



# COLOR- COURAGEOUS DISCIPLESHIP

STUDENT EDITION

FOLLOW JESUS,  
DISMANTLE RACISM,  
AND BUILD  
BELOVED COMMUNITY

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MICHELLE T. SANCHEZ

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**WATERBROOK**

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**PART ONE**

**INTRODUCTION TO COLOR-  
COURAGEOUS DISCIPLESHIP**

## INVITATION TO A RACIAL DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

You may be wondering, *What does race have to do with discipleship?* Great question! Although I am both African American and a national discipleship leader, I am still baffled by this question. For much of my life, I have not made concrete connections between race and discipleship. Does that matter?

I mean, it's pretty obvious that followers of Jesus shouldn't be racist bullies, right? Personally, I am *for* Jesus as well as all races of people. I am *against* all forms of racism, full stop. I bet most people reading this, including you, would agree. So . . . aren't we good? What more is there to talk about? Racism can be such a depressing topic. I'd much rather talk about Jesus!

But see, that's the problem: *Race* and *discipleship* aren't completely separate things, like apples and clementines. Actually, they are related in pretty eye-popping ways! What's more, I now realize this exciting truth: One of the best ways for this generation to grow as disciples of Jesus is to understand what race is all about and, together with Jesus, to resist racism as color-courageous disciples.

What makes a disciple "color-courageous"? Color-courageous disciples understand that it *isn't* so helpful to be "color-blind," moving through life as though race doesn't exist

and doesn't matter. I *wish* race didn't matter, too! But as we will soon discover, it does. In fact, racism continues to cause untold suffering throughout the world and in the lives of people whom Jesus loves. But disciples of Jesus are not powerless—we can make a difference.

The great news is that as disciples we can become part of the solution as we move from color-blind to color-courageous. Not only that, but we can get to know Jesus better on the way.

Finally, I'm starting to get it. By missing the connection between race and discipleship, I've been missing out on experiencing more of Jesus as a color-courageous disciple! I promise to share more of my story with you—but, ultimately, this is about *your* story. Even now, as you are reading, you are opening your personal invitation to a brand-new discipleship adventure. In fact, that's why I wrote this book: I don't want you—or any other disciple—to miss out on all that Jesus has for you.

## DISCIPLESHIP DEFINED

I know we've already been talking about *disciples* and *discipleship*, but before we continue on our journey, let's make sure we're clear on what discipleship is. My favorite definition for **discipleship** comes from Jesus's invitation to his first disciples: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people" (Matthew 4:19, NASB). From this brief but brilliant invitation, we discover three elements of discipleship: A disciple (1) *follows Jesus*, (2) *is transformed by Jesus*, and (3) *is on mission with Jesus*.

First, a disciple *follows Jesus*. A disciple's life isn't centered on religious stuff but on the person of Jesus Christ. A disciple has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior (our rescuer) and Lord (our leader). (By the way, if you are not yet a disciple of Jesus or want to learn more about what that means, don't miss my special invitation for "not-yet-followers" of Jesus at the back of this book!)



Second, a disciple is *being transformed by Jesus*. This means that Jesus constantly shapes his disciples to be more like him. Finally, a disciple is *on mission with Jesus*. In other words, disciples partner with Jesus to heal the world . . . and make more disciples!

#### MATTHEW 4:19

##### A disciple . . .

<i>Follow Me,</i>	Follows Jesus . . .
<i>and I will make you</i>	Is transformed by Jesus . . .
<i>fishers of people.</i>	Is on mission with Jesus.

### SO, WHAT IS RACIAL DISCIPLESHIP?

*Racial discipleship*, like all discipleship, involves all three discipleship dimensions. It is about following Jesus more closely as we encounter racial challenges, being transformed by Jesus in our racial mindsets and interactions, and embarking on mission with Jesus as we partner with him to bring racial healing to the world. As we strive for all three, we will pursue antiracism not as some fashionable trend but as an ongoing expression of our discipleship—which is exactly what it should be.

