



HEALING OUR BROKEN HUMANITY

PRACTICES FOR REVITALIZING
THE CHURCH AND
RENEWING THE WORLD

GRACE JI-SUN KIM
GRAHAM HILL

FOREWORD BY WILLIE JAMES JENNINGS

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by Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill.
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INTRODUCTION

NINE PRACTICES THAT HEAL OUR BROKEN HUMANITY

On July 17, 2014, Eric Garner died after a police officer put him in a chokehold for almost nineteen seconds while arresting him. Garner was a forty-three-year-old African American man. He was wrestled to the ground by four police officers on suspicion of selling single cigarettes from packs without tax stamps. While one officer put his arm around Garner's neck, three others pinned him to the ground. Garner repeated "I can't breathe" eleven times while lying facedown on the pavement. He then lost consciousness, and the officers did not perform CPR at the scene. Garner died that day due to the brutality of his arrest.

In 2015 Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote a public letter to his son. In it he writes, "Here is what I would like for you to know. In America, it is tradition to destroy the black body—it is *heritage*."¹ He then asked readers of *The Atlantic* to share their stories of racial prejudice. Many stories of racism and its consequences poured in. These are personal stories of racism, and public accounts of the brokenness of humanity.

We are living in a broken world. Western societies are struggling with the rise of racism, misogyny, nationalism, conflict, violence, and more. Many African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx, Asian Americans, and other minoritized groups think that systems are

unjust.² Political, judicial, policing, and other systems seem stacked against them. Hundreds of thousands of people are displaced globally due to poverty, discrimination, climate change, or political and religious upheaval. They seek refuge, hope, freedom, and a new life.

Many political and public figures are making the most of these turbulent times. They appeal to xenophobia, nationalism, and antagonisms. These messages have been magnetic in parts of North America, Europe, Australia, and other settings. The conditions seem ripe to support racism, misogyny, exclusion, injustice, conflict, and division. Nations and peoples that once enjoyed unrivaled global power and influence now feel like they are in decline, and they don't know what to do about it.

A large percentage of the population feels disenfranchised from political and other systems that seem to support wealthy individuals and institutions. These systems seem deaf to them. They feel anxious, worried about the future, angry, and disoriented. They see themselves getting poorer. They see their neighborhoods becoming racially and religiously diverse. So they are looking for others to blame. Muslims, "foreigners," or undocumented immigrants are easy scapegoats. Societies that have been told how to speak about race, gender, and religion haven't really changed. They've just pushed these feelings and animosities down deeper, resulting in collective anger, prejudice, and fear.

Unfortunately, many Christian leaders and churches are going along with these currents. The church is no longer at the center of culture, power, economics, and politics, as it was in Christendom. Some Christian leaders are anxious about their waning influence. They worry about their loss of power and status. They're easy to woo because they want their chance in the spotlight and their access to power and the powerful. Various tribal allegiances too often form Christian identity. Confident, charismatic, successful, misogynistic, nationalistic, Christendom-courting, loudmouthed demagogues have filled the vacuum.

But here is the bright side! The church of Jesus Christ can speak life and hope into this situation. It can proclaim and embody the new creation in Christ, and show a different ethic and way of life in the world. God enables us, as God's one, new, and transformed people, to recover our humanity and help change the world. After all, we follow the one who goes into the storm saying, "Peace, be still."

The way the church embodies this new way of life in the world is its shared practices.

THE POWER OF PRACTICES

I (Graham) grew up in a suburb and family full of craftspeople and tradespeople. These were people skilled in a range of functional, decorative, or specialized crafts and trades. These included carpenters, tailors, stonemasons, builders, bricklayers, and electricians. It included floorers, landscapers, plumbers, roofers, welders, truck drivers, automotive mechanics, architects, and cabinetmakers. All plied their craft with skill. They made commitments to apprenticing one, two, or three others in their craft or trade. All honed their expertise. They saw their craft or trade in the light of the broader community of artisans. They worked together, building or renovating houses, sculpting landscapes, restoring automobiles, or fashioning garments or pieces of furniture.

The finished product was rarely the result of one craft or one artisan working alone. At times these tradespeople or craftspeople were only skilled in one area. But often they were multiskilled: carpenter-floorers, plumber-electricians, architect-landscapers, truckie-mechanics, or teacher-builder-electricians. My father restored houses from time to time—including my own house, after my wife, Felicity, and I moved to Sydney, Australia. When he did this he used an array of carpentry, electrical, plumbing, construction, architectural, roofing, flooring, and landscaping skills. And he called on the skills of others he trusted.

In that environment I learned the importance of discipline and practice, both personal and in community. A person becomes a highly skilled craftsperson or tradesperson (or dancer, musician, theologian, pastor, writer, etc.) through many years of hard work and personal discipline. This person, and the community the person is a part of, performs important, disciplined practices countless times, over many years. These practices form people personally, build the community's life together, and shape the fruit of people's lives and shared efforts. This is a community of discipline. It is a *practicing* community. These practices often lead to extraordinary and beautiful results.

I (Grace) have a teenage daughter, Elisabeth, who's an example of the power of disciplines and practices. Elisabeth has been taking ballet lessons since she was three years old. When she turned eight, her dance became more and more serious, and she had to focus and become a disciplined dancer. She goes to ballet four to seven days a week. When there are performances such as *The Nutcracker* or the spring dance, she is at her ballet studio for three to five hours per day to warm up, stretch, rehearse, and learn new routines. It takes skill to dance, but also lots and lots of practice to become a good dancer.

Elisabeth takes her classes and rehearsals very seriously. In class the dancers are not allowed to talk unless the instructor asks them a question. They are expected to quietly follow directions and practice new moves. There is a lot of repetition; the instructor makes them do movements over and over again until they have mastered them. The teacher points out what dancers are doing right or wrong and also uses a hands-on approach to lift or stretch their legs or arms properly. After hundreds of repetitions of the same movement, the students come to learn it.

Furthermore, after Elisabeth's dance classes and rehearsals, she comes home and does her homework and studies for her tests. Before bed she spends thirty minutes stretching and exercising. She is very careful about what she eats, doing her best to stay away from junk

food and to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. She recognizes that a healthy body is needed to be a serious dancer.

