome evil with evil. When we fight evil with evil, we end up creating more evil, and we all get consumed by it. The only power in the world that can defeat evil is good. I know that sometimes we look at things and we say, "No good. It's not working." We have to prove a point that we can be just as nasty and just as cruel as people who have never named the name of Christ. When we name the name of Christ, we cannot behave according to the rules of the world. We have to behave by the rules of a higher order.

That's where we have to call one another to put our attention back upon the higher standard of behavior in our fallen world. If Christians can't get it, there's no hope for the world. If we as the church cannot get it and encourage others outside of the church to come into the church to get it, then there's no hope for a peaceful society. I hope, pray, and trust that all other congregations across the face of the United States, and even around the world, will have the courage to have these kinds of conversations that you're having today because the life of humanity depends upon it. The world is in dire crisis. We are not running short of people who are willing to destroy other people in order to have their way. But we need people who are willing to represent the person of Christ, the person who dwells in us and through us by way of His Holy Spirit to be peacemakers in the midst of people who want to make war. That is our calling.

It's what He has called us unto. If we decide that the Sermon on the Mount is too weak, if we decide that the virtues of kindness, gentleness, long suffering, joy, and peace are too weak for us to follow, let us make an intentional decision about it and do no further harm in the name of Jesus Christ by saying that we are followers of Christ and living according to the rules and the principles of Satan. If we are going to say no to Him, we should make a clean cut and say, "I'm not pretending anymore to follow Jesus. I have decided to go the way of the world and use the tactics of the world." I'm not telling you to do that; to follow the way of the world. I'm hoping that you continue to choose Christ as you have chosen to be in this assembly today as we're growing together, challenging each other together, expanding our horizon of the kingdom that is not of this world together.

I believe that God is smiling here today as He knows our desire to be peacemakers and to offer a spiritual solution to a spiritual problem that most people identify as a social issue. Racism is a spiritual issue.

Unforgiveness is a spiritual issue. It is a matter of the heart. Only the Holy Spirit is the inside construction worker that can deconstruct and reconstruct what He has deconstructed. Only He can do that. May God bless us as we continue on that journey together.

Mic Biesboer: We do want to create some space for questions. I'll start with the first question. You a comment about the disguise of wolves in sheep's clothing. What are some tangible examples of what the wolf looks like? Because if it is clothed in sheep's clothing, how can we as mature disciples be able to identify, "Oh wait a minute. That's a wolf?"

Dr. Jerry Taylor: Very good. The wolf is located in the house. The wolf is not out yonder somewhere. The wolf is in the house. Unless the wolf that is in the house is dealt with by the divine chief Shepherd, and the status and the stature of that wolf nature that is in us by virtue of our human nature, our sinful nature—until and unless it is confronted by the divine chief Shepherd who has the power to address it and to eliminate it from our inner region, unless we give permission to the One who knocks at the door to enter in and sup with us, and to deal with the inner dwelling of that wolf nature, that wolf nature will remain a part of who we are. And it always has been hearing, keen ears to hear the wolf call when it is sounded outside of ourselves. A wolf out there can give a sound to awaken the wolf that is inside of myself. It is going to take the chief Shepherd to eliminate the presence of that nature of the wolf that has an appetite to kill, eat, and to destroy, and to cause the bloodshed of other human beings. That is something that is innate within human nature that only Christ through the liberating power of the Holy Spirit can eliminate from our inner being.

But if we say to the wolf, "I think it's possible for you to remain inside of this house and sit on that end of the table while Jesus sits on the other end." The wolf says, "Okay, I'll take that." And before you know it, the presence of Jesus is no longer inside of you; it's only the nature of the wolf. What is that nature like? It is that little quiet, silent voice that is the root of bitterness that exists in every sinful nature. It is that little taproot of anger and hostility and it has no color, but it can be activated to be targeted and directed toward a particular color or a particular racial group.

But the locus of the enemy is within, but the liberating power of the gospel is able to address us within, and to eradicate within, and to remove it from the inner territory of the human heart. Unless and until that happens, the sinful nature resides in us, filled with a spirit of bitterness and hostility. I don't know if you have ever encountered a person regardless of their race that can be very mean-spirited. They will look for opportunities to give expression to that root of bitterness and hostility. They don't know how to let love move in, so they're overtaken by a spirit of bitterness, a spirit of resentment, a spirit of retaliation, a spirit of revenge, a spirit of rage that exists within. So I think that when we understand that Jesus is the only source of freedom from that horrible, hateful, raging, hostile spirit that exists within, until we can recognize Jesus as being the liberator from that, we will continue to carry that. Just because we get baptized does not mean that that has been removed. Just because we go through the five acts of worship every Sunday does not mean that the spirit of hostility, anger, and bitterness has been removed. That is an inside job that will take the inner work of the Holy Spirit and for us making intentional decisions and choices to follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit as opposed to compromising those things.