And now we must ponder a surprising idea: *You have already been racially discipled*. Whether you realize it or not, you have already been set up by the world to engage with race in certain ways. We have all been subtly influenced by the culture, practices, and perspectives of the family we were raised in, the place we grew up in, and even the era that we find ourselves in. The question is not *if* you have been racially discipled. The question is *how*.

That is why what many disciples need now is to embark on a different kind of racial discipleship journey—different, in that

this time it will be intentional. Different, in that this time we will orient ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ to engage effectively with the racial challenges we face, in Jesus's name. When it comes to race, most of us need to be intentionally "redisciplined."<sup>1</sup> That is, we need to be disciplined *again*. What's more, on this journey we will discover that racial discipleship is not just about resisting racism or transforming the world. It is certainly that, but it is far more: *Racial discipleship is about being personally transformed so that you can experience more of Jesus. And that is what has been the most exciting part of the journey for me.*

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***You can make a profound difference for Jesus—  
perhaps especially because you are young.***

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By the way, yes, this invitation is for *you*—whatever your race might be. None of us have a perfect perspective when it comes to race. That includes me. I can't tell you how surprised I was when I came to understand that I had been doing things to perpetuate racism too! When it comes to race, we *all* need awakening, transformation, healing, and a fresh vision to forge a better future together. Although our individual racial discipleship journeys will have different starting points and milestones, I believe that the journey itself is universal.

And yes, this invitation is also for you, whatever your *age* might be. In fact, God calls young disciples to be examples for older ones. And that's not *my* idea. It's from the Bible: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). No matter what anyone says, you can make a profound difference for Jesus—perhaps *especially* because you are young.

As disciples of Christ, we are *all* invited to awaken to the racial brokenness of the world: young and old, male and female,

Black and White—and beyond. And we are all invited to come up with solutions for our future together.

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***It's not enough to avoid racism—to make a difference,  
we must learn how to resist racism.***

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As far as solutions go, here's the crux of the matter: It's no longer enough for you to say, "I'm not racist." It's no longer enough to merely be a *nonracist* disciple. If you really want to make a difference and reflect God's heart, you must become an *antiracist* disciple. That means you must learn not only how to *avoid* racism—more importantly, you must learn how to actively *resist* racism as a color-courageous disciple. Together, we will discover how.

## NOW IS THE RIGHT TIME TO DO SOMETHING

Your generation has been witness to a profound racial reckoning that has swept the world—with the devastating death of George Floyd in 2020 as a pivotal moment. Many have asked new questions and taken new steps to learn and grow. People of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and faith traditions are wondering about racism again and asking, "What can I do?" Yet as Christians, we must also ask additional, deeper questions in light of our primary commitment to Jesus Christ: "Jesus, what are you inviting me, as your *disciple*, to do? And how can I grow closer to you in the process?" In this book, we will explore these questions.

But before diving in, let's have a brief vocabulary lesson. I think that people get stuck in conversations about race because, although they use the *same words*, they use them in very *different ways*, so then everyone ends up confused! Let's try to avoid that on our journey, shall we?

## THE GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS

George Perry Floyd, Jr., (October 14, 1973—May 25, 2020) was an African American man who was killed by a police officer during an arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Floyd was arrested because he was suspected of using a fake twenty-dollar bill to buy some-



Mural portrait of George Floyd  
by Emme Street Art in Mauerpark  
(Berlin, Germany)

thing at a store. Floyd grew up in Houston and played football and basketball in high school and college. He also served as a mentor in his religious community. Derek Chauvin, one of four police officers who were at the scene, subdued Floyd by kneeling on his neck

and back for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds. As Floyd slowly died of suffocation, he repeatedly said, “I can’t breathe.” After Floyd’s death, protests against police brutality—especially toward Black people—quickly spread across the United States and around the world. In fact, polls in summer 2020 estimated that between fifteen and twenty-six million people had participated at some point in the demonstrations in the United States, making the protests the largest in U.S. history. Nearly one year later, on April 20, 2021, Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter. Like everyone else, Floyd was not perfect. And it is true that at times he even got into trouble with the law. Nevertheless, George Floyd was created in the image of God. He did not deserve to die in this way. All people deserve to be treated with dignity.