Elisabeth's classes, routines, rehearsals, and healthy lifestyle are crucial to becoming a dancer. They have become part of her lifestyle, and they are all essential. The rest of us, whether we want to become a dancer or a faithful disciple of Christ, need to engage in similarly transforming practices.

Stanley Hauerwas says that formation happens in community.³ This is because character is at the center of formation, and community forms character. Today we as Christians need to recover, as Hauerwas writes, "the integrity of the Christian community. Here is a community breaking out of the suffocating tyranny of American individualism in which each of us is made into his or her own tyrant. Here is an alternative people who exist, not because each of us made up his or her own mind but because we are *called*, called to submit our lives to the authority of the saints."⁴ Hauerwas believes that we are called to submit ourselves to Christ and to a faithful community that practices its discipleship together.

In this community of character are individuals. They form an ethical life together and in the world through discipleship practices. These include Eucharist, simplicity, generosity, economic sharing, hospitality, creation care, reconciliation, peacemaking, and acts of justice. They include prayer, baptism, celebrating the liturgy, reading Scripture, fasting, serving with the mentally handicapped, and embracing asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented neighbors. Importantly, they include immersing ourselves in the Gospels as the training manuals for Christian discipleship.

Formational practices need disciplined communities. But, as Hauerwas notes, shaping disciplined communities isn't easy. It's especially hard in modern, liberal-democratic, consumeristic, and individualistic societies. So much in these societies pushes back against discipline, accountability, stability, and community.⁵ But discipleship and community must go hand in hand.⁶

Hauerwas draws on the metaphor of bricklaying. He says the church needs to learn to lay metaphorical bricks and to make disciples. Laying bricks involves “learning myriad skills, but also a language that forms and is formed by those skills.”⁷ It’s about learning the craft from those who’ve gone before. It isn’t primarily about gathering information. It’s about discipline, training, craft, language, patience, character, and formation in community. This is how the church must make disciples. Discipleship involves learning a myriad of skills through personal discipline and by immersion in community. We also learn a language—words such as faith and hope and love take form in our mouths and shape our hearts and minds. And, so, discipleship practices and new ways of conceiving and speaking about God and the world shape our life together. Together, we learn fresh discipleship practices and vocabularies.

NINE TRANSFORMING PRACTICES

This book shows what it means to be the church, the new humanity in Jesus Christ, as Paul writes about in Ephesians 2:15. This is the biblical basis for our understanding of what it means to become new in Christ. The church shows the world God’s perfect design for humanity, which is a reconciled, unified, whole, multiethnic, peaceful, loving life together. As a beacon to the world, the church shows the world what God calls it to be. The church shows the world its destiny and future. In an era where Christian identities seem so enmeshed with race, politics, nationalism, and material goods, we need to imagine a different reality.⁸

In *The Christian Imagination*, Willie James Jennings has shown how the Christian social imagination is often diseased and disfigured. It’s wedded to racialized, individualistic, privatized, and rootless identities. We find ourselves in this place because of historical events. We need to confront this situation head-on and theologically if we are going to demonstrate a compelling witness and life together in the

world. The church needs a compelling vision of a healed and whole Christian community (and a redeemed Christian social imagination). The church needs fresh practices before a watching world.

Too often our theological or intellectual posture is one of power and control. We expect others (e.g., indigenes, marginalized groups, and outsiders) to be adaptable, but we refuse to be so ourselves. In our attachment to power and control, rigidity, superiority, and staleness grow. This diseased posture stops Christians from forming habits of humility, fluidity, embodiment, and engagement, which lead to transformation. Yet, as Jennings says, we live in hope:

Christianity marks the spot where, if noble dream joins hands with God-inspired hope and presses with great impatience against the insularities of life, for example, national, cultural, ethnic, economic, sexual, and racial, seeking the deeper ground upon which to seed a new way of belonging and living together, then we will find together not simply a new ground, not simply a new seed, but a life already prepared and offered to us.⁹

Race relations is one area where the church and Christianity can offer hope and a new way of life together. Race is a modern construct and problem, and such disciplines as biology, genetics, philosophy, history, political science, economics, feminism, cultural and post-colonial studies, and more are examining it. We need to understand “whiteness” and how whiteness is a construct to subordinate others. Yet, strangely, Christian theologians have been largely silent about race. A theological account of race is profoundly absent.

A few theologians and authors are seeking to fill this void. Willie James Jennings, Daniel Hill, Soong-Chan Rah, Christena Cleveland, Kwok Pui Lan, J. Kameron Carter, Drew G. I. Hart, Brenda Salter McNeil, Rick Richardson, Jim Wallis, Emmanuel Katongole, Ken Wytmsa, Paula Harris, and Doug Schaupp are examples. They call the church to a new way of life together in the world in terms of race

relations. This is a way of life characterized by justice, love, reconciliation, and peacemaking. These authors exemplify Christian hope for society in regard to this important topic.

This book unpacks what it means to be the new humanity in Christ, as we embrace nine transforming practices that we hope you can adopt into your life. The practices aren't necessarily sequential. You don't need to practice the fourth before you can go to the fifth, for example. These practices may be taking place concurrently, and different people might have different entry points.

1. *Reimagine church* as the new humanity in Jesus Christ.
2. *Renew lament* through corporate expressions of deep regret and sorrow.
3. *Repent together* of white cultural captivity, and racial and gender injustice, and of our complicity.
4. *Relinquish power* by giving up our own righteousness, status, privilege, selfish ambition, self-interests, vain conceit, and personal gain.
5. *Restore justice* to those who have been denied justice.
6. *Reactivate hospitality* by rejecting division and exclusion, and welcoming all kinds of people into the household of God.
7. *Reinforce agency* by supporting people's ability to make free, independent, and unfettered actions and choices.
8. *Reconcile relationships* through repentance, forgiveness, justice, and partnership.
9. *Recover life together* as a transformed community that lives out the vision of the Sermon on the Mount.

These nine practices enable us to be the new humanity in Jesus Christ. These nine practices transform the church and the world. They lead to reconciliation, justice, unity, peace, and love.

WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS BOOK

We want to take a moment to introduce ourselves and explain why we wrote this book. We've known each other for a few years now, since we first met when Graham did some filming with Grace for the GlobalChurch Project. Graham spent almost six months filming Asian, African, Latin American, indigenous, and diaspora Christian leaders about faith, witness, prayer, and more, and he caught up with Grace in New Jersey in early 2015 to do some filming with her on her writings. Over a couple of years, we shared stories about our passion for listening to the voices of minoritized people. We discovered a shared desire to invite often-unheard voices from around the world to enter into a powerful conversation about the shape of faith, reconciliation, and justice in the twenty-first century. In the process we became close friends and decided to write about these things together.

I (Graham) teach applied theology and world Christianity at Morling Theological College in Sydney, Australia. I'm the founding director of the GlobalChurch Project. I've been in Christian ministry since 1987, including church planting, pastoring local churches, and teaching at theological colleges. I'm passionate about the local church and about seeing neighborhoods and lives transformed.

I (Grace) am an associate professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion in Indiana, and I am an ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) minister. I have written several books on marginality, racism, sexism, and the need to embrace all people. As I grew up in Canada as a young immigrant child, it became very clear that my voice was often ignored. I experienced this firsthand in my elementary school. Because my first language isn't English, kids made fun of my accent every time I opened my mouth. This made me feel self-conscious about speaking out loud in the classroom. So even though I wanted to speak up and answer questions that the teacher was asking, I felt that I couldn't participate as I wanted, and as a result my voice became

more and more silenced. In addition my voice was ignored in the Korean Presbyterian church that I grew up in. It was quite evident that male voices were welcomed, and women's voices were considered unimportant and a nuisance. The blatant silencing of women's voices was a painful reality for me and for other women in the church.

I (Graham) first became passionate about the transforming practices covered in this book in the late 1990s, when I was speaking at a conference in Manila in the Philippines. I was staying in a backpacker's hostel at night and speaking at conference sessions during the day. One morning I was woken by the sound of sobbing. I looked down from my bunk to see an elderly man weeping beside his bed. During the week I got to know this remarkable man. He was an elderly Vietnamese pastor who'd planted a church of a dozen people in his home thirty years earlier. That church had grown to tens of thousands of people. He told me stories from this Vietnamese church that sounded like something from the book of Acts. These were stories of miracles, lives transformed, persecution, and a growing, vibrant, underground church in communist Vietnam. But I noticed something. All the speakers at the conference in Manila looked like me: white men. So I started thinking about the injustice of this. Why weren't people like my elderly Vietnamese friend asked to speak, or at least to tell their stories? And I started wondering about the thousands and thousands of stories that are never heard: Christians whose voices are ignored, silenced, or marginalized. How do we start to hear these voices? How do we hear their cries for (and stories of) justice, peace, hope, and reconciliation? How do we learn from them and embrace new practices that can transform the world? That was the beginning of my journey, and these nine practices come out of listening to thousands of Christians from all over the world talk about the practices that they know can heal our broken world.

Our hope is that this book will be used by small groups, ministry professionals, activists, and laypeople. We hope this book will help

you discover new, transforming practices that revitalize the church and its mission and that transform the world. We hope that through these nine practices you'll discover fresh expressions and depths of reconciliation, justice, unity, peace, and love.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

This book can be read individually, but we also believe it is helpful to read in community. We encourage you to read this book in your small group, as a ministry team, as a college class, or in some other group setting. You may choose to gather a group of friends and read this book together in a home or a coffee shop.

Here's how your group can get the most out of this book.

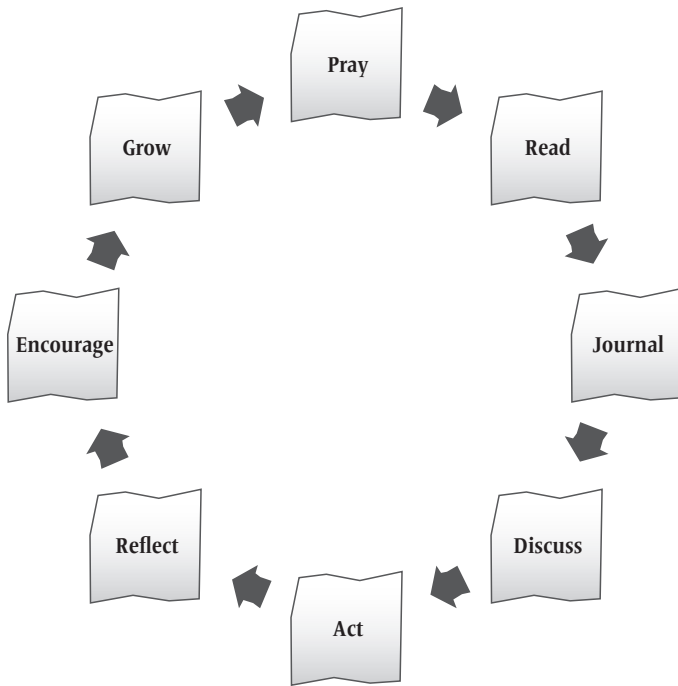


Figure 1. Practices for getting the most out of this book

Pray for open hearts. Spend time together in prayer and meditation, asking God to prepare your hearts as you read the chapter together. Ask the Spirit to make you open to what God wants to do in your lives, group, church, and neighborhood. Ask God to give you an open and receptive heart.

Read the chapter. Before your meeting, read through the chapter for the week. Many of the chapters refer to Scripture too, so read with your Bible open. Read slowly, reflectively, and prayerfully. Take your time and allow the ideas and challenges to sink in. (If you are reading this book together in your small group, you might choose to do one practice per week over nine weeks, or two practices per week over four weeks, and then one in a final week.)

Journal your thoughts. As you read the chapter, journal your thoughts. Journal what God is saying to you. How is God asking you to respond and change? What impresses or challenges you? What do you agree or disagree with? What questions do you have? How is the Spirit trying to get your attention and change your life? What is he saying to your group, church, and neighborhood? How is God calling you to think or act in response to your reading?

