

Deliverance for oppressed and oppressor

The early Black church understood that the church is not just a place for worship—it is a launching pad for liberation.

by [Alex Gee](#) in the [May 2026](#) issue

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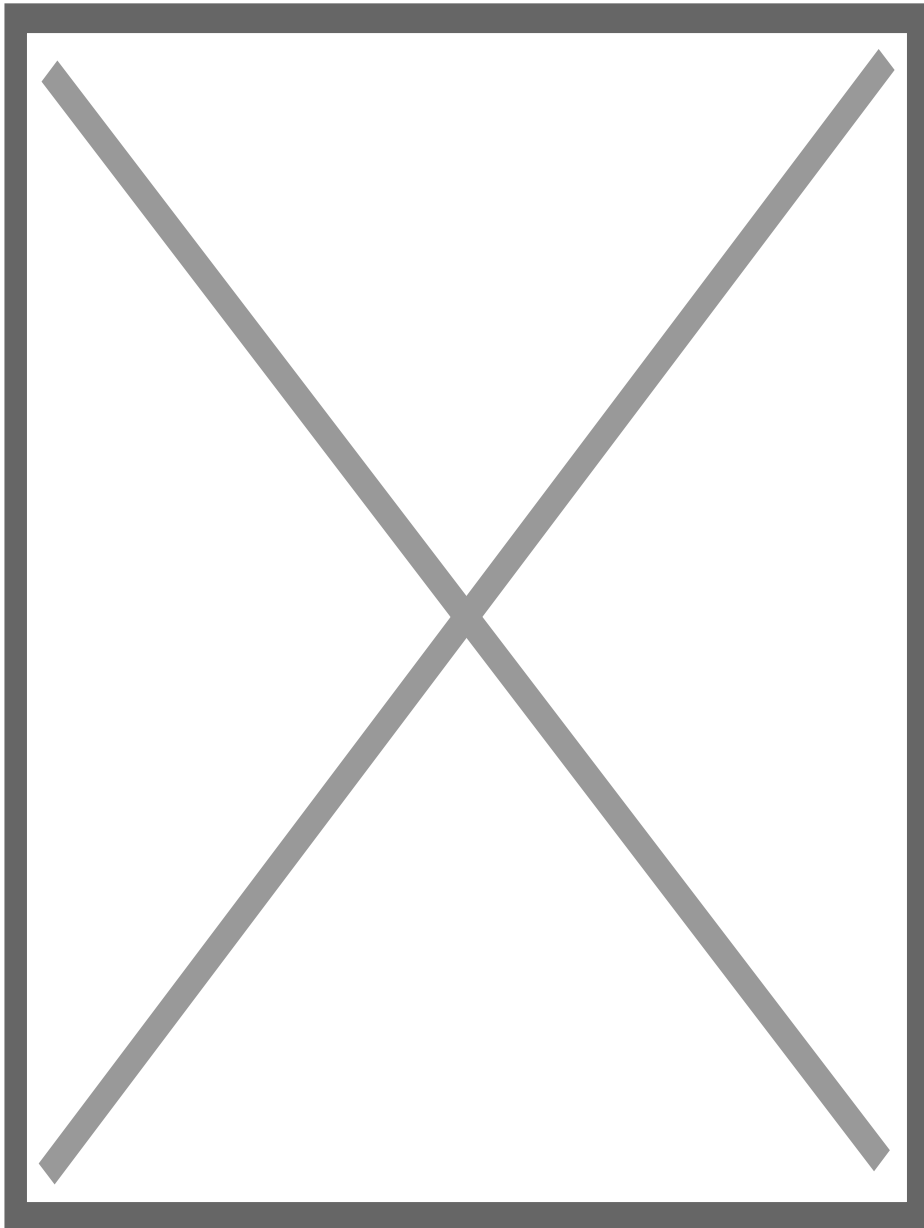


Illustration by Laylie Frazier (Dear pastor icon by Nicholas Blechman)

We asked experienced pastors and seminary professors to put themselves in the apostle Paul's shoes: You're writing a letter to a present-day ministry leader. What issues do you want to address, and what theology can you bring to bear on them?

Dear Pastor,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! I write to you today with a deep sense of urgency and conviction. As a young Black pastor leading a multicultural congregation in these turbulent times, you carry an immense weight. I know the struggles you face. You are ministering in a time when racial discord is dividing our nation, and the church itself is often a poor example of unity and love. But take heart—God has chosen you for such a time as this and has equipped you with the spiritual authority necessary to lead your people toward healing and reconciliation.

Let's not beat around the bush. The church in the United States has been deeply misshaped by the toxic forces of White supremacy and racial oppression. For too long, Christianity in this country has been distorted by the ideologies of race and nationalism, which have undermined the liberating and life-giving power of the gospel. We must acknowledge that the church, the very institution that claims to embody Christ's love, has too often been complicit in the commodification and demonization of Black and Brown people. Our faith traditions, which should have been sources of liberation, have been hijacked to justify systems of oppression.

This is the uncomfortable truth that we must face if we are ever to lead our people into true freedom. Unless we are willing to confront the role of racial supremacy in shaping and distorting the American church, we cannot hope to model the unity and love that Christ commands of us. The church cannot heal from this wound until it first acknowledges it.

And yet, here you stand—called to lead in this broken, divided, and unjust world. As a young Black pastor, you represent a lineage of faith that has withstood centuries of false teaching and spiritual abuse. Our ancestors were told that they were less than human—unworthy of dignity or value—and that this very idea was somehow biblical. But despite these lies, they clung to their faith in Jesus. They saw through the deception, and their faith—tested and proven in the fire of oppression—is exactly what is needed now to restore the vitality of the church.

