

Opening Our Eyes to Our

Multiethnic Future

BOOK STUDY GUIDE

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Why this book, and why today?

Thank you for taking the time to gather together and discuss my book, *Embracing the New Samaria*. My hope is that over the next five weeks, this study guide will help lead you through a self-reflection and group discussion that will further open your eyes to the church's multiethnic future. I want Christian leaders to learn to *see, love, reach*, and ultimately *be* the New Samaria in a way that brings true transformation to our churches and communities. Please read this excerpt from the book's introduction as a refresher on why I wrote the book and who it is for

"Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream—one that he so eloquently delivered on August 28, 1963: a hope for freedom, equality, and justice in the United States. Almost sixty years later, I also have a dream—my *sueño*—that I will spend my life's work trying to achieve. My *sueño* is to someday see all people living together in unity here on earth as it is in heaven.

Two biblical passages ground my dream in prophetic reality. One is the vision of all people around the throne of God described in Revelation 7. It reads:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9-10

This is a prophetic view of what the Kingdom of God will be like—with all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues worshiping God together around his throne. What a heavenly vision! The other biblical passage that grips me is from Matthew 6, when Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. He gave us these words:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-10

When we pray those words, we are asking God to help us live out his heavenly vision now— alongside people of all nations, tribes, and tongues—not just when we die and join him in his presence, but here on earth, today.

How We've Missed the Mark

Disappointingly, some of our churches and ministries do not reflect the earthly prayer that God prophetically laid out for us in the Scriptures. When we envision "making disciples" in our local contexts, we tend to think about reaching people who are just like us, and our churches tend to reflect that reality. In the United States, 86% of Protestant congregations are made up of one predominant racial group, making Sunday mornings one of the most segregated times of the week. Even more telling is that 53% of churchgoers think their church is diverse enough.¹

It is painfully obvious that we have failed to see, love, and reach our neighbors who are different than us. Furthermore, many of us have made peace with tepid obedience, believing that this is as good as it can get. Some of us compensate for such saltless obedience with manufactured panache, "excellence," bling, and beautiful branding, but the fact remains that a mediocre approach to disciple making is not getting us to the Kingdom vision of Revelation 7. It is killing us. We miss the true transformation that awaits us. Let God be God! We can't out wow God!

Brothers and sister. I do not believe that God called us to do something that can't be done. I do believe we can have heaven on earth. I am not speaking of a future dispensation. My hope and dream is that we fully realize the Lord's visionary prayer now. What we see now in the form of national, ethnic and immigrant tensions do not have to define our future. It doesn't have to be that way.

In this book I will have fun exploring the fictitious life of Ebenezer Scrooge who lived a dreary life of selfishness. Three ghosts assist him to see how he has lived a wasted life of selfishness. The final ghost, the ghost of Christmas future ends by showing Scrooge the results of his selfish lonely life. Scrooge now fulling grasping the missed opportunity of doing good to his fellow man asks the third ghost if the things that were shown to him the things that must be or might be if unrepented. That is where Scrooge wakes up from his night.

Dear ones, it is not too late for us to live transformed lives. I call for us to walk the walk of God with our eyes wide open. Mankind is our business! The Holy Spirit will give us the power. May my call to the GC3 (Great Commandment, Great Commission and Great Community) be as effective as Ebenezer's three spirits in rousing us to see that we should life every day doing good to all mankind! Maranatha!

Who This Book Is For

I wrote this book to help my evangelical² family—specifically those who are part of the majority culture—to transcend the status quo by loving and reaching their neighbors in the margins, as God has called us to do.

Some might read the term majority culture and wonder why I'm not just using the term white, since in the United States generally this is true. But I grew up in Laredo, Texas, a city that is majority Hispanic, so even though I am an ethnic minority in the United States, I grew up in the majority culture for my local context. And even there, in a border town that exists in the margins of American society, I've witnessed vulnerable people of various ethnicities experiencing marginalization at the hands of their own ethnic groups. So depending

on where you live, the majority culture may or may not be white—but one thing is for sure: our sinful natures make us all capable of judging people unworthy, and excluding or ignoring them as a consequence.