Discuss what you are learning. Meet in a small group or college class, with some friends at home or at a coffee shop, or as part of a ministry team. You will get a lot more out of this book when you read it with others. Together you can think about the book's challenges and implications. Discuss the chapter you read that week (or the two chapters you read that week, if you've decided to work through this book over five weeks). What are the key ideas? How does the chapter invite your group to respond? What does the chapter mean for your ministry, church, agency, family, or team? Appendix one has some questions for discussion and application.

Act on the suggested practices and activities. At the end of every chapter, there are three or more practices, challenges, and activities for small groups. These will help you explore and apply the practice

discussed in that chapter and turn ideas into habits. Choose one of the suggested activities to do together that week. Set aside some time to do that activity together. (If an activity can't be completed that week, set aside some time in your calendar to do that activity later on. Some of the activities will take quite a few weeks to complete, so set aside some time to do that exercise this year.)

Reflect on what you are learning. As you do the small group practice or exercise together, talk through what you are learning. When you meet to read the next chapter, reflect together on what God is saying to you and how God wants you to respond personally and as a group. What did you learn and discover as you engaged in the small group activity together? Engage with each other's ideas. Listen and learn from each other's insights and experiences.

Encourage each other to change and grow. We all find it easier to change and grow when we are encouraged and supported. Find creative ways to encourage each other to pursue deeper discipleship and faith and to overcome old habits and prejudices. We encourage each other by (1) discerning together what God is saying to us, (2) spurring each other on to deeper faith, (3) challenging each other to change, (4) nurturing each other's faith, and (5) holding each other accountable.

Here's one way you can keep each other accountable. Appendix two has the "Nine Transforming Practices Accountability Form." Keep a copy of this form in your Bible or in your bag or journal.

Once a week, pull out this form and write some answers to the questions on the form.

Once a month, ask everyone in your group to pull out their forms, and then discuss each of the nine practices. Hold each other accountable for the commitments you make. This accountability will help you continue to change and grow.

Grow through further reading. It's important to keep growing and learning. Appendix three has resources for recovering our humanity. These are a few books on each of the nine practices that will help you learn more about the practice and how to apply it.

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES IN THIS BOOK

To help your group get the most out of this book, we've included the following four resources:

- *Small group activities* are proposed at the end of every chapter. These will help you apply the nine practices in your church and neighborhood.
- *Questions for discussion and application* are in appendix one. These will help you dig deeper into how to apply and understand each of the nine practices.
- *The Nine Transforming Practices Accountability Form* is in appendix two. This will help you keep each other accountable as you seek to live out the nine practices personally and together.
- *Resources for recovering our humanity* are offered in appendix three. These will help you to learn more about each of the practices and help you continue to grow.



Figure 2. Resources in this book

With God's help, we can recover our humanity and pursue love, peace, justice, and reconciliation. These nine practices help encourage us to transform a dehumanized world into God's world.

REIMAGINE CHURCH

Jesus calls us to reimagine the church as the new humanity in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:15).

This is about learning together and anew about injustice and division in the church and the world. It's also about learning mutually and afresh what it means to be the new humanity in Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS "THE NEW HUMANITY IN CHRIST"?

As a child I (Graham) had the opportunity to visit the junction where the Darling and Murray Rivers meet and join in New South Wales, Australia. These are some of Australia's longest rivers. There's a viewing tower at the junction. A huge sign declares, "You are at the junction of Australia's Two Greatest Rivers." From the tower you can see the distinct difference between these two great rivers. Surrounded by majestic eucalyptus trees and the laughter of kookaburras, you look down on these rivers. The Darling River stretches 915 miles. It's a clay-based river and has a rich milky color. The Murray River is 1,558 miles long, and it flows through Australia's highest mountains all the way to the sea. It's a rich ecosystem of fish, turtles, shrimp, and platypuses, and it's a vibrant blue.

At the Darling and Murray Rivers junction, these two rivers become one great river. This is a stunning testimony to the God who creates, sustains, and restores all the heavens and the earth, and who makes the two into one.

What does Paul the apostle mean when he speaks of the new humanity in Christ?

Paul means that Jesus Christ has done away with the old divisions and enmities. He has united Jews and Gentiles as one new and undivided humanity in him through his death and resurrection. This is a new creation in Christ. God has made for Godself one new people out of the two. Christ has abolished the old divisions based on culture, politics, race, religion, law, gender, social standing, and so on. “Christ is all, and is in all” (Col 3:11) and has brought us together from every nation, language, and people as “one new people.” This doesn’t rid us of our Jewish or Gentile (or American, Korean, Australian, Chinese, Rwandan, Brazilian, Native American, etc.) cultures, identities, and unique contributions. But now our primary identity is in Christ and in that he has made us “one new humanity” in him (Eph 2:15; see Eph 2–4; Col 3; Gal 3; 6).

The political culture has become more polarized than ever in recent years. Sadly, many American Christians participated in this culture of divisiveness and animosity. Misunderstanding, accusations, and disunity continue in the church, even after the 2016 election. It’s one thing to differ and engage in vigorous debate. But disunity, animosity, and division are another thing altogether.

Much of this division is rooted in our sense of personal and corporate identities. But Jesus calls us to shape new identities as the new humanity in Christ. This new identity forges new allegiances and new social imaginations. It nurtures a deep commitment to grace, forgiveness, and love. In a world full of division and conflict, the church needs to embrace the ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking. God calls us to be a peaceable people who display unity in diversity

under Christ. God commands us to show the world what it means to be a new humanity and new creation in Christ.

So we are not primarily Tutsi or Hutu, German or French, British or Australian, Palestinian or Israeli, Chinese or Brazilian, Syrian or American. We are not primarily Republican or Democrat, conservative or progressive, urban or rural, rich or poor, white or a person of color. We bring all these identities and aspects of ourselves to our new humanity in Christ. We are primarily one people, united as one body in Jesus Christ. As a new creation and a new humanity, we are “a people on pilgrimage together, a mixed group, bearing witness to a new identity made possible by the Gospel.”¹ God calls us to show the world what reconciled, redeemed, and restored humanity looks like.