## RACE VS. ETHNICITY—WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

*Race* and *ethnicity* are not the same thing. From a biblical perspective, there is a big difference between race and ethnicity, and it is helpful for disciples to understand that difference.

I once attended a conference where an African American speaker said, “God did not create race. In the beginning, there was no race.” At the time, I was shocked. What was he talking about? Of course God created race! He loves race! I remember singing the song about it by C. Herbert Woolston in church as a kid: “Red, yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.” Right? Well, over time I have come to the surprising realization that the presenter was right. What God created—what God delights in—is not *race* but *ethnicity*. Let’s get clear on the difference by beginning at the end.

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One day, not so far from today, you will open your eyes in heaven. However you arrived—whether by an abrupt accident, a long and painful illness, or a soft final sigh—will be a fuzzy memory. In a flash, your former life will be a dream. You are now fully and deliciously awake.

You greedily gulp the air—heavy, fresh, and sweet—as your unfamiliar eyes adjust to the light—if this golden, flowing joy can be called light. This light is not thin and fleeting like the light you knew on earth. No, this radiance is pure, pulsing, weighty. *Light* is too small a word. You are bathed in glory.

What’s more, the *prism* of this glory defies description. You are awash in color—and what colors these are! Brilliant colors you have never seen, sparking new emotions you have never felt.

This glory also glimmers . . . with personality. It welcomes you, floods your heart, embraces your soul, rejoices over every

no-longer-hidden part of you. Love, sheer love, unobstructed love, crazy love! Now you understand. Paradise is not a place. It is a *presence*. Paradise is love, the very presence of God. Sweet relief—God is here. God is with you in this place, closer than your own self, rapturously real. You will never be afraid again.

You become aware of the gentle trickle of a stream. When you look, you see not a stream but a river of pure crystal. It seems alive. You begin to follow the river and the glory toward their source—a cascading garden city. And you can tell there is a party going on!

You are joined by countless saints of every color, every hue, every imaginable variety. Together you walk down transparent streets of gold toward the city's center. Without being told, you know: These are your friends; this is your family. And only together with them do you see it: love itself—God—sitting on a throne, resplendent in rainbow. You erupt with the symphony of saints in worship, captivated by the sheer rainbowness of it all—this gorgeous rainbow God, surrounded by a rainbow throne, worshipped wildly by rainbow people from every tribe, nation, people, language, and culture. And it is in this prismatic moment that you finally behold something you have been waiting your whole life to see: the forever smile of God.



In this depiction of the new creation, the Bible paints us a beautiful picture of **shalom**, the Hebrew word that means “how things are *supposed* to be.” Shalom is what we experience whenever and wherever the kingdom of God comes true. Although the word is sometimes translated as “peace,” biblical shalom is so much more. Shalom is wholeness and flourishing in every dimension of creation, including ethnicity.

## SHALOM

Here is what the word *shalom* looks like in Hebrew:

שלום.

Did you ever get the sense that the world is not as it should be? Your intuition is right—you were created for something far better. You were created for shalom. *Shalom* is a Hebrew word from the Bible that is usually translated as “peace”—yet its meaning is far richer than the English word *peace*. *Shalom* essentially means “the world as it should be”—a world marked by abundance, perfection, flourishing, and joy. At its heart, *shalom* signifies a web of *right relationships*—especially between people and God, between peoples of different ethnicities, and between people and all of creation. Color-courageous discipleship narrows in on what disciples can do to restore shalom between people of different racial and ethnic groups. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called this type of shalom “beloved community.” Of course, we cannot expect to experience perfect shalom now. Only when Jesus returns will the Lord “wipe every tear” from our eyes in a world that contains “‘no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4). However, in the meantime, we *can* work to experience a foretaste of God’s shalom in our churches and other communities—through the power of the Holy Spirit that God has given us.

The book of Revelation portrays how history will climax in a new creation where people from every nation that ever existed will gather to worship God: “After this I looked, and 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” (Revelation 7:9).

