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**TEN POSTURES to BECOMING  
HOUSEHOLDS of HEALING and HOPE**

# The Race-Wise Family

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**HELEN LEE and  
MICHELLE AMI REYES**

**Foreword by Dr. Derwin L. Gray**

# The Race-Wise Family

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*Ten Postures to Becoming Households  
of Healing and Hope*

**by Helen Lee  
and Michelle Ami Reyes**



**WATERBROOK**

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To every mother and father longing to make a difference,  
may your family and your children be the keys to bringing  
hope and healing in our racially broken world

## Foreword

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MY WIFE, VICKI, LOVES MAPS. I learned of this love when we started dating in 1990. We met my freshman year of college and have been together ever since. For thirty years, we have loved each other as husband and wife. And for thirty years, I have beheld her fondness for maps! When I say she loves maps, I mean the old-school paper maps, the kind you unfold like an ancient scroll. Only recently has she reluctantly embraced digital maps.

Why does Vicki love maps? Because they are guides that get us to our destination. With a map in her hand, we have driven across America, discovering things we had never seen or experienced before.

But every map must come from people—cartographers—who have gone before us and recorded the details so we can arrive at our destination. Helen Lee and Michelle Reyes are two such people. Like skilled travel guides, they take us to a new place of grace, where King Jesus is “creating in himself one new people” (Ephesians 2:15, *NLT*) that is wonderfully composed of a blood-purchased people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9, *NLT*). God is

building his redeemed, colorful, and multiethnic family. Sacred Scripture says it this way:

This is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:6, *NLT*)

This new, multicolored family is called the church. As God’s family loves one another across ethnic, class, and gender barriers, we bear witness to Jesus, his gospel, and his kingdom (Galatians 3:27–29).

You are in good hands with your mapmakers. Helen is an accomplished author, publishing veteran, theologian, and practitioner of racial reconciliation. Her words flow not just from a prolific pen but from a life that embodies what she teaches. Michelle is an activist; she has done the heavy lifting, along with her husband, of planting a multiethnic church in East Austin, Texas. And she is a well-respected author. She, too, writes out of a life that is immersed in the reality of the book you hold in your hands.

These two godly, gifted, intelligent women have provided us with a map called *The Race-Wise Family: Ten Postures to Becoming Households of Healing and Hope*. I envision thousands of households and Bible studies reading *The Race-Wise Family*, being inspired, challenged, and equipped with practical tools to become agents of gospel-shaped racial reconciliation.

Discipleship begins in the home, with parents beholding the greatness of Jesus, living in allegiance to Jesus, and calling their children, primarily through an embodied faith, to follow Jesus. Helen and Michelle write, “Standing against racial injustice is part of our Christian witness, but if our children are driven more by a desire to conform to the cultural moment than by kingdom-minded values, they won’t have the wisdom to do what is right even when it is unpopular to do so.”

Helen and Michelle, thank you. You have given us a map worth following.

DR. DERWIN L. GRAY

cofounder and lead pastor of Transformation Church,  
a multiethnic, multigenerational community, and author  
of *How to Heal Our Racial Divide: What the Bible Says,  
and the First Christians Knew, About Racial Reconciliation*

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## Authors' Note

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PARENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY are wrestling with how to talk about race right now. Though issues of race and racism have always existed, viral videos and a flow of newsworthy incidents have forced all of us to come face to face with police brutality, anti-Asian hate crimes, systemic injustice, national protests, and more. Even if we have tried to shield our children from breaking news and upsetting images, our kids are still over-hearing conversations at school and on social media, and they are looking for guidance. Addressing race and racism in the home is no longer something we parents can avoid.

Undoubtedly, addressing issues of race feels daunting. What if we say the wrong thing? Where do we even begin a conversation on something as big and heavy as racism? How should we respond to our children's questions about events happening in the news? What if they ask what protest they should go to? How often should we talk about race with our kids anyway? What is age appropriate and what is not?

This book is a road map for addressing race in your home. We're here to equip you with a biblical foundation for how to raise race-wise children for both the present and the future.

And who are “we”? Although we wish we could talk with you face to face over a cup of chai or coffee, for the present moment allow us to introduce ourselves.