Mic Biesboer: I feel like there are so many voices that are penetrating our hearts, our minds, and souls. Maybe even this week, if you find yourself triggered, bitter, upset, envious, angry—probably the hard question you have to ask yourself, "Is that the call of the Shepherd or the howl of a wolf?" I appreciate that. Thank you. Questions about this session. Frank is saying we do have previous precedents and

examples that showed ways to provide a means to a just ends in the person of Dr. Martin Luther King. Do you want to speak into that a little bit?

Dr. Jerry Taylor: Yes, that is absolutely right. But I would take it further than Martin Luther King. I would take it all the way back to Jesus the Christ because it was to the Christ in nature that Dr. King was pointing to that made his message and his actions so powerful during a historic period in this country that was so violent and so divided. I believe that we have to look not only at Dr. King but look at what was in him that was guiding him. And not only him, but for others that were a part of that great movement. Even before that, many individuals that were raised up during specific times in history that called everybody's attention to that higher wisdom of a higher source which is the wisdom of God. And what I want to do is challenge us today and appreciate the work of Dr. King and others who worked alongside him during that historic moment. But do not believe that those individuals that worked with him had a monopoly on what was within them.

So the call of today is for us to be reminded of the responsibility that we have to not look at Dr. King, but to look at what was in him. And to know that whatever it was that was in him that was driving him to do those heroic things exists within you and exists within me. There will never be another Martin Luther King, there will never be a great leader that we exalt from the past. But there can be other people that can tap into that same invisible reality that motivated them and activated them. I think this is what Jesus has called us to. Jesus has called us to the spiritual nature, the divine nature that has been entrusted to us. I think Dr. King and others recognize that and they were willing to get in step and get in harmony with that.

That too is the order of the day. That we need more than one individual. We need a whole generation of individuals. We don't need just one leader that can capture that and grasp that and live into that reality. We need a whole collective generation of leaders, generation of people that are tapping into the same common source that we all have common access to. I don't have a greater access to God than you do. You don't have a greater access to God than I do. We all have equal access to that divine life of the living Jesus that lives in us. The only thing that makes a difference is sometimes we don't believe we got it. And when we see people who have it, we fix our eyes on them and when they die, we say, "Well, there's nobody else left." We ought to make sure that we grow a collective generational supply of people that are tapping into the same divine light that Jesus had made available to the whole church. The church should be that collective body that is giving an expression of Christ. What do we call the church? What is the name of this church? It's the Central Church of Christ. What does that mean? The church of Christ.

It is the Christ. That's not Jesus' last name. That is his title. It means He is the anointed one. Christ as the anointed one came to make the anointed ones, too. But now coming to live within us through the power of the Holy Spirit activating the very presence of the Christ who now lives. Jesus died on Friday, but He got up Sunday morning unleashing the Christ's life. Death could not kill and hold Him in the grave. Where is the Christ today? We say we are the church of Christ. We need to say that we are the church that has Christ in us. And then we awaken as a sleeping giant to that enormous gift that Jesus entrusted to us which is the living, pulsating, breathing life of the Christ who lives in us. Where does Christ live? Paul says, "He lives in me." That's the power. If we can tap into that when we hear these howling wolf voices and we begin to listen to the voice of the Christ life that dwells in us, He then reminds us that God's divine nature has given us everything we need for life and godliness. So we have a whole lot of Martin Luther King running around here. Everybody gets to participate in that divine nature and we won't

relegate it to just one or two holy saints. All of us are saints. Some of us just haven't recognized it yet. But we are all saints given the capacity to grow into the fullness, the stature of Jesus Christ. That's our potential. Long answer to a short question.

Mic Biesboer: The question that Marley asked is not regarding just this particular church. It's across churches in America on Sunday mornings, that the admission, the confession is that Sunday mornings are a segregated time. How do we create a more diverse faith community on a Sunday morning? So obviously there's predominantly white members at the Central Church of Christ. Would you speak into that?