This is your inheritance. You have been entrusted with a faith that has stood the test of time and emerged victorious in the face of persecution. And it is precisely because of this that you now have the spiritual authority to speak life into the American church. Those who have been systematically disenfranchised and overlooked are the ones who will resurrect the relevance of the church in this hour. We are not waiting for someone else to come along and fix the church. We are the ones God has called to do this work.

But make no mistake, this will not be an easy task. As you lead a multicultural congregation, you will face resistance. There will be people who want to avoid the difficult conversations about race. They will tell you that addressing racial issues is divisive or political, and they will want you to preach a gospel that is more comfortable, more palatable. But we cannot afford to sugarcoat the truth. Multicultural congregations cannot thrive by simply ignoring racial distinctions. Unity in Christ is not achieved by pretending that we are all the same or that race doesn't matter. True unity begins with repentance and healing, and that means confronting the legacy of racial commodification and demonization head on.

The first task of any multicultural congregation is to offer a space where the sins of the past and present can be named, confessed, and healed. For centuries, racial identities have been distorted and commoditized for the benefit of others, and until we deal with that painful truth, we will never experience the true unity that Christ calls us to. You must lead your congregation in this work of healing—preaching a gospel that not only saves souls but heals wounds and restores dignity to those who have been marginalized.

But we also must acknowledge that many churches in this country do not even have multicultural congregations—and yet they need a biblical multicultural theology. This need is urgent, because the gospel is not confined to one culture or people group, and the church must not be either.

Many Pentecosts occur in the book of Acts, and the power of God falls in each of them. And in each instance, the Spirit of God crosses boundaries, barriers, and cultures to empower outsiders and the marginalized. Pentecost isn't just a moment of tongues—it is a movement of reconciliation, a divine declaration that God's kingdom is for all people.

This reconciling unity is what will serve as a bold and compelling witness to Christ's love. I believe it is this kind of radical, boundary-crossing love that will rivet the hearts of seekers and nonbelievers—as you and I have witnessed.

This theological foundation is critical because the church must not only preach freedom for the captive but also dismantle the systems that enslave. Just as Paul and Silas, after being miraculously freed from their prison, choose to stay and minister to their jailer, baptizing him and his household (Acts 16:25–34), so too must we be willing to set free those who are bound by systems of oppression—even when they are the ones those systems benefit. The salvation of the disenfranchised evangelizes the jailer, and in the same way, marginalized people today possess the spiritual authority to preach deliverance to those still trapped in systems of supremacy and oppression. This is the gospel's power at work—transforming not just the oppressed but also the oppressor.

The American church must engage in this work. It must free the captives—not just from the social chains of poverty, racism, and incarceration but also from the theological chains that have imprisoned both oppressor and oppressed. It must dismantle the false, idolatrous identities that come from historically individualistic and capitalistic theologies that prioritize personal success over communal well-being. This version of faith has often been a cloak for supremacy, enabling oppressors to believe that their success and privilege are divinely ordained while ignoring the suffering of those they marginalize.

This is where the church has lost its prophetic voice. When we fail to address these systems of injustice, we lose our moral and spiritual authority. The American church can no longer afford to preach a gospel of individual salvation without addressing the collective injustices that plague our communities. We must be about the work of freeing the captives in every sense—socially, economically, spiritually, and theologically.

As a pastor, your ministry must extend far beyond the four walls of your church building. We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world, and that means engaging in the work of justice and community transformation. Our congregations must be at the forefront of creating community ministries, businesses, family support services, and wealth generation strategies. We need to be involved in advocacy for housing reform, prison reform, and educational equity. We need to be unapologetically present in our communities, fighting for justice and building systems that empower our people to thrive.

You see, the early Black church understood that the church is not just a place for worship—it is a launching pad for liberation. The church has always been a refuge for those who have been marginalized, but it must also be a place where we equip our people to fight for their own freedom. We need to be teaching our congregants how to build wealth, how to create businesses, and how to leave a legacy for their children and grandchildren. Wealth

generation is not a dirty word—it's biblical stewardship that can be used to bless families and communities.

And let's be real—this work cannot wait. Too many of our brothers and sisters are caught in a cycle of poverty, incarceration, and systemic injustice. Too many of our children are attending failing schools that don't value their potential. Too many of our families are being displaced by gentrification and struggling to find affordable housing. These are not just political issues—they are gospel issues. Jesus himself declared that he came to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18), and we must take up that same mantle of justice in our own ministries.

But here's the beautiful part: We don't do this work alone. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives within us, empowering us to do the impossible. The Spirit is calling us to build ministries that not only preach the gospel but live it out in tangible ways—through advocacy, education, housing, and economic empowerment. Unless we model this kind of faith and unity, we will continue to lack the moral and spiritual authority to speak prophetically into the brokenness of our world. We will be nothing more than a private sanctified social club—irrelevant, ineffective, and powerless.

But God has given us the authority to change that. He has called us to be agents of reconciliation, not just within the walls of the church but in the world. So I encourage you to stay strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This work will be challenging. You will face resistance. But God has already equipped you for the task. Surround yourself with wise counsel, lean on the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance, and never forget that you are not alone.

We are in this together, and there is a generation rising up with you—so you and other Black leaders should take heart. And others as well: White pastors, don't faint. Latino pastors, prevail in prayer. Asian American and Native American pastors, don't ignore your powerful traditions. Everyone, strive for the unity of Christ. Let's all stand ready to join this fight for justice, healing, and true reconciliation in the name of Jesus.

In my next epistle, when I have more time, I will address the egregious and unbiblical assault on women in the church by Christian leaders! Please give my greetings to Pastor Ta-isha, Deaconess Monica, and Overseer DeMarcus. Please have them bring my iPad and AirPods when they visit. May the Lord bless you and keep you always. Amen!