I (Helen) am the mom of three teenage boys. They along with my husband and me comprise a monoethnic but multicultural family: 100 percent Korean by blood but a mixture of Canadian and American by citizenship. Having been married to a Canadian for nearly thirty years, I can tell you that there are vast cultural differences between growing up Canadian and growing up American! I'm also a longtime Christian publishing professional and a public communicator who has written and spoken about race and ethnicity for decades. (You can find a chapter about this topic in my first book, *The Missional Mom*.)

I (Michelle) am a second-generation Indian American married to Aaron, a second-generation Mexican American. Together we planted Hope Community Church, a minority-led multicultural church in Austin, Texas, where I also serve as a scholar-in-residence. We live in a disadvantaged Black and Brown community, and our everyday vocational ministry involves crossing cultures and navigating heavy issues such as immigration, gun violence, racial profiling, police brutality, homelessness, and more. In addition, I serve as the vice president of the Asian American Christian Collaborative (AACC), and I am the author of *Becoming All Things: How Small Changes Lead to Lasting Connections Across Cultures*. I regularly write and speak on issues of race, culture, justice, and faith. Aaron and I are raising two young children to know that living out the gospel means loving *all* our neighbors and caring for both their spiritual and their physical needs.

In this book, we invite you to join us in the messy, wild journey of raising kingdom-minded children who love God and love their neighbors with all their hearts, minds, and bodies. In the pages that follow, you'll learn about our own stories and how they have had an impact on our understanding of race, specifically as Asian American Christian women. We're also going to lay down a foundation of biblical theology on race and

suggest practical family activities and conversation starters for you to pursue with your children.

We don't think anyone ever arrives at perfect knowledge in this area. But with a spirit of humility because we still have a long way to go in our own understanding, we strive to have the posture of lifelong learners, extending grace to both others and ourselves when errors occur—which will happen! We're on a journey together now, and we hope and pray that our words will inspire you and equip you for the road ahead.

## Introduction

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### What Does It Mean to Be Race-Wise?

SO, WHAT DOES it mean to be race-wise?<sup>1</sup> We need wisdom to make good choices as we navigate the topic of race, a topic that is fraught with potential misunderstanding, divisiveness, and pain. Being a race-wise family means asking God for help in unpacking racial issues and seeking his direction to know how to identify and combat racism in all its overt and subtle forms. This is holistic spiritual work that requires both orthodoxy (right thinking) and orthopraxy (right living). In other words, the goal of a race-wise family is not simply to grow in intellectual understanding of the Bible's discussions about race and culture but rather to pursue a biblical vision of human flourishing in the home, the community, and the nation. By the time you finish this book, you will be able to see the richness, beauty, and depth of God's intent for people of every ethnicity, culture, and language to flourish together as well as how this vision should affect your family's daily conversations and routines.

Parents bear the responsibility of teaching and training their children. We can't assume that our kids are learning all they need to know from other sources, even good sources such as their school or church. We have a unique calling to disciple

**The goal of a race-wise family is not simply to grow in intellectual understanding of the Bible's discussions about race and culture but rather to pursue a biblical vision of human flourishing in the home, the community, and the nation.**

our children, and we have to take ownership of teaching our kids about race from a biblical perspective. Our society is swimming in cultural myths and fallacies, and our children are consuming messages without even realizing it. If they're not being informed and equipped in the home, you can be sure their views are being formed elsewhere. In fact, we don't always know what kinds of messages our

children are receiving from the cultural influences around them until something happens that exposes the gaps in their knowledge—as well as our own.

For example, when my (Helen's) eldest son, Jason, was twelve years old and on a new Little League baseball team, he heard words from a teammate that took him by surprise. "Ching-chong, ching-chong!" came the taunt from a white tween named Dylan while another white teammate howled with laughter beside him. The boys then went a step further and took their taunts to Instagram, posting the same phrase on Jason's page, which I was able to immortalize in a screenshot. I then sent it to the coach. Soon after, the boys were suspended for two games.

At the game after the suspension, Dylan's mom approached me and introduced herself. "I just wanted to reach out to you and apologize for Dylan's behavior. And I want to thank you for letting me know about that incident. I was completely shocked. I want you to know that we have told him that it is absolutely unacceptable for him to say those words." She shook her head as if still in disbelief. "I had no idea my son could ever do such a thing. I am so embarrassed."