Dr. Jerry Taylor: I appreciate that. Yes, I think that should be the question that should be at the forefront of our minds when we gather in assemblies is the racial demographic. "Is everybody here looking just like me?" That should be asked regardless of whether the audience is majority black or white or Hispanic. Especially in the context of the church, we should be asking, "How can we have a supernatural expression of diversity that is not coerced or forced? How can that come to be?" I think it will have to start in a place where we should have started the whole conversation about racial integration in the first place, and that is at the house.

We started, I think, at the wrong house. We started at the schoolhouse. Even before we get to the church house, we need to start at our house because what is reflected at the church house normally is an indication of what happens at our own house around Thanksgiving time and around dinnertime and lunchtime. Meetings on weekends and dinners and gatherings and lunches and so on. If we cannot eat together, it's going to be hard to meet together. I'm not talking about M-E-A-T. I'm saying that we are going to have to be intentional about people that we invite into our most intimate, personal space, that we call our home.

If we could go back all the way to January 1, 2023, and ask the question, "How many white people have I had in my house at my dinner table? Can I count them on one hand? How many black and brown people have I had in my house sitting on my sofa, eating at my dinner table? How many black children have I had over to my house for a sleepover? How many white children have I been entrusted with to come to my house for a sleepover?" As a matter of fact, how many of us adults have gone to each other's house for a sleepover?

It's the most intimate space where you feel most vulnerable and most at home that you have to begin practicing inviting people into those spaces, where you are willing to feel awkward and you're willing to kind of look at each other in each other's eyes and feel that uncomfortability and fight through it any way. To just sit there until you become comfortable in each's other's presence. And really, the truth of the matter is the reason why we don't hang out with each other a whole lot is because we feel awkward. We don't know what to say. We don't know what the other person is thinking. We think about what the other person is thinking about so much that we can't even think straight.

I would say that would be a good starting place to have two or three people that are not of your own racial makeup to spend some time with you in your home or to rent an Airbnb and go on a trip together like we did on the bus. That was a rolling Airbnb. Some of us went to sleep while others were laughing and talking. We were together in a confined space. We couldn't jump off the bus. We had to stay there and go along with the experience, getting to know each other. It was intentional and I think it was life

transforming. So if we can do that on a bus for how many ever hours it was, surely we can do that in the house that's not rolling on wheels.

Mic Biesboer: William and I were roommates on that bus tour, so we actually did have a slumber party together. Here's another question that's probably on a lot of people's heart and minds. I appreciate Aaron being vulnerable in asking this question. The question is, "How should we understand repentance?" Whether it's an individual necessity or the church collectively in light of secular descriptions like white privilege, systematic racism, etc. There are a lot of words that we hear and readings, definitions and terms. Those words are wrapped up in this conversation. So how do we understand repentance individualistically or even communally? As a reference point, he gives two texts. One in Exodus where it mentioned that God is saying that you will live in the sin of generations. And another text in Deuteronomy where it says your sin is your own. So there's tension there as well. Since I don't have the answer, we're going to let you answer it.

Dr. Jerry Taylor: Well, we're going to see what the Lord has to say. Lord, I'm listening. This idea of repentance individually or collectively, I think as Christians we all have the responsibility to engage in spiritual formation, not just for the self but for the entire body. What I do in digging up and excavating all of the bitterness and the rage that I inherited from an oppressed people, it is now my obligation as a Christ follower to come face to face with that anger, with that resentment, with that bitterness, with that hostility, with that rage. I cannot afford to pretend as if it is not there because I have lived it, I have breathed it. I have been indoctrinated by older family members who experienced some atrocious things in their lives who have deposited those stories into my memory bank.

And now after I have made a decision to follow Christ, I now have to steal away for significant time in silence and solitude and being still long enough for those teachings, otherwise they remain buried at the top of my unconsciousness. Whatever is buried in the unconscious or in the subconscious is what will guide your behavior. You can have an intellectual approach to racial equality but if that subconscious level of your being has not been challenged and changed, you'll continue to espouse the theory that you don't even live according to within the subconscious part of your being.

That's why it will take time for me as an individual on behalf of my race of people that suffered at the hands of enslavement. I now have the individual responsibility as a redeemed believer of Jesus Christ to do some inner soul work and to come face to face with the brokenness that I inherited from my ancestors who were not allowed to learn how to read or write, were not allowed to read the Bible, that were treated less than human, treated as animals. All of that blood that existed back then that I inherited is running through my veins right now. And though I'm here in 2023, the ghost of the past is still whispering, and I can't function as if that is not a part of my reality.