But let’s take a magnifying glass to the word translated here as “nation.” When you hear the word *nation*, I bet you think of a country—a place like Nigeria, Spain, or Brazil. However, the Greek word here is *ethne*. It’s where our contemporary word *ethnicity* comes from. We are called to make disciples not only of far-flung nations, but also of diverse ethnic groups, right where we are. Around God’s throne there will be people not just from every nation, but also from every *ethnicity* within nations. Know what that means? History will climax in a multiethnic party!

This is our definition of **ethnicity**, and we will also explore each phrase:

**Ethnicity is a God-ordained cultural identity that  
God delights in as a means of bringing glory to  
himself and enrichment to his kingdom.**

First, *ethnicity is God-ordained*. Scripture displays God’s passionate intention for diversity from beginning to end, including ethnic diversity. We see it in so many places: in the teeming diversity of God’s creation, in the temple that God commanded Israel to build for all nations, in the Savior who came to be a light for all peoples, and in the fiery, multicolored birth of the church on **Pentecost**—just to name a few. God both created and delights in ethnic diversity.

Second, *ethnic diversity brings greater glory to God*. How? Here’s one way: Though humans were created in the image of God, no one individual, ethnicity, or culture can reflect the fullness of who God is. Diverse ethnicities and cultures, in fellowship together, best reflect the unimaginably diverse aspects of God.

Finally, *ethnic diversity enriches God’s kingdom*. One of my favorite scriptures about the new creation shows all the ethnic peoples of the world streaming into the garden city of God with their unique cultural treasures and contributions (see Revelation



21:26; Isaiah 60:11). As a connoisseur of multicultural cuisine, I certainly hope those treasures include food. Who knows what delights we may savor in the new creation? Perhaps not only a feast of Vietnamese pho, Ethiopian injera, and French ratatouille but also New Orleans gumbo, Minnesota wild rice, and Southern fried chicken!

Ethnic diversity—fully redeemed in all its beauty and brilliance—will be one aspect of the new creation that will make it fascinating and fulfilling beyond anything we have imagined.

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You may have noticed that I did not mention the word *race* in the previous Bible discussion. That is because race is not a biblical concept. *Other than the concept of the “human race,” you will find no mention of race in the Bible as we understand it today.* That came as a surprise to me too!

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***Other than the concept of the “human race,” you will find no mention of race in the Bible.***

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But what do we mean by race? Here is our definition:

**Race is a man-made system that divides humans into categories based on visible traits like skin color. These categories are usually established so that one racial group might gain power over another group.**

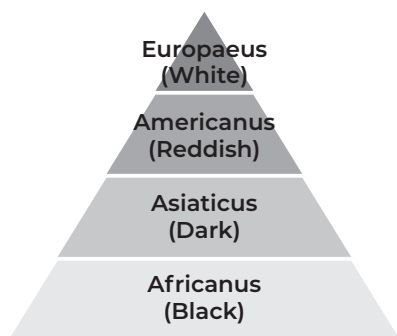
People used to identify more with *ethnicity*. *Race* is a relatively new concept that emerged in past centuries as Europeans sought to justify the colonization of non-Europeans. **Colonialism** is what happens when powerful countries seek to control less powerful countries, often becoming even more powerful as a result.

European colonialists needed a simple excuse to demean people and steal their land. So, they created this system called “race” as a solution—and it was an effective one.

Here’s an example of how it happened. One contributor to the creation of racial divisions was Carl Linnaeus, the eighteenth-century Swedish botanist commonly known as the father of modern taxonomy. Taxonomy is the scientific process of classifying or putting things into different categories. We’re still influenced by Linnaeus today in science class whenever we refer to the concepts of species, genus, and family—these were his ideas. Like an excitable kid arranging his blocks, Linnaeus clearly got a kick out of organizing things. Unfortunately, he also started to categorize *people* along with *beasts*!

Linnaeus came to delineate racial categories based primarily on skin color. These skin colors included *Europaeus* (white), *Americanus* (reddish), *Asiaticus* (dark), and *Africanus* (black).<sup>2</sup> Clearly, though, these racial categories emerged from a racist perspective. You see, Linnaeus did not stop at creating racial categories; he also ordered those races into hierarchies—meaning that he put some races at the top and others at the bottom. Of course, he always ensured that his own race was at the top! Carl Linnaeus is just one unfortunate example of a slew of powerful people who organized both humans *and* beasts into hierarchies.