Dylan was clearly learning about race somewhere, enough that he could speak racialized language to one of his teammates of color, but until this incident, his parents weren't even aware of what their son had absorbed over the years.

Of course, this incident raises questions. How can we teach and train our children in the area of racial understanding when our own education may be limited? Most of us aren't scholars in the subject. In fact, some of us might still be at the beginning of our own journeys of understanding issues of race and culture. How exactly do you talk to your children about an innocent Black man who suffocated to death at the hands of the police? How do you explain to your children that they can't go with you to the grocery store because our country is being openly hostile to people who look like your family? How do you navigate situations in which relatives or neighbors are spouting racist rhetoric at your dinner table while your children are sitting there, soaking it all in? How do you teach your kids which words are appropriate and which words aren't? What do you say after someone accuses you of being a racist? Issues of race have touched us all, but that doesn't mean we're automatically equipped to properly respond.

Part of the challenge for Christian parents is that we don't have a good understanding of what the goal really is in the area of racial reconciliation. Plain and simple, we don't have a unified biblical perspective on issues of race. Much of the church hasn't provided good teaching in this area either. If anything, we are seeing the exact opposite dynamic—that racial issues not only divide people of different ethnic backgrounds but also drive wedges between members of the body of Christ. The fact that most of us didn't have these types of conversations or lifestyles modeled to us when we were kids ourselves has left us underprepared and uneducated while our nation continues to struggle in this area and the church alongside it.

Perhaps you were taught that Christians are supposed to be color-blind. Maybe issues of race were never discussed in your home while you were growing up, and you didn't even think

about the color of your skin until recently. Maybe you come from a culture in which you were taught to just stay quiet, keep your head down, and not make a big deal about the racism you experience. Or perhaps you were taught that issues of race are too political and divisive and that Christians aren't supposed to weigh in on these conversations because we're supposed to just focus on the gospel.

Perhaps you're a parent of color navigating your own experiences of racial pain and trauma. It's hard to equip and empower our kids when we're carrying our own hurt. When my (Michelle's) eldest child, Akash, started school and became both aware of and curious about race, his questions opened floodgates of shame and grief from my own childhood. I had memories of eating alone in the school cafeteria because, as my classmates told me, they didn't want to be near my "smelly" food. There were also the dehumanizing comments about my brown skin. I didn't realize how much I had been holding in about my past until my son wanted to talk about different skin colors, ethnic roots, and more. Many parents of color hope that the hostilities directed toward them as children are nothing more than distant memories, but I quickly realized that I had to find healing in order to prepare my children for the hostile realities of race and to guide them into a more resilient future.

Regardless of the reason you're reading this book, in our increasingly diversified and still-divided country, we can't afford to create color-blind homes or simply avoid racially charged cultural moments for fear of doing things wrong. The witness of the church is at stake; the integrity of the gospel is weakened every time Christians battle over issues of race rather than unify around the call to reconciliation that we believe is clear in Scripture. More than that, if we don't choose to be race-wise families, we will miss out on discipling our kids holistically. If we and our children aren't intentionally working toward dismantling racism in our country, we're actually making the problems and divisions of race worse. Either we're working toward healing and hope, or we're participating in the very

problems that are tearing this country apart; there's no such thing as nonengagement with race.

Nevertheless, that doesn't mean that if we intentionally pursue greater racial understanding and advocacy, everything will go smoothly. Perhaps to dispel some fears, we want to make it clear up front: you will make mistakes. (We certainly still do too.) You won't always get it right. You'll find yourself in situations where you don't have the best words to discuss issues of race with your kids, or you might even feel like you failed to model a biblical response to a race-related incident. Making mistakes and learning from them is part of the process.

The goal of this journey is not perfection but rather the *posture* of a race-wise heart and a desire to learn to grow. In *The Race-Wise Family*, we suggest ten postures that Christian parents can pursue to begin shaping their lives and their families into beacons of hope and healing to those around them. There is no way to catalog an appropriate Christian response to every race-related incident. Each one is unique, and there is no easy catchall solution that addresses every situation you or your kids may encounter. But by pursuing these postures, you will grow in your understanding in this area and be better equipped to handle racial issues. All that is required is your willingness to dive in, learn, and keep pursuing these postures even when you experience failures and setbacks, as we all do.

