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Be the Bridge
Book Review

In *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*, author Latasha Morrison invites readers to a conversation of building bridges of racial reconciliation. Through her book, she briefly discusses the history of racism in America and invites readers to critically analyze themselves. In the posture of genuine humility and the willingness to learn, Morrison suggests that people open up to the opportunity for growth, "... you can see whether you've participated in, perpetuated, or benefited from the system of racism."¹ Furthermore, she displays her expertise in recognizing that there are many walls such as unawareness, fear, shame, and guilt that must be overcome for reconciliation to begin. *Be the Bridge* invites the readers to a place of recognition, healing, and growth that we may become an agent of reconciliation and bring restoration to our community, "He made us bridge builders so we could draw others into bridge building in His name."²

Latasha Morrison begins her book by emphasizing the need for truth and awareness of racism in America, "truth, unvarnished and unfiltered, is essential to the work of sanctification, freedom, and reconciliation."³ She uses the example of her friend Bekah, who comes from a predominantly White background and learns of the pains of racism through a small group, to show how awareness of truth can spring us into action. However, Morrison states, "awareness of truth is useless without acknowledgement of our complicity or its effects on us."⁴ We must

1 Latasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2019), 8

2 Ibid., 197

3 Ibid., 22

4 Ibid., 39.

bravely acknowledge the pains of the past and/or present and participate in lamenting as a community. This is what brings people to racial reconciliation as we seek the Lord together⁵

Shame and guilt are powerful motivators and can often hinder us from becoming bridge builders of racial reconciliation. Latasha Morrison states, “we’ll need to confront the guilt and shame of our collective past.”⁶ Instead of letting shame and guilt keep us from taking the bold step into repentance and forgiveness, we must follow the example of Scripture. Ezra, recognizing the guilt and shame of his people, instead of making excuses or shying away, turns to acknowledgement and lamentation. He cries out to God for forgiveness. As such, Morrison invites us to push through guilt and shame and into acknowledgement and lament. This, finally, can lead us to confess our sins and seek or extend forgiveness.

In confessing, Latasha Morrison states, “confession of our entanglement in racism and systemic privilege is essential for complete healing and restoration. And none of us is off the hook.”⁷ She boldly states that we must all confess our sins and recognize that we have been sinful to remain complicit to the system of white supremacy and to hate the darkness of our own skin to “reject the image of God in which I’ve been created.”⁸ She then points to Jesus, and invites us to take the bold step to ask for forgiveness and also to forgive the oppressors. She points to Martin Luther King who said, “Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.”

Finally, Latasha Morrison invites us to begin making amends and restore the past and present. She calls out everyone in this step; especially those in positions of power and privilege, to take bold action to make amends or reparations, “repairing what’s broken is a distinctly

5 Ibid., 41.

6 Ibid., 67.

7 Ibid., 90.

8 Ibid.

biblical concept, which is why as people of faith we should be leading the way into redemption, restoration, and reconciliation.”⁹ She quotes Curtiss DeYoung who stated that “declaring that we are equal without repairing the wrongs of the past is cheap reconciliation.”¹⁰ Restoration and amending the past is a costly act that requires active participation. It is repaying and returning power to restore equity and shalom. Lastly, she invites her readers to begin building bridges in their own communities. She recognizes that it is not an easy nor clean work, restoration is messy and difficult, but requires action, “we’ll often find that the process goes more smoothly when we don’t have the answers but are willing to seek them together... the work Jesus modeled.”¹¹

Latasha Morrison’s *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation* is a informative and heartfelt petition that edifies its readers to begin taking steps towards racial reconciliation. She is masterful in carefully helping readers recognize that we are all in need of both forgiveness and healing. In regards to racial reconciliation, I would often think about the harm that was done to me without recognizing that I have been complicit myself. Her gentle invitation to seek forgiveness and to forgive others was effective and fully supported through Scripture. I completely agree with her emphasis on confession and instruction on recognizing that racial reconciliation is both an individual and communal process. It is important to recognize that, as the bridge builders, we play both equal parts of being forgiven and forgiving.

Furthermore, her challenge for readers to begin carrying the cross was important for me to begin practically thinking about how I can apply her lessons in my context. As an Asian-American, or what the society calls the ‘model minority,’ I find my colleagues and I shying away from speaking about racism. We often think that we are ‘blessed enough’ to have privileges and opportunities that it is not necessary to bring up racism and cause ‘divisions.’ Through this book,

9 Ibid., 154.

10 Ibid., 157.

11 Ibid., 187

I was able to first recognize my complicitness and am challenged to begin engaging others in conversation and into action. As Morrison states, “bridges are built not with passivity or avoidance but with the deep, hard work of seeking to understand. The deep, hard work of fighting for justice for all. Love is always a fight worth taking on.”¹²

¹² Ibid., 220,

Bibliography

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

Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2019.