We must not root Christian identity in nationalism, ethnicity, partisan politics, sociopolitical-economic status, gender, and other such things. Instead we must root Christian identity in discipleship to Jesus Christ. This identity is formed through a vision of what it means to be a distinct people with an alternative ethic, politic, and life together. That people, formed by God for Godself—Jew and Gentile, women and men, rich and poor, black and white—shows the world an alternative way. Together as a new humanity we are made up of every tribe and ethnicity and language, valuing difference and particularity but united in our Christian identity. This new people roots its story in Israel, in Jesus, and in a vision of the new humanity and the age to come, when God will rule and reign.

We Gentiles (Americans, Australians, British, Asians, Latin Americans, Africans, etc.) join the story of Jesus. Our particular histories and cultures (personal and group and ethnic) are still important. The story of Jesus gives some parts of those stories more and fresh meaning. And other parts are revealed as destructive or divisive. But, now, in Jesus Christ, all our personal and corporate stories are situated and framed within the story of biblical Israel, the Jewish Jesus, the new humanity, the new creation, and the age to come. We express

this in grace, love, forgiveness, lament, fellowship, hospitality, welcome, and a commitment to human flourishing.

This unified identity is not the opposite of diversity. The church is intended to be diverse, and it has work to do in terms of becoming less monocultural and more intercultural. As Scot McKnight says, we are a “fellowship of differents.” This means we understand Christian life as a fellowship, as a social revolution, as life together, and as transcending and honoring and enjoying difference. We understand Christian life “to be about love, justice, and reconciliation.”² We must be a community of diverse races, languages, cultures, marital statuses, political views, genders, professions, experiences, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and much more.

It’s not enough to talk about unity in diversity. Diversity without theological substance is shallow and secularized. We need a vision of *unity in diversity under Christ* that is rooted in Scripture and theology. This new humanity embraces distinct qualities and convictions.

THE QUALITIES AND CONVICTIONS OF NEW-HUMANITY CHURCHES

What are the qualities and convictions of new-humanity churches? These churches know that they are one body, with one Messiah, one Spirit, one life, one table, one politic, one righteousness, one peace, one mission, one faith, one hope, and one love. Let’s unpack each of these.

One body. Jesus Christ calls his church to be one unified and diverse body. “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:4-5). As one body, our unity in diversity is under Christ and witnesses to him. It witnesses to his redemption and to his restorative future for all creation and humanity.

Too often diversity is co-opted by pragmatists for the sake of cultural relevance (or for “political correctness”). Too often diversity is

just about reflecting the concerns or values of society. *Diversity* is often a code word for black and brown, which neglects Asians and Native Americans. But the church needs to do better than that. We must incarnate the value of diversity and implement it for biblical, theological, and missional reasons. We must build a theology of *unity in diversity under Christ* that shapes our life together and in the world. Bruce Milne writes:

In today's context of in-your-face diversity, it is time to revisit the heart of the New Testament, with its claim that in Jesus Christ a new quality of human relationships has arrived and that the gathering of his followers in Christian churches represent a unique possibility of bridging the gulfs that separate. . . . Christian congregations, everywhere, are called to be just that—bridging-places, centers of reconciliation, where all the major diversities which separate human beings are overcome through the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit.³

God's mission is to reach the whole world. Jesus poured out his Spirit at Pentecost on diverse peoples with diverse languages, traditions, hopes, cultures, and expectations (Acts 2). God works in and through racial, gender, linguistic, and generational diversity. God has given the gospel to all the nations, granting all peoples "repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). In our unified diversity, we join with God in God's mission and welcome. This is the intercultural scope and embrace of the gospel. We reflect the extraordinary mosaic that emerges from God's hospitality and love (Acts 17:26-27).

God is reconciling the world in Jesus Christ. God is calling every ethnicity, and both women and men, to join in that ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14-21; Gal 3:28), to be a multiethnic and redemptive community that shows the world what the world looks like in its redeemed state. This community joins together in mission, ministry, worship, and community. God calls the church to be a light to a divided and broken

world, to witness to the world as it breaks down the dividing walls of animosity, hatred, fear, and discrimination (Eph 2:11-22).

God is shaping the local and global church into the church of every nation, tribe, people, and language. One day we will all worship together as brothers and sisters before the throne of God (Rev 7:9-12). We seek to express this future in our life together today as we “put on the new self” (Col 3:10), both individually and corporately. Together we are renewed through the one in whom there is now no dividing distinctions, “but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col 3:11). Forgiveness, compassion, humility, kindness, gentleness, patience, justice, thankfulness, peace, worship, joy, and love, “which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col 3:14), characterize our life together (see Col 3:1-17). We serve each other, caring for one another and honoring those whom the world may deem less honorable. Among God’s people those who have been neglected, marginalized, silenced, forgotten, exploited, and broken are treated with dignity, honor, love, and respect (1 Cor 12:12-31).

As we embrace this theological, missional, and communal vision, we offer a compelling witness and life together in the world. We see this being lived out in churches around the world. When we think of New York City, we think of a cosmopolitan of diverse communities, ethnicities, and cultures. In that large city we can see a witness to life together in Riverside Church as different people from around the world worship and engage in ministry and life together. In Sunday morning worship there, you can see intercultural ministry being lived out as people of different walks of life come together to worship. The global church needs a compelling vision of a healed and whole Christian community like Riverside Church demonstrates. We need a redeemed Christian social imagination.⁴ The global church needs fresh postures before a watching world.

Now, we need to be careful here. We’ll never address racial injustice with tokenism, pragmatism, cultural accommodation, or

window dressing. Merely replacing white male leaders and speakers with women and people of color won't solve any problems. In fact it'll just entrench problems. We need long-term, systemic, and theological solutions to animosity and division in the church and world.

That requires addressing the underlying issues. These include internalized racism and a diseased and disfigured Christian imagination. We need to get to the root of racialized, individualistic, privatized, and rootless identities. And we need to embrace and express a compelling, biblical vision of the church.

Only this way can we truly be the new humanity in Christ. Only this way can we truly be the church. Only this way can we have a strategic social ethic. Only this way can we show the world what God intends the world to be. Only this way can we embrace a compelling vision of a healed, whole, and multiethnic Christian community—one body in Jesus Christ.

One Messiah. Our unity comes from our Messiah, Jesus Christ. We are united with him in his death and resurrection as his body. He has created this new humanity and is the source and sustainer of our new life in him.

