

## Taking a Knee is Not Enough

By The Reverend Matthew L. Watley

Symbols are important. Whether they are confederate and Nazi flags or tiki torches; police uniforms and judge's robes; taking a knee or locking arms – these symbols represent deeply held beliefs about race, justice, and America itself. Of course, there can be no false equivalency between the flags and props of racism and domestic terrorism and the peaceful constitutional actions of citizens seeking to protect life and ensure justice and equality for all. **Symbols are important, but they must be accompanied by systemic change.** The wide spread repudiation of the President's' vile comments, while necessary, is not the goal. We must change the way police treat citizens of color in every jurisdiction so there truly will be liberty and justice for all in America.

Collin Kaepernick's courage has brought the issues of bias and police brutality to the national stage in a powerful way. We can't afford to miss the window of opportunity for change by not realizing where change happens. **Taking a Knee is Not Enough.** Change starts by taking a knee, changing the channel, and locking arms. However, each of these symbols of change must be accompanied by the substance of change. So, While Not Watching The Game (#WNWTG), may I suggest 10 things that you can do to actually make change happen. Actually, I'd rather you watch the game and do these things afterwards, than not watch the game and do nothing else. Bad ratings won't keep me safe the next time I'm pulled over. Just laws, proper training, fair judges, and good cops will make it more likely that I make it home to my family - not from Afghanistan, but from the grocery store.

1. Pray – Prejudice, racist speech and violence, police brutality, and injustice are not simply immoral - they are evil. We must pray for the soul of this nation, because morality cannot be legislated. We must call on the name of the Lord who alone has the power to change and transform the hearts of people. Praying across black, white, and blue lines will bring our communities on one accord in a way that nothing else can. II Chronicles 7:14 says "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land".
2. Learn the Law – There are rules that govern the interactions between law enforcement and citizens in your local area. Learn about the rights of citizens

to pursue justice, when brutality or bias has been committed. Learn about the rights of officers to defend themselves from these charges which, often times, are more protective than the rights of ordinary citizens.

3. Grade Them - Once you have learned about the policies and practices of local law enforcement, rate them and publicize their grade, not as the end of a conversation but as the beginning of one. Seek to positively engage law enforcement leaders to celebrate or improve their grades, and partner to make the community safer for citizens and officers alike. Justice-focused law enforcement leaders will welcome the opportunity to set the public's mind at ease that they are doing all within their power to ensure public safety. Law enforcement officials who are resistant to positive engagement should be held publicly accountable through investigative journalism, pressure on public officials to terminate employment, when warranted, legal challenge, and, in extreme cases, peaceful protest. An example of this grading and engagement process can be found at [makethecovenant.org](http://makethecovenant.org).

4. The Talk - Train black and brown people on how to improve their chances of surviving a police encounter. Obviously, the fact that every black family has to have 'the talk' with their children is an indictment upon the continued reality of racism in American law enforcement. Furthermore, it is obvious that full compliance with the law and police commands does not insure against being shot and killed. Yet, we must teach our children to survive first and seek justice later.

5. Act – Do not confuse social media activity for action that brings systemic change. Likes, shares, and comments do not equal votes, legislative changes, or judicial appointments. Obviously, social media plays a vital part in disseminating information and galvanizing attention. But the movement doesn't end there – that's just the starting line. We must Pray, Strategize, Petition, Sue, Vote, Rally, Protest, and Repeat.

6. Get the Detail - A little known reason for officers being able to kill citizens without fear of punishment is that police unions often enter into collective bargaining agreements with cities and counties that grant them additional protections and privileges when under investigation. As an example, officers may be given 24 or 48 hours before having to turn themselves in after a shooting- which provides ample time for coaching by lawyers, potential tampering of evidence, and influencing of prospective witnesses. Elected officials must be held accountable so that they do not sign away the rights and protections of their most vulnerable citizens by creating blue privilege.

7. Jury Duty – While serving on a jury may be viewed as a pain, it is also one of the best ways to influence the system. By simply participating on the jury, you make the likelihood of a just result that much more possible on a case by case basis.

8. Register and then Vote – Because jury pools are often developed from voting rolls, failure to vote excludes you from serving on a jury. We must vote not simply in presidential elections, but in every election. Often it is state and local elections where the biggest opportunity to affect our society is determined.

9. Commitment to Truth – Whites must acknowledge the obviousness of bias in policing and its violent effects on black and brown souls in America and lead in repealing and replacing this racist system. Blacks must recognize and honor the fact that the vast majority of law enforcement officers are upright people who put themselves in harms way daily in order to fulfill their duty to protect and serve. Law enforcement must choose to tear down the blue wall of silence when they see crimes committed by their colleagues. Only when we all tell the truth, which is often inconvenient, can we hope to move our country forward.

10. Fully Commit - In II Kings 13 we see King Joash, deeply distressed because of the threat of his enemies, going to the prophet Elisha who is on his deathbed. Elisha tells Joash to shoot an arrow out of the east window, and as he does, Elisha proclaims “the Lord’s arrow of victory”. Then Elisha tells Joash to shoot some arrows into the ground. He shoots three arrows and then stops, at which point Elisha becomes angry saying “You should have shot five or six arrows, then you would have totally defeated your enemies, but because you only shot three times, you will defeat them only three times.” The message couldn't be any clearer. King Joash’s effort was halfhearted, and so his victory would only be incomplete. We cannot afford to address police brutality with half- measures. We must be resolute to press on until “justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a might stream” Amos 5:24.