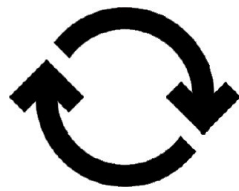


**REDISCIPLINING**

**STUDY GUIDE**

**THE**



**WHITE**

**DAVID SWANSON**

**CHURCH**



## OUTLINE

### Ten-Session Track:

1. Session One: Disciplined by Race .....	4
2. Session Two: Concealed by Race .....	5
3. Session Three: Wounded by Race.....	6
4. Session Four: Solidarity and Practicing Table Fellowship.....	7
5. Session Five: Practicing Kingdom Preaching.....	8
6. Session Six: Practicing Subversive Liturgies .....	9
7. Session Seven: Practicing Children’s Ministry of Reconciliation .....	10
8. Session Eight: Practicing Presence .....	11
9. Session Nine: Practicing Salvation from Superiority .....	12
10. Session Ten: Practicing Uncommon Friendship.....	13

### Five-Session Track:

1. Session One: Disciplined by Race .....	[See Session One Above]
2. Session Two: Concealed and Wounded by Race.....	14
3. Session Three: Solidarity and Practicing Table Fellowship.....	16
4. Session Four: Practicing Kingdom Preaching, Subversive Liturgies, and Children’s Ministry of Reconciliation.....	17
5. Session Five: Practicing Presence, Salvation from Superiority, and Uncommon Friendship .....	19

## INTRODUCTION

In these pages, I’ve imagined an approach to discipleship which is purposefully communal. Because the racial discipleship which has shaped us is social and systemic, it’s essential that our practices are not individualistic. This rediscipleship must always emphasize our place within the Body of Christ and the formational potential of the Church’s liturgy.

With this in mind, I hope that as you’ve read you’ve found yourself wanting to talk, dream, and plot with others. Maybe new possibilities have come to mind. Maybe you’re wondering about how your community could begin to reimagine its discipleship practices. Maybe you’re curious about how this rediscipleship would be received in your church. Whatever the case, I hope you’ve found yourself wanting to get out of your own head and join others on this journey toward solidarity. Reading, after all, is generally a solitary endeavor while the task in front of us is decidedly not.



I've had the privilege of meeting and dreaming with many ministry leaders and pastors about the ideas in this book. I've spent lots of hours with these women and men - whose locations and ministries differ wildly - discussing how we can actually live into this vision. Sometimes we've gotten stuck; the racial discipleship we're called to confront is deeply rooted and firmly entrenched. But more often than not, I've watched the Holy Spirit breathe creativity and courage into our imaginations. In these sacred conversations we not only begin believing that true solidarity is possible, we start to see the practical steps we can take today.

One of my convictions about the ministry of racial reconciliation and justice is that we cannot do this work on our own. Yet many of us who have been called by God to this ministry feel alone. It can seem as though there is no one else in our community who is troubled by the racialized status quo, no one else who is ready to take the risk to reimagine another way to live together as sisters and brothers in Christ. And this brings me to another of my core convictions: No matter what it looks like, God never leaves us to do this ministry in isolation. The most important thing that some of us can do right now is to pray that God would open your eyes to those in your community who are ready to take this journey with you.

With these convictions in mind, and with the hope that this book's readers want more than to read about true solidarity, I've provided the following discussion questions, anticipating that small communities would gather around the practices and possibilities we've envisioned here. Depending on your group's interest, you can engage the discussion questions in ten sessions - chapter by chapter - or in a condensed five-session format. However you choose to proceed, I pray that God would bless your conversations with dreams and visions, courage and conviction.



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## TEN-SESSION TRACK

### SESSION ONE: DISCIPLED BY RACE [FOR BOTH TRACKS]

In chapter one we defined discipleship and looked at how people are disciplined in the way of Jesus: Christian disciples are made as they follow Jesus (into the kingdom of God) to become like Jesus (through habit-shaping practices that orient our desires) in order to do what Jesus does. This understanding takes seriously that, as James K. A. Smith says, humans are not primarily thinking or believing beings; we are desiring and loving beings. Any attempt to disciple (or redisciple) must account for this part of our humanity. How does this understanding of discipleship line up with your own church or ministry experience?

