

A BRIEF THOUGHT ON BALTIMORE

Posted on May 2, 2015 by Emily Taylor



When Brandon and I got married, we wrote our own vows; and one of the things Brandon said to me was: **I promise to listen not only to your words, but the thoughts and the feelings behind them.** And 8 years into this whole marriage thing, I'm so grateful that he has done exactly that. Because truth be told, there are times when my words just don't tell the whole story — and he has had the wisdom to learn my ways and love me enough to make the effort to reach resolution when conflict arises. Since neither of us are perfect, I have a feeling this strategy of investigating each other's hearts will continue for a while.

For me, I think it's possible that might be the best way to perceive and decipher what is going on in Baltimore. Because clearly this response is much bigger than the death of Freddie Gray. And the following verse gives some direction quite applicable to both parties involved.

"The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger." Proverbs 29:7-8

I should probably come clean that my initial reaction was shock and disgust. And I still can't fully dismiss the chaotic violence that resulted in fear, disorder, looting of

people's livelihoods —and general cultural distress. It was like an adult temper tantrum. Looting the stores of those in your own community and burning stuff in the streets just doesn't make sense to me when you're demonstrating out of anger that your community is being mistreated. And claiming racial discrimination from the police when your police department is majority minority doesn't seem to jive either. Hurling bricks and debris at those in authority seems foolish and deserving of discipline. We are lucky to have a functional police system in our country. While there are certainly flaws (we are still humans and all of us are susceptible to poor decision), we are so much better to have them in place. After reading; [The Locust Effect](#), by Gary Haugan; I am more convinced than ever this is true.

But...

Neither would it be the first time there was an abuse of power. And when *that many people* are showing signs of deep wounds, distrust and strongly declare racial opposition; it seems the wise thing to do is at the very least, pause and listen. It means that we consider what could be causing the thoughts and feelings behind the display of anger — tantrum or not. One thing that seemed both interesting and remarkable to me was that when those who lived in the community (and were not involved in the ensuing chaos) were asked to comment, there was very little verbal condemnation. While most of them agreed it was a sad and poorly constructed demonstration of feelings, they also seemed to offer an underlying sense of understanding for the "youths." I don't think understanding always means there's truth to angry accusations, but the seemingly unified sense of frustration in the system certainly gives those claims some strength. If there is, in fact, some abuse in power, it must be addressed.

As I am currently reading a mini biography on the story of [Jackie Robinson](#), I can't help but make some connections. I think we can all agree that Jackie was a tremendous example of strength, dignity and heroism to the African American people when segregation and racial discrimination was arguably at its worst. One of his mentors was a man named Karl Downs, a Methodist preacher, who: *"knew that Jackie was a Christian, and taught him that exploding in anger was not the Christian answer to injustice. But he also explained that a life truly dedicated to Christ was not submissive; on the contrary, it was heroic."* — [7 Men](#); by Eric Metaxas.

A Christian based perspective on responding to conflict quite simply works more

effectively than the alternative.

My prayer is that the example of men like Jackie Robinson would take root in the people of Baltimore, and that if there is in fact injustice and the abuse of authority being administered to the community; that it would be addressed quickly and thoroughly. I pray that the leadership who are capable of making responsible investigations would do just that. And that they would be granted wisdom, discernment and strength as safety and order is pursued. It is my hope that the people of Baltimore would come to a place where wounds would be healed; and people would be wise enough to hold their communities accountable for speaking the truth in love. **Because I believe that heroism is grounded in a firm grip on truth.**