OPENING A DOOR TO RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Pastor and Author Mark Vroegop Explores How Lament Can Be a Helpful Starting Point for Unity in the Church

WHEATON, Ill.—Recent disturbing events have amplified racial issues that the United States has been experiencing for decades. Many are now calling for systemic reforms and personal change at the heart level. While these events are largely playing out across the streets of the country, author and pastor Mark Vroegop notes that even the church is not exempt from these issues. With such deep divides, how is progress possible, especially in the church?

In an effort to bridge the canyon of racial misunderstanding, insensitivity, and hurt, Vroegop—pastor of College Park Church in Indianapolis—has written *Weep with Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation* (Crossway, July 2020). “I’ve written this book because I’m compelled by the vision of ethnic harmony through the gospel. Racial reconciliation is an essential part of the church’s story, and I’m grieved how far we are from it . . . I’d like to invite you to join me in helping the church look more like heaven—right now,” writes Vroegop.

Vroegop suggests that a place to start this conversation is through lament. Vroegop defines lament as “the biblical language of empathy and exile, perseverance and protest” and believes it “can open the door for reconciliation.” *Weep with Me* outlines lament in the context of a five-fold path for reconciliation: love, listen, lament, learn, and leverage.

Whereas discussions on race and ethnicity can quickly devolve into political talking points or arguments about statistics and history, resulting in defensiveness and hurt, Vroegop wants to strike a different tone. After defining what lament is and the role it plays in reconciliation, *Weep with Me* seeks to help Christians “weep, speak, and repent where needed.” The book will also “explore lament for African-American and other minority believers as they wrestle with exile, redeem their hurt, and dare to hope again.”

Each chapter features lament prayers written by well-known leaders, including Thabiti Anyabwile, Trilla Newbell, Jarvis Williams, Danny Akin, Mika Edmondson, and John Onwuchekwa, designed to help inspire readers’ own laments. *Weep with Me* also includes discussion questions at the end of each chapter for personal and group reflection.

“Christianity looks stunning to the world and most emulates Jesus when our
identity and unity in the gospel are more foundational than any other identity—including our ethnicity,” writes Vroegop. “Our broken world needs to see this vision lived out in new and fresh ways in the church. While lament doesn’t solve all the problems, it’s a place to begin. For the sake of racial reconciliation, I’m inviting you to embrace a bigger, heavenly vision. Come, weep with me.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Vroegop is the lead pastor of College Park Church in Indianapolis and the author of Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament, the ECPA 2020 Christian Book of the Year, and Weep with Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation. He’s married to Sarah, and they have four children and a daughter-in-law.

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