As we begin the journey toward solidarity (more on that in the chapters to come), it's important that we evaluate our own lives and ministry contexts honestly. How does your church measure up to the vision of Ephesians 2:14-18 especially with regards to pursuing racial unity? How do you personally measure up to this vision with regards to your relationships with those who are different from your own racial and ethnic background?

A primary reason why white churches have not disciplined people away from racial segregation and injustice is because we have not recognized the racial discipleship that forms our desires and imaginations. These racialized practices and habits orient our desires away from solidarity with the diverse community of Christ, leaving us content with the status quo. Reflect on the churches and ministries of which you've been a part. What has their engagement with race and racism been like? Why has this engagement, or lack thereof, looked the way it has?

As we begin this journey, it's important that we do so with great humility. This is especially important for those of us who are white and are waking up to the harsh realities of racial injustice. For example, at the beginning of the chapter, I described an instance where the racial discipleship which had shaped my imagination revealed itself in all of its ugly power. Can you think of and share a similar moment in your own life?

#### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard.
- *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, James K.A. Smith.
- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, Bryan Stevenson.
- *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul*, Eddie Glaude.
- *The Color of Law: The Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated American*, Richard Rothstein.



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## SESSION TWO: CONCEALED BY RACE

As a pastor of a multiracial church, I have seen how this sort of church is often identified as the solution to the racial segregation that is so common among American congregations. Yet, as numerous studies have shown, multiracial churches often perpetuate white culture. This tendency reveals how important it is to begin with discipleship, rather than immediately pursuing diversity. As you consider your ministry context, have you observed churches attempt to become more diverse without addressing discipleship? What have been some of the results?

Drawing on the work of Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, we saw how white Christians grasp for the tools of individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism when attempting to address racial segregation and injustice. I think of these as white Christianity's instincts; we default to them without being aware that we are. Unless we clearly identify these instincts and unless our rediscipleship strategy adequately addresses them, our attempts at reconciliation will remain largely futile. How have you observed these three instincts in your personal life? In the white churches you've been a part of?

White Christianity's instincts can make it difficult for people to see the systemic nature of racism. What about in your context? Where do you see examples of how racism infects systems and structures?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- "Nobody Knows My Name" and "My Dungeon Shook" in *Collected Essays*, James Baldwin.
- *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, Christian Smith and Michael Emerson.
- *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing For Racial Reconciliation*, Jennifer Harvey.
- *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*, Drew G.I. Hart.
- *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1829-1900*, Jacqueline Joyce Royster, ed.
- *White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to Be White*, Daniel Hill.



### **SESSION THREE: WOUNDED BY RACE**

In this chapter I observe that for people of color and white people, the earliest engagement with race differs wildly. When was the first time you learned of the importance of race? What were the circumstances of that discovery?

To understand the harmful effect of racism, we need to redirect our attention from the obvious racist instances – as consequential as they are – to the more subtle and insidious manifestations of our racialized society. For example, I observed firsthand the devastating loss of generational wealth resulting from the way Black and Brown people were targeted for subprime mortgages in years leading up to the housing crash in 2008. How has the racialized nature of American society affected your context? How have you benefitted (or been harmed) by societal structures of racial inequality and injustice?

We also looked at the work of Dr. Glenn Bracey who coined the phrase “race tests” to describe how people of color are forced to assimilate to white spaces or to leave them. Consider your own majority white church. How have you seen race tests directed toward people of color?

#### **FOR FURTHER READING:**

- *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates.
- “On Being ‘White’... and Other Lies in *Collected Essays*, James Baldwin.
- *The Myth of Equality*, Ken Wytsma.
- *Notes from No Man’s Land: American Essays*, Eula Biss.
- *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength*, Chanequa Walker-Barnes.
- *We Gon’ Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation*, Jeff Chang.
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Frederick Douglass.