Some of you may have picked up this book because you sense that the church needs to change, but you are unsure where to start. Others may already be taking steps outside of your comfort zone but want to know how to take it to the next level. Then, of course, some readers may be further along in the journey and interested in hearing a new perspective. I am incredibly grateful for the Christians who have worked hard to embody biblical justice, racial reconciliation, and the diversity of God's Kingdom here on earth. They are wonderful examples for us all—but there is never an end point. We all have work to do, and the purpose of this book is to be a brotherly prophetic call for us all to open our eyes, acknowledge the divine opportunity that is in front of us, and start taking steps toward the dream. I hope that my perspective as a bicultural (Mexican and American) person who has lived and worked in both majority-culture and marginal spaces will help guide us through the challenges and opportunities we face as a multiethnic body of Christ.

How did we get to the point of ignoring disciple making in the margins? I believe some of us have been so focused on either the great commission (spreading the Good News to the ends of the earth) or the great commandment (loving your neighbor as yourself) that we have failed to see the inextricable connection between the two, which when lived out together result in a great transformed community of believers. I call this the GC3:

THE GREAT COMMISSION AND GREAT COMMANDMENT BUILD GREAT COMMUNITY

Many Christian churches and parachurches have given more emphasis to either the love mandate or the disciple-making mandate, so that energy spent on one seems to take away from the other. Few have been good at holding both in a healthy tension. You can find lots of books on disciple making and church planting, and you can find lots of books on justice and compassion, but you won't find many books that systematically and intentionally join those two great themes together. These four ideas are connected, however: Love/justice and disciple making/church planting combine to bring transformation in our communities. This is the essence of the GC3, which I will share more about in chapter 7 and refer to throughout the book.

When I see the ministry of Jesus, I see people being discipled and matters of compassion and justice being addressed fluidly. I don't see Jesus wearing his justice hat one day and his disciplemaker hat the next. I see transformation at all levels. If we want a great community—a transformed church helping to transform the surrounding community who are not yet Christ followers—we must commit ourselves to both the great commission and the great commandment."

Even as I am writing this study guide, hundreds of thousands of people are being flown from other countries to the United States. These people, who have been friends of America, are soon to become Americans alongside us. While some consider this is a coincidence, I considerate this movement of people to be a work of God. The United States is nearing a tipping point in our demographic shift, where there will no longer be a majority culture. The evangelical church must be ready to adapt. God has a purpose—for all people to know Him.

Read Acts 17:16-33

We read what happened when Paul walked through Athens, through the marketplace, and through the Acropolis where business was conducted. Paul observed the people and did some street evangelism. While at work he invited the philosophers to have a more private conversation without all the distractions of the people. The conversation the next day was a few yards away at the Areopagus, also know as Mars Hill. It is a rough and uneven hill, a good place to get away from the crowds.

Now focus on Acts 17:26-27:

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:26-27 (NKJV)

I stood on the very spot where Paul spoke these words in the Athens at the Areopagus. In those days he was surrounded by philosophers within plan view of the famous Acropolis, known for its many columns.

Discuss as a group what Paul is saying:

- 1. What does the phrase "one blood" mean? Why is that relevant?
- 2. What does "preappointed times and boundaries" mean?
- 3. What is God's purpose for moving people over times and boundaries? (verse 27)
- 4. Many Christians believe that the "Rule of Law" (Roman's 13) is the standard; however, God (and God alone) has always had the last word on all human laws. I do not believe in "open borders"; nevertheless, God still can do as He has preappointed.
 - Dialogue about this conundrum. How have God's people navigated this in past times?
 - This is a deep dive question. There is not a clear answer.
 - Consider the EFCA's work with Immigrant Hope www.immigranthope.org
- 5. Can we believe both?

Consider the next three statements that help you understand where the EFCA is coming from in its mission:

- The EFCA mission statement.
 - · The EFCA exists to glorify God by multiplying transformational churches among all people.
 - · Watch the video https://helps.efca.org/resources/we-are-the-efca
 - · Where does the phrase "all people" come from? (Read Matthew 28:19-20)
- Read the EFCA Distinctives: https://credentialing.ministries.efca.org/distinctives
- Read the EFCA Statement of Faith paying close attention to article 3, 7, and 8: https://www.efca.org/sof
- Read my blog on the GC3:
 https://go.efca.org/blog/all-people/gc3-great-commandment-great-commission-great-community

If you have any questions before diving in to next week's study, contact me at alex.mandes@efca.org.