### Linnaeus’ Skin Color Hierarchy



So, we can now clearly understand the difference between *ethnicity* and *race*: Ethnicity was God’s idea; race was our idea. Ethnicity is natural; race is artificial. Ethnicity will endure forever; humanity’s racial divisions will cease when God’s new creation comes.

ETHNICITY	RACE
God’s idea	Our idea
Natural	Artificial
Eternal	Temporary

## FROM RACISM TO ANTIRACISM

Now we turn to the definition of *racism*. We can’t resist racism if we don’t really understand racism. And guess what? It’s not as obvious as you think! **Racism** is personal racial prejudice *plus* systemic practices by institutions that lead to racial inequity in society. Or to say it in a simpler way:

**Racism = Personal Prejudice + Systemic Inequity**

There’s a lot packed into that description, so let’s take a closer look. **Prejudice** comes from two word parts meaning “before” (*pre-*) and “judge” (*-judice*). So if you are racially *prejudiced*, it means that when it comes to race, you “judge before.” You make preconceived judgments about people—both positive and negative—based on race. And here’s the thing. *You may not even be aware that you’re doing it.* Personal prejudice can be both conscious and unconscious. That’s one reason that racism continues to plague our world today. And then, unfortunately, personal prejudice all too easily leads to discrimination. **Discrimination**

is the act of treating people from different racial groups differently, typically with some groups receiving better treatment than others.

As it turns out, we all exhibit unconscious biases in different ways throughout life—even as early as three years old! In one study, preschoolers were shown to use racial categories during playtime to identify, exclude, and even negotiate power with other kids.<sup>3</sup> And, as you might imagine, the problem tends to get worse as we get older—not better. Whether we realize it or not, we adults still aren’t playing fair when it comes to race.

The second part of our definition of racism is “systemic practices by institutions that lead to racial inequity in society.” When something is **systemic**, it means that it doesn’t just impact *individual people* but also *entire systems*. More and more people are beginning to understand that racism has both personal and systemic dimensions. If you think about it, that shouldn’t be a surprise. After all, our systems and institutions were created by and continue to be run by *people*—the very same people who have those racial biases we just talked about! We are reminded that it’s not only humans—but also *systems created by humans*—that are defective. When we refer to **systemic racism**, what we mean is that patterns of racial inequity characterize many of our systems, policies, and institutions as a whole. I am thinking in particular of systems like our criminal justice system, our healthcare system, and our educational system. Many of these systems can be identified as “racist” not because they are somehow intentionally mean to people of color, but simply because their practices consistently result in unequal racial outcomes. For example, it was recently reported that U.S. non-White school districts received \$23 billion less in funding than majority-White school districts.<sup>4</sup> Not fair, right? We are going to explore many more examples of systemic racism, but let’s be clear from the get-go: The problem has reached epidemic proportions.

Unfortunately, although race is not a biblical concept, the

construct of race is here to stay for the foreseeable future. Race still matters in that it makes a real difference in people's lives. That is why it no longer works for us to have a color-blind approach to race. What we need now is to move from color-blind to color-courageous. And we need color-courageous disciples to intentionally counteract racism with *anti-racism*.

What is antiracism? **Antiracism** is essentially racism's opposite: *the practice of becoming aware of and uprooting personal racial prejudice plus working to dismantle systemic practices that lead to racial inequity*. Or, to put it simply:

**Antiracism = Uprooting Personal Prejudice +  
Dismantling Systemic Inequity**

You might, perhaps, find this definition of antiracism to be overwhelming. After hundreds of years of racism, can you really make a meaningful dent now? What's more, can ordinary people—including ordinary *young* people like you—really do much to dismantle systemic racism?

The beautiful answer is yes! Because here's the thing: Even if you can't change *the* world (as a whole), you can certainly change *your* world. And if we all did just that, imagine the difference it would make!

