

*A Traveler's Guide to the Kingdom: Journeying Through the Christian Life*

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*“As we travel together to pubs and cathedrals, we will immerse ourselves in what God did—and still can do.”*  
—James Emery White

## Having doubts amidst the journey

When you walk into Dachau, you walk into a mausoleum of human pain and suffering. No one laughs or talks above a whisper, even in the open air of the barracks or assembly grounds. There is a blanket of sobriety, a weight of gravitas. It is as if you are on holy ground. How ironic that space drenched with such a sense of the sacred is the seed of so much spiritual doubt. While many found faith of its deepest and most vibrant nature on the grounds of Dachau, others lost it forevermore.

I read an interview of a man by the name of Christian Reger who spent four years as a prisoner at Dachau for nothing more than belonging to the Confessing Church, the branch of the German state church which opposed Hitler. Later he became a leader of the International Dachau Committee, and returned to the grounds in order to restore the camp as a monument so that the world would not forget. In the interview, Reger reflected how the German philosopher Nietzsche said a man can undergo torture if he knows the *why* of his life. “But I, here at Dachau, learned something far greater. I learned to know the Who of my life. He was enough to sustain me then, and is enough to sustain me still.”

Are you there yet? In the face of staggering questions and assaults against your faith, and even against God’s character, are you content with the *Who* of your life as opposed to the often-empty nature of the *why*?

Throughout our faith journey we will experience doubt—doubt about the goodness of God, the wisdom of God, even the truth of God. Dachau moments. Moments when you wonder what God is *really* like. Sometimes it can seem that the God of the Bible acts in ways that we would never dream of acting, which makes it hard to believe *that* God—or what we think we *know* about that God—is *right*; much less that he is worthy of worship and obedience.

Much of the evil and suffering and insanity of this world is self-inflicted. Dachau itself was a reflection of human depravity, and was meant to be as evil as it was. Even the first camp commandant, an SS officer named Theodor Eicke, had been plucked from a psychiatric hospital due to his

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BOOK EXCERPT

sanity being questioned by the local Nazi leadership. Fitting, in a way, as Dachau was insanity made manifest. But it was human insanity, not God's.

—Adapted from the chapter on the Dachau Concentration Camp,  
“You Will Have Doubts”

# BIO

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**Dr. James Emery White**

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**Dr. James Emery White** is the founding and senior pastor of Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and president of Serious Times, a ministry which explores the intersection of faith and culture. He is also Distinguished Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Anderson University in South Carolina and consulting editor to *Leadership Journal*.

White holds a B.S. degree in public relations and business, along with an M.Div. and a Ph.D. from Southern Seminary, where he was awarded a Garrett Teaching Fellowship in both New Testament and theology. He has also done advanced university study at Vanderbilt University in American religious history and continuing education at Oxford University in England, including participation in Oxford's summer program in theology. He has served as a visiting professor at such institutions as New Orleans Seminary, Southern Seminary, Southeastern Seminary, Western Seminary and the Moscow Theological Institute, and has served on the board of the Boston Theological Institute, which includes such schools as Boston College, Boston University and Harvard.

White is the author of over a dozen books, including Gold-Medallion nominees *Serious Times* and *A Search for the Spiritual and Christianity Today* "Book of the Year" award-winner *Embracing the Mysterious God*, as well as *The Prayer God Longs For* and *Rethinking the Church*. His most recent publications include *A Mind for God* and *Christ Among the Dragons*, as well as the Key Questions series of booklets.

Though his family's roots have been tied to North Carolina for generations, he was born in Chicago and then lived in California, Utah and Washington during his childhood. His family returned to North Carolina during his teen years. White and his wife, Susan, have four children.



**James Emery White,**  
author of *A Traveler's*  
*Guide to the Kingdom*

## An interview with James Emery White, author of *A Traveler's Guide to the* *Kingdom*

### **What is the significance of this book being a “traveler’s guide”?**

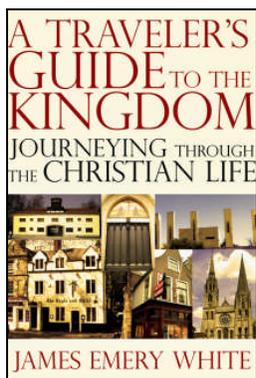
It carries something of a double meaning. Each chapter is rooted in a place of spiritual significance that I take the reader to, and then each place/chapter introduces a bit of a traveler’s guide to the Christian life through that place. Pilgrimages have long been significant to Christian life and thought, as have mentors. This is something of an attempt to combine the two.

### **You have written *Serious Times*, *Christ Among the Dragons*, *A Mind for God*. Why did you decide to write this *Traveler’s Guide* and how does it compare with your other books on Christianity and culture?**

I’ve always had my feet in several camps: the church and the academy, culture and apologetics, and spiritual formation. I wrote a book called *Embracing the Mysterious God* that won several awards—and was later released as *Wrestling with God*, also through IVP—on life in Christ. This is something of a return to that. But in truth, I reject separating life into compartments. We can’t engage culture apart from a life in Christ; we can’t journey with Christ apart from our minds. It’s all one thing.

### **Why do you say that place matters, particularly as it pertains to this *Traveler’s Guide to the Kingdom*?**

From the beginning of human history, we have invested certain places with significance and meaning, sometimes because of their historical significance, sometimes because of their symbolic significance. To this day, people travel to the Holy Land to walk where Jesus walked. Or to Dachau. Or Iona. But it’s not simply what happened at these places, or the personalities involved. It’s the meaning of what took place. And that it took place.



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So in the book, when we “travel” to St. Catherine’s monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, it reminds us that there is a God, and he has not been silent. He has been making himself known from the very beginning. Our God is the God of Moses. Our God is the God of Sinai. Our God is the God of the burning bush. Our God is the God of everything, and everyone, you read of in the Bible. Standing there conveys that with a weight unlike any other experience; so yes, place matters to us as humans. We are temporal, earthly creatures. It’s difficult to underestimate its power.

### **Give us a glimpse of what we learn from Iona Abbey in Scotland.**

That particular chapter explores the spiritual life proper. I have traveled to many places that seemed “spiritual.” I have never been quite sure whether it was because it was steeped in religious history or full of mystery, or whether my soul simply resonated with the atmosphere. All I know is that Iona is, for me, a spiritual place. It feels like you are standing on the edge of the world, alone with your spirit before the Spirit, in nature’s great monastery where buildings are only a part of the cloister. There are few places on the planet that call us to such powerful reflection and interaction with God.

In the book, I explore the idea that we don’t really have a spiritual life. We just have our life, and it is meant to be lived spiritually. Then I explore the myths that surround the life we pursue in Christ—and there are many—and the realities of how to truly develop an intimate relationship with God.

### **What are three things you hope readers take away from this *Traveler’s Guide*?**

Obviously an appreciation for these places. Our Christian history is being lost. A life such as Corrie ten Boom’s, and her “hiding place,” is virtually unknown to many younger Christians. Places like Iona, even Dachau, must be remembered. Second, I would hope for a sense of what the journey with Christ is meant to hold for us, and how it can hold it for us—again, the mentoring element. And finally, to see that we are creating history with our own lives in our own day, creating places and living lives that may inspire future generations, if we will prove faithful.