As Paul says, the Messiah is the image of the invisible God. He is the source of new and eternal life for all those who trust and believe in him, and he is the fullness of God. He reconciles humanity to God and to one another through his death and resurrection (Col 1:13-23). Any life, hope, vitality, forgiveness, and unity the church knows is only found in and through its Lord and Messiah. This is the ministry of reconciliation—between God and humanity, between whites and peoples of color, between rich and poor, between young and old, between Democrats and Republicans, between commerce and the earth, and the list goes on. Our reconciliation, redemption, and unity in diversity are in Christ alone. But let's not make any mistake—this is about justice, peace, freedom, reconciliation, and hope for all peoples and all creation. It goes beyond us. This is because everyone

and everything has “been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col 1:16-18).

At one stage all who are Gentiles were “foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). But now the Messiah has redeemed us by his blood, regardless of our gender, age, language, culture, or race. He is our peace. He has abolished division, enmity, conflict, fear, discrimination, and prejudice. He has made us one new people—a new humanity in Christ—reconciling us to God and each other through the cross and abolishing enmity. Together as one new people we are fellow citizens, God’s household, built on Christ Jesus and the prophets and apostles. This new humanity is also a holy temple, again built on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, and “built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:22). How can we allow any disunity or division to continue when the Messiah calls us to be reconciled and unified in him?

One Spirit. The Messiah unifies a diverse church in the power of his Spirit. The Spirit establishes, fills, empowers, and renews the church as his ongoing and dynamic creation. The Spirit forms the community into a countercultural community embodying the redemptive reign of God, helping it to be faithful, indwelling it with its power and presence. The Spirit works in the church so that it is holy and unified and gives it the ministry of reconciliation.

Jürgen Moltmann describes how the church enjoys “fellowship with Christ” as the Spirit reveals Christ, unites the church with Christ, glorifies Christ, and forms the church for the sake of Christ’s messianic mission. “Faith in Christ and hope for the kingdom are due to the presence of God in the Spirit.”⁵ The presence of the Spirit forms the church as the “messianic fellowship of service for the kingdom of God.” And the Spirit helps the church see itself “as the messianic fellowship in the world and for the world.”⁶

The Spirit creates the church and fills it with his grace. He empowers the church for the coming realm of God. The Spirit is present in and forms the church's sacraments, ministries, missions, and structures. Moreover, all these aspects of the church are "conceived in the movement and presence of the Spirit." The Spirit takes up the church's "gifts and the tasks assigned to it." The Spirit works in the church for the sake of the messianic mission and the eschatological realm of God.⁷

The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in the power of the Spirit. And the Spirit uses these four attributes for the glory of Christ, for the unity of the church, and for the extension of the realm of God.⁸ He works through them to bring liberation, healing, justice, mercy, and hope to a broken world.⁹ In doing so the Spirit empowers the church to witness to divine love and reconciliation.¹⁰ This is the work and fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26).

One life. The Messiah unifies and renews his church through *his* divine life. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). The Messiah doesn't just offer the church new life—he infuses the church with his very life-giving presence and power. People from every nation, tribe, and tongue join to receive this life, made one in the Messiah.

Colossians 2–3 contain warnings, promises, and commands. Persuasive arguments and empty ideologies are always trying to secure our allegiance and passions. These can be religious, political, cultural, or other types. But these are all empty deceptions that ensnare our hearts and lead to divisions, strife, and conflict among God's people. These ideologies split the church, leading to judgmentalism, idolatry, legalism, immorality, greed, division, pride, fear, and brokenness.

Instead Paul encourages us to lay hold of the Messiah, in whom all the fullness of God dwells in bodily form. In his life, death, resurrection, wisdom, and triumph is fullness of life. We have been buried and raised with him to new life—the full life only he can offer.

We are called by the Messiah to lay hold of that life together, as one body. This is “putting on the new self,” personally and together, as a new people. Setting aside distinctions and divisions and empty arguments, we enter the fullness of life in God. We decide to live as a new humanity in which “Christ is all, and is in all” (Col 3:11).

This life is manifest as a new way of being in the world—one of compassion, humility, grace, holiness, and hope. “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col 3:14).

One table. In Asian cultures, eating and sitting around the table is an act of welcome and hospitality. Sitting around the table is a vision of family, friends, and strangers coming together to share life together. The table is an important symbol of life, respect, and welcome. Traditionally in Korea, the table is usually low and round, and people sit on the floor around it. This means there is no need for chairs, so many people can gather around. If friends or strangers drop by, they are always welcome to sit at the table and join the meal. Furthermore, food is cut up into little pieces so that one can pick all of it up with chopsticks. There is no need for forks or knives to cut up the meat placed on one’s plate. The act of cutting up food while cooking also allows for visitors to come in anytime to join a meal. This is in contrast to the West, where families often need to know exactly how many people are going to eat in order to prepare the exact number of pieces of steak or chicken per person.

In my (Grace) childhood in Korea, we all sat on the floor around the table. We always welcomed neighborhood kids and friends to drop by anytime to eat, as there was always room at the table. This is a powerful symbol of hospitality and embrace.

Ruth Padilla DeBorst says:

Hospitality means conversion from individualism to community, from autonomy to interdependence, from idolatry to true worship, from grasping to receiving, from oppressive

dominion over creation to loving care of it, from indifference to passionate, prayerful action, from Western definitions of “development” to loving participation, from competition to collaboration, from protagonism to service.¹¹

The new people that Jesus had in mind are a hospitable, welcoming, open, and generous people. We have responded to Jesus’ welcome at the table, as we are recipients of Jesus’ divine hospitality. We invite people of all nations, languages, cultures, and colors to our tables. We offer this hospitality to each other and to the world, sometimes while we ourselves are foreigners or displaced or sojourners. More often we welcome outsiders to our local culture.

When I was growing up as an immigrant in Canada, there seemed to be continual immigration from Korea. Every time a new immigrant family came to our neighborhood, my dad would invite them over. So we had strangers constantly coming to our home. When the Vietnam War broke out, there were lots of refugees; some people called them “boat people.” When they came to Canada and into our neighborhood, our family opened our house to them. Friendships developed as we welcomed them and ate together and shared our stories of living in a new country.

