

To the religious leaders in our communities. To Pastors, directors of ministries, youth Pastors, worship leaders...To anyone who leads a congregation of faith in any religion or denomination. You have failed us.

By us I mean the men and women of the law enforcement communities and our families. Our spouses. Our children. Our loved ones.

I write this as a Christian, church worker, and a Police Chief that is blessed to serve one of the most courageous, righteous, and self-sacrificing segments of our communities.

Let me start by saying the death of George Floyd was done at the hands of someone evil and vile. I along with every other member of the law enforcement community disown him as one of our own. He was never one of us. He may have worn a badge. But that is just a hunk of metal without the honor that backs it up. In the same way that the robe of the clergy or title as pastor has to be backed up with the same level of honor or it means nothing. And let me say this...i believe racism was at its core.

As a police chief trying my best to serve those I'm charged to lead, I have been holding meetings with all of our officers to discuss what is going on in our country. To discuss the horrific actions that lead to Mr. Floyd's death.

As well as to discuss the horrific actions of those who are preying on our law enforcement brothers and sisters in the name of justice. There have been tears in those meeting. Words of anger toward the wolf in sheep's clothing that took his life. Words of fear. And then there have been countless words that I as a Christian am ashamed to hear. "Chief, our pastors have abandoned us". "They have sold us out for slogans in the name of attempting to be relevant". "Chief, what about us?" "Why has my pastor and congregation hash tagged organizations that condone killing us in their social media postings and sermons?" "Chief, don't they know that the

movements they are promoting at its core celebrates the killing of police officers simply because they wear the badge”.

I have been asked by those in our community countless times...”Do you believe black lives matter”? My definitive answer, YES! I believe that the lives of every black man, woman, and child matter just as much as the lives of every white man, woman, and child and police officer. Just as with every other nationality we get the privilege of calling our neighbors and every religion represented. But I do not support the Black Lives Matter as a movement as it seems to glorify the killing of my brothers and sisters. It is not what you pastors and religious leaders think it is. Stop trying to be relevant and look deeper into what you are saying, posting, and tagging before you do it. But please..never give up the fight against racism. We have a long way to go! But we need everybody moving in the same direction.

And hear this...I am 100 percent supportive of all of the protesting and demands for justice that are happening now. They are valid and necessary for change. I am your biggest ally in the fight to stamp out any racism, or corruption in our country’s police agencies. I am on the front line in this battle. It’s my job to not only keep the “bad apples” from wearing the badge, but also to make sure the soil in my organization and profession remains pure.

I have also been asked if I will take a knee at these protests. Taking a knee is a sign of surrender. I will not surrender to this fight for justice. I take a knee of surrender to my Lord and Savior alone. I will however stand with you and protect your rights to protest and have your voices heard. And I will bow down to pray with you. To pray to make our hearts pure. My heart pure. For us to see each other as we are...God’s creation. His Son’s and Daughter’s. Regardless of race. To celebrate diversity. That’s what I bow for.

I have purposely not watched, read, or listened to anything the religious leaders I hold most dear have posted in the last week. Why? Because I know that, in an attempt to appease people, they may say things that are just not true. Because I do not want to abandon the ministries I serve and support, I have stayed away from the sermons and social media posts. But not all of our officers have. And you have abandoned them. Left them disillusioned. Left them questioning if there is a place for them in your congregations and ultimately in service to the Kingdom as a whole. Shame on you!

We have children. Wives. Husbands. They all feel abandoned by you. There will be a generation coming of the sons and daughters of law enforcement officers that want nothing to do with your churches because you sold out their fathers and mothers. I have two of those children myself. I have heard it from our officers countless times in the last week. You must do better. You must serve your entire congregations.

I will say personally I had an amazing conversation with my pastor this week. He is one that sees all sides of the story and I love him and his leadership. He preached an amazing service this week with two pastors of local churches made up predominately of black congregations. They were amazing! I hate lumping my pastor in with this letter. All I can say is that I understand it really sucks to be lumped in with the worst of the worst of your chosen profession.

You have ruined twenty-three years as a police officer and a Christian trying to bridge the gap of faith and my brothers and sisters in blue. Shame on you.

Sincerely, Chris Byers