## SESSION FOUR: SOLIDARITY AND PRACTICING TABLE FELLOWSHIP

One of the major shifts I'm suggesting in this book is redirecting our focus from diversity to solidarity. When I think about Christian solidarity, Paul's instructions to the church in Rome are what come to mind. "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:15) Unfortunately, racial segregation has kept many white Christians from even knowing who in the larger Christian family is rejoicing or mourning. Can you think of examples of cross-racial Christian solidarity in your context? What were the circumstances which led to those possibilities?

In Part Two, we will look at seven different discipleship practices which can be reimagined to lead white Christians away from racial segregation and injustice and toward solidarity with the diverse Body of Christ. We begin with Holy Communion. For this sacred meal to form us toward solidarity, we will need to understand how the communion table anchors us not only in fellowship with God, but also with other believers. Reflect on your communion liturgy. How is the congregation reminded of the fellowship they share with other believers across lines of race and ethnicity? How might this biblical theme be emphasized more?

In many white churches, the emphasis at the table is on what Christ has done for individuals. Important as this is, we can miss kind of corporate we see in Paul's challenge to the church in Corinth [1 Corinthians 11:17-34]. When we do pause for this reflection, we will need to make space for lament over the segregated state of the church and our own complicity in it. What are some ways you could make space for corporate reflection and confession at the table? How could lament be incorporated into your communion liturgy?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, Theresa Latini.
- *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community*, Simon Chan.
- *Faithful Presence*, David Fitch.
- *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*, Robert Webber.



## SESSION FIVE: PRACTICING KINGDOM PREACHING

In the majority white churches of my youth, the emphasis was on the individual mind. After the service we might ask, “What did you think about the sermon?” By contrast, in many African American churches, the focus is on the corporate experience of the preached Word of God. Leaving one of these services you might hear something like, “We had some church today!” Think about the white churches you’ve belonged to. Has the emphasis been more on the individual or on the community? Have sermons typically been addressed to the congregants’ minds or, more holistically, to their entire embodied experiences?

Worshipping with Black congregations has helped me evaluate my previous experiences of preaching more thoroughly. Have you had the chance to worship in cross-cultural settings? How have those opportunities helped you see your own context more clearly?

One of the challenges to reimagining preaching as a discipleship practice has to do with how a white church understands its collective identity. Most white people don’t think of ourselves as white and thus we overlook the racial discipleship that is forming our imaginations and assumptions. How would you evaluate the racial awareness of most of the white people in your church? How aware are they of how our racialized society has influenced their imaginations and assumptions? How might preaching help the congregation understand the collective impact of racial segregation and injustice while applying the gospel to this area of great need?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *They Like to Never Quit Praising God*, Frank Thomas.
- *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States*, Michael O. Emerson.
- *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*, Charles L. Campbell.
- *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson.





## SESSION SIX: PRACTICING SUBVERSIVE LITURGIES

Every church has a liturgy, the forms which guide our worship. As much as our beliefs shape the liturgy, as we've already seen, the liturgy also shapes our desires. In our goal of discipling white people toward solidarity, the Sunday liturgy holds significant potential to reorient our assumptions and imaginations.

Think for a minute about a typical worship service at your church. What are the consistent elements which make up the service? Are these liturgical elements currently forming worshippers more deeply in the diverse Body of Christ?

In this chapter we saw that the liturgy is not simply a pattern that guides our worship, it holds the potential to reshape our basic orientation to God, time, community, and mission. Can you observe these characteristics of the liturgy in your weekly worship service? What might need to be adjusted in order to draw the congregation's attention to what is happening in worship?

One of my basic assumptions is that, in order to redisciple white Christians, a church does not need to reinvent the wheel. Rather, we have God-given wisdom and tradition from which to draw on. Our task is to look at our discipleship practices with a new imagination and identify how they can claim more of their power to form us into the Body of Christ. With this goal in mind, take some time to thoroughly review your church's weekly liturgy. After identifying each element within the broader movements of entrance, proclamation, communion, and dismissal, think of one specific way for each element to intentionally form worshippers toward solidarity with Christ's diverse Body.