We also want to offer a special word to parents of color on healing from racial trauma (see posture 9). As women of color, we know the realities of racial trauma firsthand, and we also know that part of the way to find healing is to cultivate a safe space to address the particular pains and challenges we have experienced. However, we encourage everyone to read this chapter because we believe it's helpful for all parents to understand the challenges that exist for families of color.

Our deep desire is to help parents learn how to both train their children and transform their families into race-wise households. We are here to help you see and engage with the realities of race all around us and to do so from a biblical foun-

dation. Our hope and prayer is that God will use our words to direct the posture of your family's hearts so that you and your children will feel equipped to understand current dialogues about race and to embody a Spirit-led response that resonates with God's clear heart for all his image bearers.

This is an opportunity for us parents to make changes that can have a lasting impact on us, our children, and, by extension, our communities, churches, and nation. It might feel impossible to alter the views and actions of our society such that racial issues disappear, but we can begin with small steps in our homes as we raise our children to treat all people equally and respectfully. By reading this book, you are taking the first step toward the biblical vision of true healing, peace, and flourishing for people of all ethnicities.

## Posture One

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### Valuing Multiethnicity

I (HELEN) REMEMBER a morning when I was teaching in my church's Sunday school program. My class of kindergarteners through fifth graders was majority white, with my youngest the only person of Asian descent at the table, and I was leading the kids through an exercise in understanding their ethnic roots. When it was my son's turn to share about his connection to Korea, one of the other children interjected, "That's the same as China, right?"

"No, Korea is a different country," I explained.

"China, Korea—whatever. It's all the same," he said.

In his third-grade understanding, the word *Asian* had come to represent a variety of ethnic groups without distinction. It was also clear that he didn't place value on identifying the differences between Korea and China. I had to patiently help him see that these were two distinct countries and people groups with their own identities and cultures. I knew the boy's parents, both of whom were well educated and culturally sensitive, but this was a detail of multiethnic understanding that had apparently never been covered in their home. If there hadn't been a Sunday school teacher who herself was the daughter of Korean

immigrants, this young child may never have learned that day that China and Korea aren't at all the same.

When the Bible refers to people of “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9), it is acknowledging details about God’s intentionally created humanity that many Christians still might be overlooking. We live in a beautifully diverse world, and the biblical understanding of multiethnicity is foundational to becoming race-wise Christians. Often ignorance, discrimination, and ethnic or racial hatred come down to simply not valuing multiethnic voices and experiences.

In this chapter, we’ll take a deeper dive into what multiethnicity means, why it matters (especially within the body of Christ), and how families can play a special role in reflecting this value. We have chosen the word *multiethnicity* intentionally because valuing multiethnicity is a biblical principle, one that reflects the heart of God toward his people, seen first in his selection of a particular ethnic group—the Israelites—and seen now in his open arms to people of all ethnic backgrounds, who are given the opportunity through God’s grace and mercy to be adopted into his spiritual family (Galatians 3:26–29).

We also want to clarify that multiethnicity in and of itself isn’t the goal. While Revelation 7 presents a complete vision of the redeemed in its glorious diversity—unified in a posture of worship—the focus of the celebration is our God in the highest, and knowing him is our chief goal. In other words, pursuing multiethnicity is an extension of our worship of God. Nevertheless, throughout Scripture, God clearly acknowledges and values diversity, both for his own pleasure and for the spread of the gospel, as we will explore in this chapter.

## Defining Terms

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Let’s first pause to address several terms that will be helpful to define as we move into this chapter, namely *ethnicity*, *multiethnicity*, *diversity*, and *representation*.

**Ethnicity**, from the Greek word *ethnos*, is defined as “a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like.”<sup>1</sup> Korean, Italian, and Haitian are all examples of ethnicities. In the Bible, you will often find the Greek word *ethnos* translated as “nation” or “people,” such as in Acts 2:5: “There were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation [*ethnos*] under heaven.”