Hospitality includes our relationship to our home, to the earth, and to a local place. It involves our connections to local relationships and local generosity. It includes the gifts that the earth offers to us as we place them thankfully at our tables. Are we connected enough with these to be hospitable? Are we willing to offer strangers welcome into those places and relationships and lands we love the most? Are we willing to allow others to call our land their land and our homes their homes? Are we open to immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and others? Sometimes it is much easier said than done.

Hospitality makes us fuller, richer, more Christlike people. It’s one of the signs that we are a new humanity in Christ. We welcome people

into our homes and lives and families and lands in anticipation of the home and the age to come. In doing so we are a foretaste of our ultimate home and of the age to come in Christ Jesus.

One politic. God calls God's church to be a distinct people, with a distinct ethic, a distinct story, a distinct peace, a distinct community, a distinct diversity, and a distinct witness. As Stanley Hauerwas says, "The first responsibility of the church is to *be* the church. . . . The church doesn't *have* a social ethic—the church *is* a social ethic."¹² Put another way, "The church doesn't have a social strategy, the church is a social strategy."¹³

As the new humanity in Jesus Christ, our life together is political. We're not talking here about Republicans or Democrats or some other form of party politics. We're talking about the politics of the realm of God. Together, as God's new creation, we display a new and redeemed politic before a watching world.

Too often we get caught up in the political concerns and spirits of our age. But instead we should show the world a new and redeemed politic by choosing to be the church. What if post-Christendom, secularism, materialism, sexuality, immigrants, refugees, nationalism, and Islam aren't things to be feared but instead opportunities to truly be the church? What if the church could truly be a sanctuary for people needing refuge? In the age of President Trump, certain churches in the United States are becoming sanctuary churches for undocumented workers and their families.¹⁴

What if these social changes are opportunities to embrace fuller discipleship, to reform our beliefs and practices, to dig deeper into the stories that shape us and our society, to see God's presence within expressions of doubt and questioning, and to practice a distinct social ethic? What if these are opportunities to cultivate a distinct community with a distinct love and ethic and grace and holiness and reconciliation and hope and welcome? What if these are opportunities to discern how we've become thoroughly secularized and how to be the new humanity and new creation in Christ? What if these are

opportunities to ask what really shapes our identities and desires and to repent? What if these are opportunities to join with God in God's mission, to live full and joyful lives, to listen to the hopes and longings of others, to embrace fresh confidence in the gospel, to open our hearts and homes and lands and families, and to invite the Spirit to convert its church?

The church remembers, tells, and embodies the story of Jesus Christ. It shows the world what God calls the world to be. The church does not withdraw from the world. The church does not stand in self-righteous judgment on the world.¹⁵ Instead the church serves Jesus and his world. Hauerwas writes, "The church can never abandon the world to the hopelessness deriving from its rejection of God, but must be a people with a hope sufficiently fervid to sustain the world as well as itself."¹⁶ The church, sure of its unique identity, must engage fully with the world—showing the world what God destines it to be.

The church witnesses to Jesus as a peaceable, virtuous, ethical, just, serving, and diverse-but-unified community.¹⁷ God calls the church to be an alternative society. The church is a parallel and distinct community, subverting the present powers and age, providing a standard and vanguard for the world as a foretaste of the age to come.

As a redeemed people, embodying a distinct way of life that witnesses to Jesus and his realm, the church needs to cultivate its unique practices. This way its "body politic," ethic, witness, and social forms are countercultural, missional, and glorifying of Christ. We are called to be "alternative people" or "another city," people who practice a distinct, Christ-honoring life together. The church is salt and light, a "city on a hill."

As part of the church's call to embrace a distinct social existence, we reject violence, relinquish power, pursue holiness, embrace ethics, cultivate meaningful community, embrace missional presence, respect free association, and imitate the servant nature of Christ. A faithful church abandons the reach for power, prestige, and

effectiveness that we may often see in megachurches around the world. Rather, it imitates the foolish weakness of the cross. As we look at history, we see God's sovereign purposes unfolding, including the formation of a new, redeemed humanity in Jesus Christ, as reflected in the church's unified politic.

One righteousness. This new people is made holy and righteous by God's grace. God purifies God's people and cleanses them from sin. God sanctifies them so that together they are God's holy and righteous bride. This is all God's work and all according to his grace, a righteousness by faith in Christ alone. We are now "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith" (Rom 3:24-25). The Messiah is righteous and makes his people holy, pure, and just through faith in him.

Receiving this righteousness through grace and faith, the new humanity chooses to put aside greed, lust, control, division, prejudice, racism, sexism, and vanity. Together we defy and dismantle unrighteous borders, injustices, divisions, and enmities. Together we clothe ourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in Christ. We embrace unity, humility, self-sacrifice, love, honor, hope, forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation. All these are expressions of our righteousness in Christ (Col 3:1-4:6, 1 Pet 1:13-25).

One peace. God calls the church to be a people of peacemaking and reconciliation. The Messiah is our peace, and he has abolished the conflicts and enmities that divide people (Eph 2:11-14). Peace and reconciliation are at the very heart of the new humanity in Christ. Jesus calls his church to express peace and unity, to be a peaceable community. He calls his church to be peacemakers in a world characterized by misunderstanding, war, hatred, and animosity.

Jesus Christ showed us what peacemaking looks like by living a life of nonviolence, justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Not only did he say, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called

children of God” (Mt 5:9), but he also showed us in his life and death what such peacemaking looks like. Love for enemies is the hallmark of discipleship: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:44-45).

God not only calls us to be peacemakers who love our enemies, but God also “reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18). God reconciles the world to Godself through Christ. God calls us to be ambassadors of Spirit-empowered reconciliation—calling women and men to be reconciled to God and to each other.

One mission. Taking our cue from David Bosch and Michael Frost, we’re convinced that being missional means alerting everyone everywhere to the universal reign of God through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ We do this together, in word, sign, and deed.