See the New Samaria

This book is divided into four logical parts: See Samaria, Love Samaria, Reach Samaria, and Be Samaria. We start with seeing because once we see people the way Jesus sees them, we want to reach them for Jesus. Once we reach them, just about anything can happen—the greatest possibility is that we would be a body that seeks to be one in Christ. My greatest hope is that we live out unity as the body of the Church, as we are admonished by Paul in the book of Ephesians.

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

CHAPTER 1: Recalibrating Our Vision

It starts with the eye. In John 4:35-36 Jesus admonished the disciples to "open your eyes and look on the harvest." Read the whole story of the woman at the well, which begins at the beginning of John 4.



Spend some time thinking:

What did Jesus see in the Samaritan woman that the disciples did not see? Are there any groups of people that we do not see or choose not to see?

Think about the example of Scrooge on page 17-18. What was his reaction to the person soliciting help for the poor? Discuss the reasons why Scrooge reacted the way he did (political, economic, sociological, and inconvenience).

Explore his rationales. Stretch your imagination. Are there no mission/governmental or parachurch organizations that are helping the poor?

Does any of the rest of Scrooge's story evoke any thoughts?

While we may not have a solution to the problem of poverty, that does not mean we should turn our eye from the poor and vulnerable, as Scrooge did. We still must see everyone, no matter our differences in appearance, documentation status, ethnicity, culture, or socioeconomic status. Genesis 1:26-27 explicitly tells us that all human beings are made in the image of God.

There were theological, sociological, and cultural reasons why the disciples couldn't see the Samaritans the same way Jesus saw them. The Jewish people and Samaritans had a long history that caused them to hate one another. So what did Jesus mean when He said, "Open your eyes and see?" What did the disciples have to unlearn in order to make this happen?

CHAPTER 2: The Demographic Tipping Point

Chapter two chronicles the undeniable demographic changes happening in the United States. Before the next group meeting, spend thirty minutes looking at two things:

- 1. Google "Demographic tipping point"
- 2. On the internet look up the ethnic diversity of several of the public schools around you.

Share with the rest of the group your findings. Are there any surprises?

How do you feel when you hear statistics about the changing demographics of our country? What are your honest thoughts about immigrants and the diversity of cultures and languages around you? Have you allowed God's heart toward "strangers" to penetrate your own heart?

Think about your church and those in your area. Do their demographics match your findings?

This is an exploration exercise to make sure we aware of the demographic makeup of our communities. Pay attention to all markers, not simply race or ethnicity. Some areas have little color diversity, but there might be diversity of another kind (e.g., socioeconomic). Ask yourself the question, "Are we reaching our community?" It starts with opening our eyes and seeing who is in our community.

CHAPTER 3: Justice Revival

What do we do if we don't like what we see? Some of you may be pleasantly surprised. All is not wrong in our churches. Some are doing great things. But if your community is very mono-cultural, stuff the righteous indignation. We are not looking for finger pointers. James 1:20 reads, "...human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." We are not here to judge. The Lord will judge His own people (Hebrews 10:30). We do not need revolution by man. What we need is a justice revival.

Read Isaiah 58 in its entirety. Identify who is making each of the statements.



- 1. What are people complaining to God about? What are they expecting Him to do?
- 2. What does God ask them to do instead? Why?
- 3. What does God promise if they do as He commands?

What are your thoughts about our country's sins resulting from structural P3 (preference, privilege, and prejudice)? What are some ways in which we might participate or perpetuate this problem without even thinking?

- 1. How will part one of this book change how you see people?
- 2. Consider sharing one area in which Isaiah 58 challenged your view of spirituality.
- 3. What are some ways you or your church could stretch your comfort zone and begin exercising compassion or seeking justice for the marginalized?

Love the New Samaria

Once we see what God sees, and we see how He loves the world, there is hope that we can love the same way He loves. What did you think about the story of Shoreline Community Church shared at the beginning of chapter 4? Did it stir anything in your heart?

CHAPTER 4: Extending Our Vision of God's Kingdom

The Father and the Son are always working together, and we, too, need to join the Father where He is at work. Consider the following passage in John 5:

"So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.' For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus gave them this answer: 'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.'" John 5:16-20 (NIV)

Jesus stayed with the disciples in the Samaritan village for two days in order to teach them an important lesson about the deep-seated biases that were impeding their missional vision.



Spend some time thinking:

Were there any ideas passed along in your family that have caused you to (consciously or unconsciously) avoid certain kinds of people?