**Multiethnicity** refers to a collection of more than one ethnic group in contrast to *monoethnicity*, which means only one ethnic group. God is the creator of all the ethnic groups in this world, and when we reach the end of time, individuals—from all these groups—who have embraced a saving knowledge of Jesus will celebrate him.

Another term you may hear frequently in conversations about race is **diversity**. When we talk about diversity, we mean the full range of all of God’s creation, everything listed in Genesis 1, including stars and planets, birds and animals, vegetation and humans. By itself, diversity isn’t a negative or positive idea. For our purposes here, it just means that a particular group or context reflects a range of different kinds of people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

**Representation** refers to the idea that the multiethnic range of people whom God has created should be reflected throughout relevant social systems and structures. The goal of representation isn’t for every space to be representative of every distinct ethnic and cultural group that exists; that wouldn’t be practical or even feasible. In South Korea, for example, it’s not realistic to expect that people from, say, China or Italy or Nigeria should be represented in the country’s leadership. Rather, the goal of representation is for any given space to reflect the people in its community and/or country. In this book, we are focusing on North America, where there is no justification for why significant imbalances exist, especially given our increasingly diverse demographics. For example, if you look at the CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies, you’ll find that 86 percent of them are white men even though that group represents only 35 percent of the

American population.<sup>2</sup> So, in the US, *representation* refers to the intentional inclusion of underrepresented voices. We will be focusing on ethnic and cultural representation in our discussion, although the term can be used in other contexts with regard to other categories.

## **A God who Values Multiethnicity**

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One of my (Helen's) favorite hobbies is bird-watching. The Bible does, after all, say, "Consider the birds" (Matthew 6:26, CSB)! On a beautiful day, I can spend hours of Sabbath time sitting outside and watching all manner of feathered friends enjoy the multiple forms of bird food I supply. (For now, let's put aside the fact that the Bible doesn't say, "Feed the birds," as my husband regularly teases me!) I absolutely marvel at the variety of flying creatures that frequent my yard, ranging from large hawks swooping overhead to miniscule hummingbirds whizzing by, their wings in constant motion. I often reflect on how much enjoyment God found in creating each one. I don't think it was a chore; I think it was an overflow of his creative spirit.

Unsurprisingly, God's creative spirit is manifest in the way he designed humanity. As the Bible says, "Are you not much more valuable than [the birds]?" (verse 26). There is a reason God created humankind with so much wondrous variety as opposed to making all of us the same. In our different ethnicities, appearances, languages, and more, God's value of diversity is on display. As Old Testament professor Bruce Waltke said of the creation account in Genesis 1–2, "All created species follow God's master design and appointed purposes."<sup>3</sup> Whether we are talking about the birds of the air, every kind of flower and tree, or people, the opening chapters of the Bible declare that God delights in a universe that reflects his incredible creativity, especially as "all his works everywhere in his dominion" praise him in full submission and worship (Psalm 103:22).

In Scripture, God also repeatedly demonstrates his love for

humankind as a multiethnic body. From the creation mandate for humans to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28; 9:7, NLT) to the diversification of people into numerous tribes and languages at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), we see God’s commitment to humans flourishing as a multiethnic group. Creating human beings who reflect multiethnic diversity was God’s idea from the very beginning, and it is also part of what it means to be made in God’s own image—the Godhead itself is three diverse, unique persons in one. Moreover, from God’s promise to Abraham, which included a name change such that he became “the father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5), to God’s willingness to save the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in the book of Jonah, to the multiple ways that Jesus showed love to people groups whom the Jews thought of as outside God’s mercy and grace (i.e., Samaritans and Gentiles of various ethnic backgrounds), God showed that he embraces people from every nation (Acts 10:34–35) even when human beings don’t do the same for one another.

God has clearly valued multiethnicity from the earliest days of the church, which was given the directive to share the gospel “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2, the apostles, full of the Holy Spirit, began speaking in languages they didn’t know: “God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven . . . heard their own languages being spoken” (verses 5–6). In this moment, a multicultural group of Jews broke out in a multilingual choir of sound. The beauty of this significant day is not that people’s ethnicities were erased, but that their differences were bridged. God did not brush over the ethnic differences of the people in Jerusalem, but he leaned into those differences and used them to bring more people to a saving knowledge of himself. More than three thousand people became Christians that day. Clearly, the gospel goes forth *when* we celebrate diverse peoples, languages, and cultures. Pentecost offers a truth we so often fail to embody: God’s dream is for his followers to reflect his love for diversity, not homogeneity.