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, Sandra Van Opstal.
- *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.
- *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, James K.A. Smith.



## **SESSION SEVEN: PRACTICING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

Think about your childhood. How were you disciplined, either intentionally or by the lack of conversations about race, about your racial identity?

White parents often avoid difficult conversations about race with their children because they don't face the same threats that children of color do. What are some of the implications of not disciplining our white children about their own racial identities and the diverse Body of Christ to which they belong? Is your church prepared to equip parents to begin disciplining their children in these areas? If not, what would need to change?

One of the challenges facing many white churches when it comes to redisciplining children and their parents is the basic assumptions that church is supposed to feel safe and comfortable. When these assumptions are left undisturbed, children are ill-equipped for the challenging work of confronting racial injustice and segregation. Evaluate how your worship service feels to a child. What elements would form a child to understand that following Jesus is a costly endeavor that calls for courage?

On pages 127-128 I suggest an example prayer which directly addresses racial injustice in a manner appropriate for children that could be included in a worship service. Think about an instance of racial injustice that made the news in your own context and then write out a prayer that would invite everyone in the congregation, including the children, to come before God with specific petitions for racial justice and reconciliation.

### **FOR FURTHER READING:**

- *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*, Jennifer Harvey.
- *Incorporating Children in Worship*, Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom and David Bjorlin.
- *Is it a Lost Cause?* Marva Dawn.



## SESSION EIGHT: PRACTICING PRESENCE

The history of how race developed into what we experience today involves three elements we identified in this chapter: erasing Jesus' particularity, European colonialism, and racial hierarchy in the United States. One result from this toxic brew is how we struggle to see the importance of our relationship to place, to God's creation. Are there any ways that your discipleship practices intentionally reflect your physical location?

The idea that race, and racial whiteness in particular, emerged from certain circumstances and agendas is one that most of us haven't grappled with. How would you describe some of this history to someone who is just beginning to understand that race is a relatively recent social construct? What role does place and creation play in how you retell this history?

In a city like Chicago where I live, it's easy to see how our racialized society has been interwoven into the physical structures of our city. How segregation shifts from one neighborhood to the next, what schools receive more funding, where toxic waste facilities are located- all of these reflect how race has deeply impacted place. What about your context? What are some ways that racial segregation and injustice has affected the environment and infrastructure of your community?

One of the potential antidotes to our disconnection from place is to make a commitment to remain in a particular place long-term. For some, a suggestion to stay put strike against the very essence of middle-class American identity. We have been formed to expect to move for lots of different reasons: a better paying job, a higher status graduate school, a more pleasant climate, etc. For others, those who've not had the same access to mobility, the invitation to stay could feel manipulative. How do you personally experience the possibility of committing to a particular place and its community? What would be some of the ramifications should your church begin discipling its members to consider their relationship to place and creation? What possibilities for cross-racial solidarity might begin presenting themselves?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, Brenda Salter-McNeil.
- *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*, Randy Woodley.
- *Race and Place*, David Leong.
- *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, Willie James Jennings.
- *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture*, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove.
- *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World*, Brian Bantum.



## SESSION NINE: PRACTICING SALVATION FROM SUPERIORITY

Can the journey to solidarity begin when a person starts following Jesus, or does a concern for racial justice need to wait for a later conversion? How you answer this question probably reflects your understanding of discipleship. Think about how your faith community connects evangelism and discipleship. Is one emphasized more than the other? What possibilities might open up by beginning with the invitation to follow Jesus?

