



# A Time for Burning

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

This is not a Bible Study; instead, the following questions are meant to start a dialogue that will continue long after today. To that end, do not rush through these topics, but spend time where people need to process. Please do not neglect the final set of questions that stir us to action by the Spirit's leading.

*"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

## PEOPLE

<sup>1</sup> **Ernie Chambers** went on to become the longest-serving state senator in Nebraska history.



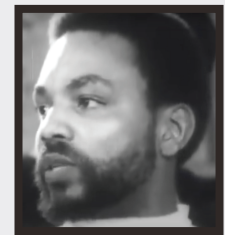
**Bill Youngdahl**

*Pastor of  
Augustana  
Lutheran Church*



**Ray Cristensen**

*Church Council Leader  
of Social Ministry  
Committee*



**Ernie Chambers** <sup>1</sup>

*Barber who converses  
with Bill and  
Augustana*

## RESPOND

<sup>2</sup> For more context, watch **this video** which covers the systemic issues that existed in America leading up to the civil rights movement.

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**By what we say, by how we act, we teach, we witness.**

- How familiar are you with the Civil Rights movement? <sup>2</sup>
- Did any quotes or conversations stick with you? How did they impact you?
- Which person's perspective did you most resonate with? Which do you admire?

**Watch the exchange between Ray and Ernie closely (36:17-39:35).**

- Where does the tension come from?
- Who do you feel is in control of the dialogue?
- Is the tension a product of fear? Of intolerance? Of inexperience?

## REFLECT

<sup>3</sup> **Send us** your favorite blogs, videos, and other resources from racially diverse LCMS ministries and leaders, so we can share them with others.

<sup>4</sup> BIPOC is an acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. View the **full definition here**.

**A church isn't really a showplace for saints, it's a hospital for sinners.**

- *How does this statement line up with what Scripture proclaims?*
- *Does your church reflect that to all people in your church and in your community?*

**If you (Rev. Youngdahl) listen and try to do something, you'll get kicked out of your church.**

- *Does your pastor regularly tell you things you do not want to hear?*
- *How do you respond internally and externally to these criticisms or challenges?*

**One young lady offered that a church doesn't exist on its own, but is made up of people who shape its attitudes and practices, both known and unknown.**

- *As Ray said, we might never literally close our church doors to a particular group of people, but what about our hearts?*
- *As you reflect on your life and that of your church, where are there sins of inequality that need to be addressed?*

**If a person hates another person, where is he going to learn to not hate, if not in church?**

- *The film noted that it was the Black churches that were leading the conversations and efforts about racial justice. Is that true today?*
- *What Black ministries and church workers of the LCMS do you listen to and learn from? <sup>3</sup>*
- *In what way have they taught you about the injustices BIPOC communities face, as well as how the Gospel applies to those wounds and struggles?*

## ACT

<sup>5</sup> If your group wants to discuss this further, see Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*.

**We meet, we talk, and we still conclude that it's not the right time. Not the right time for whom?...How many years do I have to prepare myself to talk with another human being? What am I waiting for?**

- *Like Ray, do you think most people in your church are waiting to engage on issues surrounding racial justice, equality, and reconciliation? Why or why not?*
- *Do you think that just talking to another human being who is a different color than you will do any good? Why or why not? <sup>5</sup>*

## ACT

<sup>6</sup>For a robust list of resources, visit the Black Clergy Caucus' **website** from Black Ministry Week.

<sup>7</sup> **Library of Congress Article** about the film lays out the significance of the film. **Doctalk Episode** about the film allows you to see how and why it was made.

<sup>8</sup> Please **contact LRJ** with any questions or comments regarding this discussion guide. Lutherans for Racial Justice would love to hear from you. Post any insights, plans for action, or your discussion group's pic on social media with the hashtag: #LRJTalks

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**As far as I'm concerned, your Jesus is contaminated.**

- *What do you think led Ernie to believe that?*
- *Do you think he would say the same thing today?*
- *How would you respond to his criticism of the Church?*

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**There are many more things we could look and find to do but is there anything more important or more crucial right now?**

- *What would you identify as the most crucial issues facing the church today?*
- *Do you think that these are the same issues our BIPOC brothers and sisters would identify as well?*
- *For you personally, what's your next step in learning about racism, inequalities, and the pain of our BIPOC brothers and sisters?*
- *Who are people of color you might listen to from social media, podcasts, books, etc. about their experiences?* <sup>6</sup>
- *Who are people in your community you can begin to build relationships with?*

**It's noted in the film that church members who agreed with Rev. Youngdahl were silent while the dissenting voices loudly protested his efforts.**

- *Why do you think the supportive church members were silent?*
- *What might be your next step to engage or further the conversation and efforts of racial justice and reconciliation within your congregation?*
- *Who might you reach out to this week for a conversation about what your congregation can do?*

**Board members at Augustana Lutheran Church feared that these conversations would lead to loss in membership or a divide of the church.**

- *Do you think similar fears exist today?*
- *How can you encourage those in your church community to see that reform will unite, not divide?*
- *What can we learn from A Time for Burning about efforts of racial justice and reconciliation as we consider our own next steps?*

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**If we do not start now, the world is going to pass us by on the biggest issue of our lifetime... This is the smallest step we know of, dialogue, talking with one another, understanding. Let's not look back on history and say the church had nothing to do.** <sup>7</sup>