The principle of multiethnicity applies just as much today as it did at Pentecost. My (Helen's) friend James Choung is a second-generation Korean American. His wife, Jinhee, is formerly a Korean national who immigrated to the US after they got married. James notes that when he says, "I love you," Jinhee understands what he is saying. But when he says, "*Saranghae*," that touches her in an indescribably deep way because Korean is her heart language. Ethnic identity and experience are key channels through which God delivers the gospel and calls people—in their heart language—to their heavenly home. Jesus himself reached across gender, class, generational, religious, and ethnic lines in order to declare his lordship over all and to proclaim his gospel message to everyone. Jesus valued ethnicity and culture, and we as individuals and as families are called to do the same.

Finally, God repeatedly foreshadowed in his Word what will ultimately happen when every tongue, tribe, and nation worships before the throne (Revelation 7:9–10). For example, in Daniel 7 we read,

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (verses 13–14)

Daniel 7 and Revelation 7 remind us that "multiethnicity is that dream, that ideal [realized], that all of God's people—of every tribe, tongue, and nation—are welcome and cherished in God's kingdom. It is the hope and vision of a community of Christ followers that represent the diversity of God's creation."<sup>4</sup> We will exist as a diverse people group for all eternity. Moreover, the purpose of teaching our children to value people of every language is not to have multiethnicity for multieth-

nicity's sake but to showcase the power of unifying in worship before the Lord Almighty. The barriers that often exist when people of every stripe and color are together vanish as they collectively focus their full attention on God.

**The barriers that often exist when people of every stripe and color are together vanish as they collectively focus their full attention on God.**

Our primary identity as Christians is that we are citizens of God's kingdom and coheirs with the rest of God's chosen people. Our spiritual identity, however, doesn't diminish our ethnic identities. God values the diverse ethnic groups he created, and we will retain our ethnic and cultural identities in the new heaven and the new earth. Similarly, God is calling us, as race-wise families, to acknowledge and respect the diverse ethnic contexts of the people in our lives.

## **Why We Need Multiethnic Understanding**

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According to recent population projections, the United States will become a non-white nation by 2045.<sup>5</sup> Lest we think this is still a faraway reality, for our kids who are fifteen years old and younger, the nation's future demographic reality is *already* the case. Fifty percent of this age group is non-white.<sup>6</sup> For this reason and more, it is imperative for race-wise parents to be actively communicating God's posture of valuing multiethnicity and embracing it ourselves in our families.

Sadly, we can't rely on the body of Christ to do this automatically. In the North American church, there is evidence of postures and preferences that aren't in alignment with God's example and intent. According to a 2018 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute, "A majority (54%) of white evangelical Protestants say that becoming [a] majority-nonwhite

nation in the future will be mostly negative.”<sup>7</sup> When the family of God prefers that its composition remain largely monoethnic, fissures and a reduced witness are inevitable.

Jemar Tisby, author of the *New York Times* bestselling book *The Color of Compromise*, is quoted in the *Washington Post* as saying, “As long as white evangelicals either consciously or subconsciously assume that American means white or European descended, they will always perceive changing demographics as a threat to ‘the American way.’”<sup>8</sup> The body of Christ still has a long way to go before we collectively value multiethnicity in the way our heavenly Father does.

It is equally dangerous to assume that the presence of different cultures alone is sufficient to ensure that the needs and concerns of people of color are being seen and heard. Sometimes well-meaning Christians think that as long as people of color are present somewhere in the system, then all shall be well. But there is a difference between representation and creating a truly multiethnic community and culture.

In January 2021, a well-known megachurch posted a video intended to teach children about the Bible. It featured a white pastor dressed in a Chinese shirt, making stereotypical martial arts sounds and then spitting out sushi he had made. The church received a flood of complaints, the video was removed, and both the lead pastor and the church issued apologies for the cultural misstep. While the content might have been thought to represent Asian culture, it actually did much more harm than good. In his apology, the pastor indicated that the video demonstrated cultural and racial insensitivity, and it was an inappropriate way to teach children and their parents.