Some have raised an important objection to the word *antiracism*. Some have said to me, "I don't really want to be 'anti-' anything! That sounds so negative." Another person said, "One of the challenges with the word *antiracism* is that it makes clear what you're against but not what you are for." These are good points.

When it comes to the racism conversation, I must admit that there are no perfect words. Rather than the word *antiracism*, some prefer phrases like *racial righteousness* and *racial reconciliation*. Yet these phrases have their shortcomings too. For me, the word *antiracism* has been most personally transformational—that's why

I'm sharing it with you. The word *antiracism* has made crystal clear to me that being “nonracist” is not enough, that being “neutral” in matters of race is not sufficient. Racism is a pernicious problem. It's still here after hundreds of years, and it won't go away anytime soon unless we all start doing something very different. When it comes to defeating racism, the word *antiracism* clarifies for me that I need to dismantle racism *proactively* and *intentionally* if I hope to make a real and lasting difference.

With all that being said, my favorite new and creative phrase when it comes to a Christian approach to antiracism is *color-courageous discipleship*. Implied in the term itself is a positive, proactive call for disciples to courageously resist racism in Jesus's name. So, color-courageous disciples are against racism, but what are they for? What is our end goal?

For me, the culmination of color-courageous discipleship is the creation of beloved community—community that is grounded in Christlike, agape love for God and for one another amid all our differences. So now we come to our guiding definition for **color-courageous discipleship**: *the courageous, lifelong journey of following Jesus, dismantling racism, and building beloved community*. A **beloved community** is a community grounded in Christlike love for God and for one another amid all our differences. *Love* is always the disciple's goal, and it's a goal worth giving our lives for.

## INVITATION TO A NEW DISCIPLESHIP ADVENTURE

Did you know that following Jesus does not mean responding just one time to his invitation? After you say yes to Jesus for the first time, he will have *many* more discipleship invitations for you during your lifetime. And each one is an invitation to a new adventure. Consider this book to be your invitation to the adventure of racial discipleship!

By the way, I love the definition of *adventure*: An adventure is a journey that is both *exciting* and *hazardous*.<sup>5</sup> The discipleship adventure is *exciting* because it gives you a new opportunity to know Christ better and partner with him to see God's dreams come true. But it is also *hazardous* because it requires you to risk loss and pain along the way. Like every discipleship journey, the journey of racial discipleship will require you to carry the cross, take risks, and possibly experience loss and pain. As Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). In other words, every true discipleship adventure requires courage.

As disciples of Christ, our call to courage is simultaneously a call to the cross. I have no idea what your unique cross may entail on the journey of racial discipleship, but God may invite you to

- enter into repentance, confession, and forgiveness
- engage in conversations that produce discomfort, anger, or disagreement
- uncover unconscious biases that have caused harm
- revisit painful moments
- acknowledge the shortcomings of the church or other organizations you love
- experience suspicion or rejection by others
- sacrifice in unfamiliar ways as you courageously love God and others

Yet, at the same time, let's also remember that discipleship never ends with the cross. It ends with resurrection! On the other side of the cross, there is always new life. What that resurrection life will entail for you on this journey is God's surprise, but perhaps you may

- see more of the world and its people from God's perspec-

tive

- understand the gospel more deeply, in the depths of both your brokenness and God’s grace
- awaken to life-changing insights from the racial and ethnic journeys of others
- enjoy new friendships and richer, more authentic community
- know deeper levels of liberation from fear, sin, and shame
- discover God’s presence and experience God in new ways
- experience healing or help others heal
- become more effective at bringing shalom and beloved community to your world
- celebrate when new disciples of Christ are made

At times, color-courageous discipleship will feel difficult, dangerous, or both—which is precisely why you need Jesus as your leader and the Bible as your anchor. You need supernatural courage for this journey. Courage is the “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.”<sup>6</sup> Only in Christ will we find the power, wisdom, and grace we need to flourish as color-courageous disciples.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE JOURNEY

Our racial discipleship journey will have three main parts. This is part 1, your invitation to pursue a racial discipleship journey grounded in Jesus Christ.