There are a handful of mentors of color who, over the years, I've come to trust implicitly. One of the disheartening themes I've heard repeatedly from them is that, given my racial identity, there will be places my voice will be more credible than theirs, despite how much more wisdom than me each of these women and men have. They've helped me see my responsibility to speak up about racism, especially with white people who will likely take me seriously. Reflect on your relational networks. Who are the white people with whom you have credibility? Are they aware of how your discipleship to Jesus has led you to pursue racial justice? What could it look like for you to begin inviting these friends to begin following Jesus, including leaving behind the places of complicity with racial injustice and segregation?

Given a long history of separating evangelism from justice, many white Christians will struggle to imagine what it actually looks like to hold these together. It's really hard to do something we've never experienced ourselves! Are there churches of color in your region who are known for their commitments to both evangelism and justice? What are some practical ways you could begin learning from them?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In*, James Choung.
- *Get the Word Out: How God Shapes and Sends His Witness*, John Teter.
- *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World*, Raymond Rivera.



## SESSION TEN: PRACTICING UNCOMMON FRIENDSHIP

We've been culturally disciplined to see cross-racial friendships as either the means to racial reconciliation or as evidence that we have achieved it. But as we saw, neither of these is actually the case and too often cross-racial friendships serve as a veneer over white cultural dominance. What is your experience with cross-racial relationships? Have these friendships been a result of truly multi-cultural community, or have they existed within spaces which affirm white cultural norms?

Despite the ubiquity of shallow expressions of cross-racial friendships and multiracial community, diverse friendships are critical for white Christians moving toward racial justice. Think about your motivations to build and nurture friendships. How might these three rationales for diverse friendships shape how you intentionally pursue friendships and nurture community in the future?

As strange as it might sound, not only do many white people not have any friends of color, but we also don't really know how to even begin establishing these friendships. In some cases, a church help provide the circumstance where these friendships can begin. While remaining vigilant to the possibilities of cheap diversity and shallow relationships, what are some ways your church could help its white members break out of their segregated relational networks and begin fostering genuine friendships with people of color?

One sign that a white person's relational network with people of color is healthy is whether they have joined in the work of repair for the harm done by racism and white supremacy. This reveals an understanding that racism is not primarily a problem of relational separateness but of material harm. What people or organizations in your community are engaged in the work of repairing the damage done by racial injustice? How could your church begin partnering with those who are doing this work?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, Michael Eric Dyson.
- *The Hidden Wound*, Wendell Berry.
- *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Austin Channing Brown.



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## **FIVE-SESSION TRACK**

### **SESSION ONE: DISCIPLED BY RACE**

See Ten-Session Track, Session One above.

### **SESSION TWO: CONCEALED AND WOUNDED BY RACE**

As a pastor of a multiracial church, I have seen how this sort of church is often identified as the solution to the racial segregation that is so common among American congregations. Yet, as numerous studies have shown, multiracial churches often perpetuate white culture. As you consider your ministry context, have you observed churches attempt to become more diverse without addressing discipleship? What have been some of the results?

Unless we clearly identify and address White Christianity's these instincts - individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism - our attempts at reconciliation will remain largely futile. How have you observed these three instincts in your personal life? In the white churches you've been a part of?

White Christianity's instincts can make it difficult for people to see the systemic nature of racism. What about in your context? Where do you see examples of how racism infects systems and structures?

A person's first glimpse of the significance of race often varies significantly depending on race. When was the first time you learned of the importance of race? What were the circumstances of that discovery?

To understand the harmful effect of racism, we need to redirect our attention from the obvious racist instances - as consequential as they are - to the more subtle and insidious manifestations of our racialized society. How has the racialized nature of American society affected your context? How have you benefitted (or been harmed) by societal structures of racial inequality and injustice?

Dr. Glenn Bracey coined the phrase "race tests" to describe how people of color are forced to assimilate to white spaces or to leave them. Consider your own majority white church. How have you seen race tests directed toward people of color?

### **FOR FURTHER READING:**

- "Nobody Knows My Name" and "My Dungeon Shook" in *Collected Essays*, James Baldwin.
- *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, Christian Smith and Michael Emerson.