When was the last time you asked yourself, Where is God at work around me? Have you ever considered our demographic shift and the movement of people around the world as being from God?

Consider the discussion on page 78-79 about contact hypothesis. Look up some stories in the Bible describing moments when Jesus was in contact with Gentiles. Why are those stories important?

Share with the group your favorite story of Jesus interacting with Gentiles.

We must not forget that God is always at work in the margins. It is not our job to swoop in and "save" anyone, but if we join in on His work, we will be transformed. We must learn to truly love all people enough in order to want to seek their good.

Spend a few minutes discussing the parody of Jesse and the Man at Walmart. What was your reaction to the story upon first reading it?

ASSIGNMENT: Ask a person who is different than you (ethnically, racially, socioeconomically) to a meal and listen to them. Ask them about their family. Ask them about their view of life. If you don't want to weird them out, tell them that you are trying to make sense of the cultural climate in America today. They will appreciate that and will be even more willing to share and ask you questions. LISTEN.

CHAPTER 5: Appreciating the Beauty of Other Cultures

Consider your own ethnic or cultural background. Even if you are a white American who is generations removed from an immigration experience, you still have a culture! What ideals, values, and traditions does your family celebrate? Now think about other cultures you have been around (could be other ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds or generations). What do you find beautiful about other cultures? Share with your group.

Reflect on this hymn about ethnic diversity and unity, written by John Oxenham, 1852-1941.

In Christ there is no east or west, In him no south or north, But one great fellowship of love Throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere Their high communion find, His service is the golden cord Close-binding humankind.

Join hands, united in the faith, Whate'er your race may be! Who serves my Father as a son Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west, In him meet south and north, All Christ-like souls are one in him, Throughout the whole wide earth.

Discuss among yourselves the implications of this hymn for multiethnic ministry.

ASSIGNMENT: Pick one of the following books by an author of color to read. Once you've had a chance to read it, bring your thoughts back to the group.

1. Tony Evens: Oneness Embraced

2. Orlando Crespo: Latino Identity in Christ

3. Brenda Salter McNeil: Roadmap to Reconciliation

4. John Perkins: One Blood

CHAPTER 6: Entering into the Pain of the Marginalized

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:26 – "If one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it."

Assignment for group: Watch the movie Same Kind of Different as Me.



Some may be too quick think it is another story of majority culture saving minority culture. But who ends up saving who? How and why? What does Dallas teach his friend about real relationships? How does Ron approach the relationship? What does Dallas mean by "catch and release"?

- 1. As we spend time with different people how does it change how we see them?
- 2. What are the implications for multiethnic church planting?
- 3. How have you become richer as a result of becoming close to a person who is different than you?

Reach the New Samaria

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

QUESTION: What is the Great Commission?



- A. Make Disciples
- B. Make Disciples of all people
- C. Make Disciples with the three participles of going/baptizing/teaching

I won't quibble or play games. All of them are true. Answer A has the benefit of branding simplicity. Answer C has the benefit of completeness. Answer B has the benefit of guarding us against making it just about our own people. Some people have challenged me by saying that "all people" is understood, therefore doesn't even need to be stated. I would argue, however, that we need to keep the "all people" top of mind, especially if we seek to intentionally reach our neighbors amidst this undeniable demographic shift. "All people" as in Isaiah 58: "people stuck in bonds of wickedness, people stuck under heavy burdens, people oppressed, people who are hungry, the poor and cast out, the naked."

CHAPTER 7: Strategy Transformation

The mission of the EFCA is "to multiply transformational churches among all people. Our mission is to see changed lives! Discuss the GC3 on page 114. How does it hold us accountable to all of the mandates of God?

If it fair to talk about a "Great Transformed Community?"

What kind of adaptations would this requires of our leaders?

How have you approached the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in your faith journey? Have you leaned into one more than the other? Why?

Read 2 Corinthians 2:15 (NIV):

"For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

If your church disappeared, would anyone in the community miss you?

CHAPTER 8: Making Disciples

Consider the following scripture:

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

Today we have turned everything into making disciples. But what is it? How do we know if we are doing it? Here are some test questions:

- 1. What is a disciple?
- 2. Does your church have a process for making a disciples?
- 3. How effective is it?
- 4. Are you making disciples among all people?