How did such a misguided teaching tool even get created in the first place? Perhaps Asian Americans weren’t consulted at all, or if they were, those who were asked for feedback either didn’t feel comfortable being honest about their concerns or may not not been culturally sensitive enough to be aware of how the content could be damaging.

Pursuing multiethnicity isn't just about getting one or two people to vet ideas that could ultimately prove to be offensive or insensitive. Instead, it is about making the systemic or structural changes needed to ensure that the experiences and voices of people of color will be fairly and

appropriately represented and heard. It is about understanding how power plays a role in these discussions and dynamics and then finding ways to empower those who are on the margins.

Representation is important, and diversity is also needed in the books we read and the shows we watch as well as in the churches, organizations, communities, and schools we are part of. However, diversity and representation aren't enough. We must give honor and deference to each person's culture as well. Thus, pursuing multiethnicity means we must enjoy one another in all our diverse personalities, idiosyncrasies, and ethnic backgrounds with the aim of appreciating and edifying one another—not treating someone else's culture as a prop or the brunt of a joke. As we lean into valuing one another, we will experience the power of our witness as the multiethnic body of Christ.

Unfortunately, our ethnic uniqueness hasn't always been valued. Instead, we have both often experienced the sting of exclusion and occasions when it was clear that our presence was problematic precisely because of our ethnicities. I (Helen) can keenly recall the way I felt throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when it was being repeatedly termed “the Kung Flu” and “the Chinese virus.” Whenever I was out grocery shopping for the family, I felt fearful and nervous with every sideways glance in my direction. When people of color

**Pursuing multiethnicity means we must enjoy one another in all our diverse personalities, idiosyncrasies, and ethnic backgrounds with the aim of uplifting one another.**

and those of mixed identity—in other words, those who are non-white—experience being stigmatized or being seen as “the other,” they feel the opposite of valued; they can experience trauma and feel shame about their God-given ethnicity. This isn’t how God intends any of us to feel about how he created us.

Here in the US, because of our increasingly multiethnic demographics, we have an opportunity to provide a beautiful foretaste of Revelation 7 in a way that many other nations do not. Pursuing multiethnicity today means making space for different peoples and cultures in ways that honor them. It’s a posture that will require us to learn about ourselves and others and to love one another and work together despite our differences. Whether or not multiethnicity is being addressed in our churches, we parents need to teach our kids about topics like these: Why did God choose to create humankind in different shades and ethnicities? What purpose do these differences serve in addition to giving God pleasure? How do we show people of other ethnicities and cultures that we value them as fellow human beings?

We believe that God’s intent is for all of us to lean into the beautiful differences inherent in the body of Christ and to demonstrate in no uncertain terms that the love of Christ ultimately overcomes all barriers and binds his people—his diverse and multiethnic people—in such perfect unity that “the world will know that [God] sent [him]” (John 17:23).

### **Practices to Value Multiethnicity as a Race-Wise Family**

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As race-wise parents, we must teach our children to value multiethnicity so that we can honor, celebrate, and utilize the diversity God has given us for the sake of his kingdom. The following are suggested practices that you and your kids can adopt to develop a posture of valuing multiethnicity, and doing so will bring you closer to the heart of God. Embracing these practices will also help bring healing and unity to the body of Christ as

people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds begin to experience being seen and valued by other Christians. The church could become an incredible example of Christian witness and unity if we begin to be more like Christ in our love for people who are unlike us, especially nonwhite, often-marginalized groups who still experience the trauma of rejection from their fellow citizens here in the US. It just takes a posture of valuing our multiethnic body, binding ourselves together in our Savior's perfect love.