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- *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing For Racial Reconciliation*, Jennifer Harvey.
  - *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*, Drew G.I. Hart.
  - *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1829-1900*, Jacqueline Joyce Royster, ed.
  - *White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to Be White*, Daniel Hill.
  - *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates.
  - "On Being 'White'... and Other Lies in *Collected Essays*, James Baldwin.
  - *The Myth of Equality*, Ken Wytsma.
  - *Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays*, Eula Biss.
  - *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength*, Chanequa Walker-Barnes.
  - *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation*, Jeff Chang.
  - *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Frederick Douglass.



## SESSION THREE: SOLIDARITY AND PRACTICING TABLE FELLOWSHIP

Christian solidarity resists the thin expressions of diversity which do little to address the material sources of injustice. Also, solidarity can be pursued no matter how racially and homogenous your context. Read Paul's description of solidarity in Romans 12:15 and then reflect on your own ministry setting. How has solidarity across lines of cultural hostility and division been pursued in your community? What has kept it from being more of a priority?

While the discipleship practices which form us away from segregation and into solidarity are always communal, the process of leading people into those practices will often feel solitary. What are some of the barriers and push-back you have experienced as you've invited people to confront racial segregation and injustice?

It is essential that we count the cost as we begin addressing how racial discipleship has deformed our communities. Share the story about how God woke you up to the importance of racial reconciliation and justice. What are you doing to make sure that you can be faithful to this call, even when things get difficult?

The first discipleship practice we considered is Holy Communion. While white Christians usually emphasize our fellowship with God when we come to the table, our fellowship with one another is often muted. Reflect on your congregation's communion practice. In what ways does it affirm our individualistic instincts? Are there any ways in which it purposefully resists them?

At the communion table we live into the mutual submission that is meant to characterize the Church. Highlighting this, however, might lead us to notice that in our majority white churches and communities we don't regularly submit to Christians of color. In your personal life of discipleship, are there any spiritual leaders or mentors to whom you are submitted? What are some things you could begin doing now to begin nurturing these kinds of relationships?

What are some ways your practice of communion could be reimagined so that, as a discipleship practice, it is forming new habits of love for and solidarity with the diverse Body of Christ?

### FOR FURTHER READING:

- *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, Theresa Latini.
- *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community*, Simon Chan.
- *Faithful Presence*, David Fitch.
- *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*, Robert Webber.





## **SESSION FOUR: PRACTICING KINGDOM PREACHING, SUBVERSIVE LITURGIES, AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

In white churches, the sermon is commonly directed to the minds of the congregations. People might ask each other after the service, "What did you think about the sermon?" It's a question that makes sense in a context where individual thinking is highly valued. In other contexts, though, a higher value might be placed on the community's participatory engagement with the sermon. Think about the white churches you've belonged to. Has the emphasis been more on the individual or on the community? Have sermons typically been addressed to the congregants' minds or, more holistically, to their entire embodied experiences?

One challenge to reimagining preaching as a discipleship practice has to do with how a white church understands its collective identity. Most white people don't think of ourselves as white and thus we overlook the racial discipleship that is forming our imaginations and assumptions. How would you evaluate the racial awareness of most of the white people in your church? How aware are they of how our racialized society has influenced their imaginations and assumptions? How might preaching help the congregation understand the collective impact of racial segregation and injustice while applying the gospel to this area of great need?

Every church has a liturgy, the forms which guide our worship. Review a typical worship service at your church. What are the consistent elements which make up the service? Are these liturgical elements currently forming worshippers more deeply in the diverse Body of Christ?

Instead of throwing out everything we've previously done, our task is to look at our discipleship practices with a new imagination and identify ways these practices can claim more of their power to form us into the Body of Christ. With this goal in mind, take some time to thoroughly review your church's weekly liturgy. After identifying each element within the broader movements of entrance, proclamation, communion, and dismissal, think of one specific way for each element to intentionally form worshippers toward solidarity with Christ's diverse Body.