There are many good processes for making disciples. (Look on page 138 for resources.) The important key to remember is that disciple making should be life on life. When you look at Jesus's ministry, He spent lots of time with His disciples. They learned from Jesus because they followed him and watched him closely. Then Jesus expected them to do the same. It takes a disciple to make a disciple.

On page 135, I list seven ways to create a culture of disciple making in your church. Review those principles and discuss which ones stand out or surprise you.

CHAPTER 9: Equipping Leaders

Group Discussion:

- 1. True/False and why? Everyone can be a disciple, but not everyone can be a ministry leader!
- 2. What is the difference between being a disciple and being a ministry leader?

Does everyone have to go to school to be a ministry leader? Obviously, it would be great, but what are the obstacles that some people face?

What did Jesus and Paul do?



Read the section on page 148: "Adaptive Training for Today's Off-Road Leaders"

What did you learn from some of the examples?

If you were going to create a disciple making process and leadership training program for the leaders in your church who can't receive formal seminary training, what would you do?

Think, pray, and listen to the Spirit. Did you know many of the ivy league seminaries started off in a church by a pastor trying to prepare pastors for the future? Everyone starts somewhere. If you feel called to start something, ask others for help.

- 1. Be the transformation. Start with yourself. Reflect on whether your views on leadership have allowed room for marginalized people who are gifted and called. What is God calling you to change about your posture toward new models of equipping leaders?
- 2. Figure out what you can do to get a leadership training process started in your church. Use the bible, and see what others are doing. Identify potential leaders from diverse ethnicities, cultures, genders, and socioeconomic levels. Think creatively about training. Pray that God will remove our blinders.

Be the New Samaria

"Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Philippians 2:1-4

While there is much to admire about being obedient to God in seeing, loving, and reaching the New Samaria, we must also succeed at being the new Samaria. The focus in this part of the book is on how to be one body, one community of believers, that not only transforms lives but transforms the community around us.

CHAPTER 10: One Reconciled Community

On December 18, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made his often-repeated statement that "the most segregated hour in this nation" is Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Unfortunately, not much has changed since then, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to change this fact.

Think back to the woman at the well story. After the woman brought the city to Jesus, they took Jesus and His disciples back to the city for two days of fellowship. Decades of centuries of hate came down in one afternoon. It can happen!



Spend some time thinking:

Why is creating unity among different types of people so hard? Is creating unity with likeminded people easier, or not? Why? Consider the opening verse.

Read page 162 about the Homogeneous Unit Principle. How did that philosophy help churches believe that they could be "separate and effective?"

After reading this chapter, what do you think it take to become a "Reconciled Community"? Do you feel hopeful that it is possible? What are some of the benefits to embracing differences? Share your answers.

CHAPTER 11: Multiethnic Ministry and Transformed Communities

Wayne Gretsky's father is reported to have said, "A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be." With the demographic changes that are happening, it is time that the church lean into the future rather than be satisfied with the past. A multiethnic church model should be a ready tool in our bag that we can utilize moving into the future.

Discuss some of the different models of multiethnic/multicultural ministry listed on pages 174-180. Have you ever been part of any churches like them? Which ones seem like they could help your church?

After reading this chapter, what makes you excited about the pivot to a multiethnic church model? What makes you nervous? What are your fears and concerns? Share with the group.

CHAPTER 12: Pass the Church Forward

If there is one major takeaway from this book, let it be this: we need to get out of the way and let God be head of the church. No, I am not pointing fingers, but if the shoe fits wear it.

Discuss: what are some elements of current evangelical church life that are making it hard to reach the New Samaria? Additionally, what in your own heart is making it difficult? Review the questions under the "Examine Your Heart" section on page 192.

Pages 188-191 list a few principles that will help us pass the church forward. Discuss them.

- 1. Love being a cultural adventurer. How can you see yourself doing this?
- 2. Realize that we have more in common than we think. Such as?
- 3. Embrace the fact that the New Samaria will make the church their own. What does that mean?

- 1. Pray that the Lord give you insight into your changing community. Pray that the Lord would help orient the church to be welcoming to the marginalized. Pray that the Lord would give you Samaritans that can join the church and be part of those will lead it into the future.
- 2. Look back over the book and consider two or three points that you believe to be true but that would be sticking points for your church's leaders. How would you say it differently in a way they would understand it?
- 3. What is the next step for your church? What work do you feel God is calling you to do now in order to push the church toward the dream of being Samaria?