The new humanity in Christ integrates proclamation, evangelism, church planting, and social transformation in a seamless whole. We do this best as we learn from each other through multicultural, multiethnic, and global-local conversations. We engage in mission together, locally and globally, alerting people “to the universal reign of God in Christ.”¹⁹

Much of the missional conversation in the West is white, male, and privileged. Such authors have a place, of course, and they have important things to say. But white, male, privileged voices must not dominate our understanding of missional theology and practice. This does the conversation a disservice and doesn’t reflect new-humanity church. More than that: it limits, distorts, and even corrupts missional conversations and practices.

We’re very hopeful and excited about diverse, multicultural, multiethnic, multivoiced, female-male, global-local missional conversations. These conversations are happening more and more, all over the globe, and it’s thrilling. Missional conversations and practices will only be worthwhile if we embrace diversity, multiethnicity, and global voices. We need the perspectives of the Majority World (Third

World), First Nations, indigenous, African American, and diaspora (immigrant) voices. After all, this is where most of the global growth and mission of the church is happening today. A global missional conversation needs voices from all over the planet. It needs the contributions of both genders and of many cultures and ethnicities.

One faith. Our faith is in Jesus the Messiah and his gospel of salvation. This new people—formed as Christ joins Jew and Gentile together as one in him—embraces confident faith in him and his gospel. We say with conviction, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Rom 1:16).

Christians are passionate about many things, which is a good thing. Many issues deserve our passionate and courageous response—politics, race, gender, sexuality, poverty, the environment, and more. But our first passion must be for Jesus and for his gospel—all our other passions must flow out of this first and essential passion.

The gospel is astonishing. The gospel is the story of the triune God working through the story of Israel to save all humanity. The gospel is the story of God bringing that saving work to completion in the saving story of Jesus and in his Lordship over the whole world and all created things. The gospel is the invitation to all people to respond and enter into this marvelous work of God in history in Jesus Christ. This story must capture our hearts, minds, and passions.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, it says that the gospel is “of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, . . . he was buried, . . . he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” How does this gospel shape our lives, communities, beliefs, and passions? “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor 5:14-15).

This gospel is for all people and unites us together in Christ as one. We are united, even in our great diversity, through our shared faith in

the power and truth of the gospel. Paul writes, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13; see all of Rom 15:7-13 on the inclusivity of the gospel). Our faith unites us as one and fills us with hope.

One hope. Peter exclaims ecstatically,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet 1:3-5)

The church is experiencing more suffering and persecution today than ever before, all over the globe. And as the world becomes more divided and polarized, it threatens to suck the church into similar conflicts. But we have a living, imperishable, astonishing, and unfading hope! We are aware of our weaknesses and mistakes and failings. But, by the grace and Spirit of God, we are united as a new, restored, and transformed humanity in Christ. This is to result in “praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Pet 1:7).

We look with hopeful expectation to the end of the age.

There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.” (Rev 7:9-10; see also Rev 5:9-10)

Since our hope is in the age to come, we should seek to be that church now. We must strive to be the unity-in-diversity church, alerting everyone everywhere to the universal reign of God in Christ through our courageous, distinct, countercultural, new-humanity life together.

One love. How will people recognize the new humanity in Christ? They will know we are his people by our love for our enemies and by our love for one another (Mt 5:43-48; Jn 13:34-35).

What does this love look like? Pray for those who persecute you. Forgive those who have wronged you. Seek the welfare of your city and neighborhood, including those who oppose you. Welcome the stranger. Offer refuge, shelter, and hospitality to the undocumented immigrant, the asylum seeker, and the refugee. (This is now becoming more necessary in the United States.) Care for creation. Give away your time, goods, money, and gifts. Stop judging others. Imitate Christ's humility. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:3-5). Those are just a few of the ways we express love.

We were baptized by the Spirit into one body in Christ, to the glory of God (1 Cor 12:13). As one body with many members, God calls us to prefer each other over ourselves. God calls us to honor and respect our weaker members, to care for each other, to seek unity in our diversity, and to suffer and rejoice together. We use our gifts to serve and build each other up. Finally, we express the gift of love (1 Cor 12:14-31).

We are told what new-humanity love looks like. It is patient, humble, polite, hospitable, warm, forgiving, patient, hopeful, trusting, and persistent. It has no place for sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, greed, pride, prejudice, manipulation, animosity, or fear. "Love never fails" (1 Cor 13:8). "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 Jn 4:18). John puts it succinctly: "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them" (1 Jn 4:16).

New-humanity churches know that as one body they have one Messiah, one Spirit, one life, one table, one politic, one righteousness, one peace, one mission, one faith, one hope, and one love.

PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIVITIES FOR SMALL GROUPS

Here are some practices and activities for your small group. These will help you reimagine the new humanity in Christ.²⁰

Serve with other groups in your community. As a small group, find practical and tangible ways to collaborate with Christians from a variety of backgrounds. Do this in your local community. Serve with Christians from different ethnicities, denominations, theological traditions, ages, approaches to mission and witness, and so on. Now expand this out to collaboration with non-Christian groups that are trying to make a difference in your community. These include social, welfare, religious, governmental groups, and so on. Make sure the collaboration is practical and rooted in your local community. Then get your group to ask questions about their discoveries. What have they learned about mission, partnership, social action, grace, and embrace in these tangible acts of collaboration?

Visit with Christians from a different race and ethnicity from your own. Once every eight weeks, visit a worship service, Bible study, discipleship-training event, prayer meeting, or mission program conducted by Christians from a different ethnicity from your own. Mix it up over a two- or three-year period. This way you've experienced these things in as many ethnic contexts as possible—African American, Arabic, European, Chinese, Greek, Latinx, indigenous Australian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Serbian, South Korean, and so on. Or commit to spending twelve months immersed in a neighborhood and church of an ethnicity other than your own. As a small group, ask questions about what you can learn from these ethnicities and cultures.

Start “listen and learn” nights. During these nights, invite someone from a different faith, ethnicity, theological perspective, and so on to come and share. Invite them to share their story and their views in an attentive, nonthreatening environment. Your aim is not to criticize or debate them. It is to listen and learn. It is to reflect together on your learning as a group and on what it means to be the new humanity in Christ. Your group may never share all the perspectives or theologies of your visitor—especially if they contradict your biblical convictions. But you will grow together as you listen, and especially as you listen with respect, humility, prayer, grace, and attention to the Spirit.

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