Right now, if I want to spiritually evolve and become the full human being that God put me on this planet to become, I have to pay attention to the brokenness that I have inherited as a black human being in the context of the United States of America. But I can't just look at that and become embittered by it. I have to look at that and ask God to give me the strength to redeem that and to transform the brokenness into a blessing. That is to be done on behalf of the entire communities that we would call African-Americans because if I can get inner spiritual healing, it's going to have a spillover effect to anything I am related to as an African-American. If that is true for me, it therefore has to be true for my white brothers and sisters.

You were not back there physically or literally during slavery for your ancestors—I'm not saying everybody in here had an ancestor that enslaved people, but there were white ancestors that enslaved people. That same blood runs in the veins of people today. That's why we ought to be thankful for the blood of Jesus Christ because it can redeem. But just as I have to struggle with the temptation to live a life of bitterness, anger, hostility, and unforgiveness, my white brothers and sisters have to struggle with the fact that you have inherited at a subliminal subconscious level an entrenched belief that whiteness is superior to blackness.

I'm not saying that we consciously hold those views, but I'm saying living in the context in which we've lived in, in this country, it has a way of seeping in without us even knowing it. So how do I repent? Well, I have to practice some silence, some stillness, some listening and allowing all that stuff that has been buried to come up to the top. There's no reason to condemn yourself and hate yourself for that. That's just part of the humanity that has not yet been given expression to because it has been undiscovered. But through silence and stillness and being in the presence of God, He has a way of bringing to our attention all of the broken places within us that still need healing. Brothers and sisters, we can do that job together. We won't have our guns aimed at each other, but we'll have all of our guns aimed at a common enemy whose name is Satan who seeks to kill and destroy.

Mic Biesboer: I do know that there was one more question from our previous session. The question that Linda is asking is, "What language should we use that could help better prepare us to speak into or speak towards children, grandchildren, and others as they someday will be the voice of good news, the voice of gospel?" What language should we use even among each other? How do we speak into this?

Dr. Jerry Taylor: I think we have to emphasize the description that was given to Jesus in John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Why am I emphasizing word? Well, the Word had creative power. When it was spoken, it brought things into existence that did not exist before. God said, "Let there be light." The Word went forth and there was light. The Word went forth and said, "Let us create man in our own image," and mankind became a living soul. The power of life and death is in the tongue.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." If we ever want to know the intellect of God, we need to look to the vocabulary of God. There's only one word in it and that's Jesus. What creative capacity do we have existing in us that we call the word? The word still has the creative power to enable us to come to a fresh language that does not come to us from the outside world in, but comes to us from the inside world out. We're no longer allowing the external world to set the context of our vocabulary that we have to use certain words to talk about the issue of race. We have access to the divine creator that created that language in the first place. If we can tap into that divine reality in terms of the words that we need to use to talk about this very highly charged issue, I believe that the Word will give us the words that we need in order to communicate with each other.

He may even give us some new words to talk about this thing called race. We will not pigeonhole into the words that we've been taught to view as triggers to shut down our thinking capacity. When we hear a certain word, we've been conditioned to say, "Well, I'm not hearing anymore of this. I'm shutting down." As Christians, that should be an inner speaker that's speaking in a language that our souls understand and that we can understand in terms of each other striving together to come to a place of common agreement and common understanding in Christ Jesus. I believe that He will teach us what to say and how to say it and it will be rooted and grounded in a Spirit of love. Our words will not be

damaging, but they will be seasoned with salt. That's what I'm asking God to do with me is to refresh my language so that when I speak words, they will be filled with His divine peace that will give life and not bring death. That they will bring peace and not hostility and anger and war.

Those words that come out of our mouth must be spoken as the very oracles of God. They cannot be the oracles of God if we have not done the deep penetrating active listening to the inner voice of the inner teacher. Jesus said He will guide you into all truth. Not Fox News, not CNN, not MSNBC; they will not guide you into all truth. Not the media, but that inner teacher that the Holy Spirit through Jesus said, "I'm going to leave this with you to guide you into all truth." It is that Spirit that we have to listen to in the evaluation of everything that we hear coming from the world because sometimes information forms as incorrectly within and it is reflected in the ways that we behave towards other human beings. Acting wrongly towards other people is evidence that the wisdom that we are embracing is a fault that's not of God.

Mic Biesboer: God, thank you for today. Thank you for Dr. Jerry Taylor's vulnerability; his way of making himself transparent to us, exposing his soul in a way that has penetrated our hearts. God, thank you for sharing your brother with us. We say a special blessing upon him as he travels home. Keep him safe, God. Again, we're grateful for his family. Of course, the same blessing that you have given him, we put upon us that we be your people this week and beyond. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.