1. Discuss God's creative design and love for diversity with your children while going on a color walk. You might think of it like a treasure hunt where the treasure is color. Choose any colors you like, let your children choose their favorite colors, or look for all the colors of the rainbow. Then walk through your house (if you have young children) or go on a walk outside together. You can photograph or draw each thing you find, write down what you see, or just look around. In addition, you can go to the zoo, a museum, or an arboretum/botanical garden and make a list of all the new and/or unique things you see, including their colors.
2. Read stories and books by diverse authors who honor different cultural and ethnic backgrounds by depicting their characters in positive, redeeming ways (see appendix 3 for a list of recommended titles). Children of all ages can benefit from being surrounded by these kinds of books, which are growing in number each day. As you learn about people different from yourselves, continue to point to God's posture of valuing multiethnicity in order to impress on your children that this is God's heart and intention.
3. As a family, investigate the ethnic heritage of your neighborhood, city, or region. Visit or call the local chamber of commerce or historical society to find out more about the indigenous populations who first lived in your area and

about the immigration patterns that emerged over time. Find out what, if any, ethnic celebrations happen in your area, and make a point to attend these together on a regular basis.

4. Take virtual trips to other countries. Check out services such as Dorina Lazo Gilmore-Young's monthly membership *Global Glory Chasers: Traveling the World from the Comfort of Your Home*, in which she and her family curate these travel experiences with a variety of recipes, books, movies, and music to easily bring cultures from around the world into your own home. On her website, Dorina wrote, "We believe God uniquely created each one of us in His image. If we want to grow in our understanding of God, we need to grow in our knowledge about each other."<sup>9</sup> We couldn't agree more.
5. Learn about cultural occasions and holidays from around the world. What is Lunar New Year, for example? Who celebrates it and how? You can do the same with Diwali, Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or any number of other ethnic holidays. These occasions are opportunities to teach your children about the blessing of the multiethnic world God has created and to make sure they know that the biggest celebration at the end of time will be like all these other special events combined—times a million—as we worship God together.
6. Regularly pray for people groups around the world. A wonderful resource to use for regular family devotional times is the book *Window on the World*, written by the leaders of Operation World. A comprehensive guide to understanding and praying for various people groups around the world, *Window on the World* is written with young children in mind, although the content can be just as helpful for teens and adults. Each chapter provides educational information about a particular country or people group and its culture as well as facts about its reli-

gious demographics and suggestions for praying for that people group.

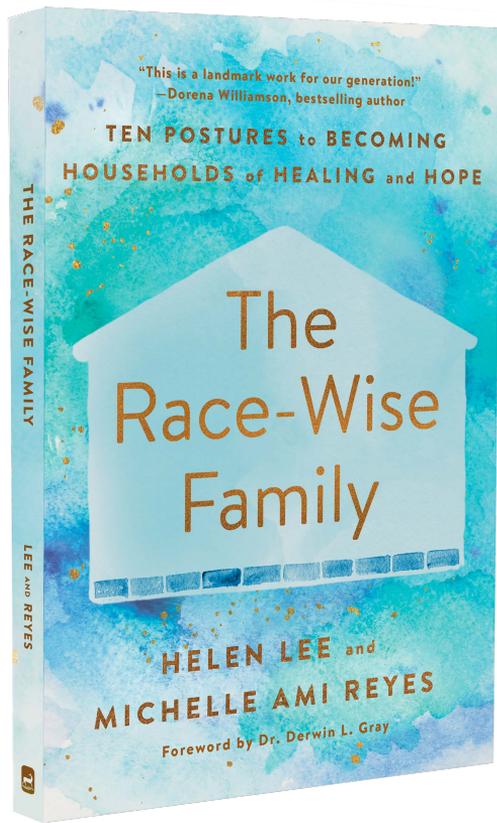
7. Offer the following prayer either in your own devotional time or with your family:

*Creator God,*

*You intentionally formed distinct cultures and ethnicities as a reflection of your diverse design for creation and as a way to draw all nations closer to yourself. We thank you that you demonstrate your love for humankind in and through a multiethnic body. Instill in our family a true love for multiethnicity, not for diversity's sake alone but rather out of a deep conviction that you showcase the power of unity when all of us together worship before you, the Lord Almighty. May we intentionally cultivate space for multiethnicity in our home, our church, and our community in order to bring healing and unity to the body of Christ, and may people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds begin to sense that they are seen and valued by other Christians. We recognize that it is only through this means that the church will become an incredible example of Christian witness and unity.*

*God, may we be your hands and feet.*

*Amen.*



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