Part 2 will explore four color-courageous discipleship paradigm shifts. These paradigm shifts will empower you not only to grow in antiracism but also to experience Jesus in new ways as you do so.

Part 3 will investigate the place of spiritual practices (also known as spiritual disciplines) in the life of color-courageous



disciples. We will revisit spiritual practices because racism is, at its core, a spiritual problem—and it requires spiritual solutions. Without spiritual practices, we are left to pursue antiracism with our own strength alone. Not a good idea! But *with* spiritual practices, our pursuit of antiracism can become an intimate journey with Jesus Christ. Spiritual practices allow us to access God's strength. What's more, spiritual practices empower us to be transformed as we transform the world.

Our journey will be grounded in God's Word. But based on our discussion so far, I also want to clarify one thing: It would be incorrect to say that the Bible *directly* engages race. The Bible does not condemn racism, and it does not encourage antiracism—*because race wasn't invented yet!* Nevertheless, the Bible *does* portray plenty of conflict between diverse groups, including diverse ethnic groups. For example, we do find **ethnocentrism** in the Bible—the far more ancient belief that one's ethnic group is central and/or superior to others. With that said, I believe there is much we can learn about race and racism from the Bible by virtue of how the Bible engages ethnicity, ethnocentrism, and related challenges.

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT WORDS

Becoming a color-courageous disciple involves seeing the world in some new ways. To see the world in new ways, it helps to have new words. That is why I have included in the appendix an extensive glossary for you. Don't tell anyone, but when I was a kid, I read the dictionary for fun. Yes, I'm aware that makes me weird! With that said, you can be sure that reading the glossary alone would be a spectacular way to expand your horizons. Throughout this book, you will find glossary words in bold text.

When I refer to people, I will use the following terms interchangeably: **people of color** and **minority**, as well as **White** and

**majority.** I do get that these words aren't perfect either. For example, the terms *minority* and *majority* are waning in usage because they are becoming outdated: The census predicts that by 2045, if not sooner, the United States is projected to be "minority White."

I will use *people of color* to refer primarily to people of African, Native American, Asian, Latina/o, or Middle Eastern descent. Many push back on the term *people of color* by rightly pointing out that White people have "color" too—which, of course, they do! White people are not the color of snow, just as Black people aren't the color of the midnight sky. At the same time, the term *people of color* has resonated with many because it helps these groups enjoy solidarity with one another. It's also noteworthy that the term has precedent. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., used the phrase *citizens of color* in his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech. So, for now, we'll go with it.

A final note: As of this writing, there is no general agreement on whether the words *Black* and *White* (or the related terms of color) should be capitalized. Many have given compelling reasons for why one, both, or neither word should be capitalized. For simplicity and consistency, this text will capitalize both terms.

## LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!

So, let's wrap this up. Why should Christians of this generation bother to deepen our understanding of ongoing racial realities and inequities? We do so because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. We do so to experience more of Jesus. And we do so to further Christ's mission in the world.

Remember, too, that while *racism* is a stain on God's creation, *ethnicity* is a God-ordained cultural identity that God delights in to bring glory to himself and riches to everyone in his kingdom—

including you. Those who take steps to dismantle racism will undoubtedly discover new opportunities to enjoy more of the surprising riches of God's colorful kingdom.

As you go deeper now into this journey of color-courageous discipleship, I pray that you will be surprised by how God works—both to bring greater shalom to your corner of the world and to draw you closer to Jesus Christ!

### THINK ABOUT IT

1. As we begin this journey, what are some of your own thoughts about what race and racism have to do with discipleship?
2. What do you understand so far about the difference between being “nonracist” and being “antiracist”? Why does it matter?
3. In your own words, what is the difference between race and ethnicity? Why is that distinction helpful? What are some riches of ethnic diversity that you have experienced or would like to experience?
4. What hopes and concerns do you have for the color-courageous discipleship journey?
5. How do you imagine that you might experience Jesus more deeply on this journey?

# COLOR- COURAGEOUS DISCIPLESHIP

STUDENT EDITION

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DISMANTLE RACISM,  
AND BUILD  
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