White parents, like many other parents, want to protect their children from the worst elements of the world. But by privileging this desire for innocence, we end up abdicating our responsibility to disciple our children. What are some of the implications of not disciplining our white children about their own racial identities and the diverse Body of Christ to which they belong? Is your church prepared to equip parents to begin disciplining their children in these areas? If not, what would need to change?

On pages 127-128 I suggest an example prayer which directly addresses racial injustice in a manner appropriate for children that could be included in a worship service. Think about an instance of racial injustice that made the news in your own context and then write out a prayer that would invite everyone in the congregation, including the children, to come before God with specific petitions for racial justice and reconciliation.



## FOR FURTHER READING:

- *They Like to Never Quit Praising God*, Frank Thomas.
- *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States*, Michael O. Emerson.
- *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*, Charles L. Campbell.
- *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson.
- *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, Sandra Van Opstal.
- *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.
- *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, James K.A. Smith.
- *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*, Jennifer Harvey.
- *Incorporating Children in Worship*, Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom and David Bjorlin.
- *Is it a Lost Cause?* Marva Dawn.



## **SESSION FIVE: PRACTICING PRESENCE, SALVATION FROM SUPERIORITY, AND UNCOMMON FRIENDSHIP**

One of the implications of how the construct of race developed over time was how people became less formed by God's creation. Are there any ways currently in which your discipleship practices intentionally reflect your physical location?

One of the potential antidotes to our disconnection from place is to make a commitment to remain in a particular place long-term. What would be some of the ramifications should your church begin discipling its members to consider their relationship to place and creation? What possibilities for cross-racial solidarity might begin presenting themselves?

What if we were to take Dallas Willard's suggestion seriously, that by beginning with discipleship conversions to Jesus will take care of themselves? This paradigm provides a possibility of connecting evangelism with racial justice from the very start. Think about how your faith community connects evangelism and discipleship. Is one emphasized more than the other? What possibilities might open up by beginning with the invitation to follow Jesus?

Oftentimes, white people will be more likely to learn the difficult truths about our racialized society from other white people. Who are the white people with whom you have credibility? What could it look like for you to begin inviting these friends to begin following Jesus, including leaving behind the places of complicity with racial injustice and segregation?

Given a long history of separating evangelism from justice, many white Christians will struggle to imagine what it actually looks like to hold these together. Are there churches of color in your region who are known for their commitments to both evangelism and justice? What are some practical ways you could begin learning from them?

White people have been culturally disciplined to see cross-racial relationships as either the means to the racial reconciliation ends or as evidence that we have achieved the reconciliation goal. But as we saw, neither of these is actually the case and too often cross-racial friendships serve as a veneer over white cultural dominance. What is your experience with cross-racial relationships? Have these friendships been a result of truly multicultural community, or have they existed within spaces which affirm white cultural norms?

Not only do many white people not have any friends of color, but we also don't really know how to even begin establishing these friendships. In some cases, a church help provide the circumstance where these friendships can begin. While remaining vigilant to the possibilities of cheap diversity and shallow relationships, what are some ways your church could help its white members break out of their segregated relational networks and begin fostering genuine friendships with people of color?



One sign that a white person's relational network with people of color is healthy is whether they have joined in the work of repair for the harm done by racism and white supremacy. This reveals an understanding that racism is not primarily a problem of relational separateness but of material harm. What people or organizations in your community are engaged in the work of repairing the damage done by racial injustice? How could your church begin partnering with those who are doing this work?

#### **FOR FURTHER READING:**

- *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, Brenda Salter-McNeil.
- *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*, Randy Woodley.
- *Race and Place*, David Leong.
- *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, Willie James Jennings.
- *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture*, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove.
- *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World*, Brian Bantum.
- *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In*, James Choung.
- *Get the Word Out: How God Shapes and Sends His Witness*, John Teter.
- *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World*, Raymond Rivera.
- *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, Michael Eric Dyson.
- *The Hidden Wound*, Wendell Berry.
- *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Austin Channing Brown.