

REGGIE DABBS & JOHN DRIVER

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An Invitation to Honest Conversations  
about Race and Faith

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about Race and Faith

REGGIE DABBS & JOHN DRIVER

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*Not So Black and White*

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# AN INVITATION TO HONEST CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE AND FAITH

*May 25, 2020*

The world watched as Derek Chauvin, a white officer in the Minneapolis Police Department, knelt on the neck of George Floyd, a Black man lying on his face in handcuffs in the middle of a downtown neighborhood. Chauvin kept his knee and the weight of his body on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes. George begged for mercy. He said he couldn't breathe. He cried out for his mother. A crowd of onlookers also pleaded with Chauvin to let him breathe. Other police officers standing nearby did not intervene as George Floyd gasped for air and eventually stopped breathing. He lay unconscious on the pavement for nearly three minutes, with Chauvin's knee still on his neck. Floyd had no pulse when paramedics arrived and was later pronounced dead at the hospital.

As protests erupted around the nation and the world, a tired yet somehow disturbingly invigorated conversation was reignited in the church and on social media. Everyone seemed certain that they were right and everyone else was wrong. Humility, empathy, or

any acknowledgment of the need to listen or possibly change one's thinking seemed to be exotic concepts.

Everything was cast as black and white, even though it was not.

*May 26, 2020*

**T**he world wasn't watching the next day as a conservative white Christian nervously picked up his phone and called his longtime friend Reggie, who is Black. During their short conversation, they talked about uncomfortable things they had never discussed before.

"I'm sick to my stomach, man," John said as he paced across his living-room rug. His emotions were raw, and for some reason he felt insecure talking with his Black friend about George Floyd, as if he was just catching up on something he should already have known. "I mean, the cop pushed his face into the concrete . . . and Floyd screamed for his mama. I've been so mad and I've been crying. This ain't right."

"No, it ain't." Reggie wasn't trying to be short with John, but he was already exhausted from what he had been reading online after the murder. He wasn't sure where this conversation was going. A long pause ensued.

"I just can't believe what so many Christians are saying on social media," John huffed. "It's like they don't think George Floyd was a real person. How did we get here, Reggie?" No answer. John took a breath, then said, "Bro, are you okay?"

"I'm hanging in there." Reggie could tell he didn't sound very convincing. "This is tough, man, but I think something is changing. It has to."

"I know how *I* feel right now, but I can't imagine how *you* must feel." John took yet another deep breath. "I realize you're dealing with a lot right now, but could I ask you a few questions without offending you?"

“We’ve been friends for years. What do you want to know?”

John understood that once he asked, there was no going back. But it was time. “Have I missed it all these years? Is all of this ‘systemic racism’ that everyone is fighting about something you’ve experienced? What’s it really like to be a Black man in America?”

John expected a delayed response, but Reggie jumped right in. “When I was teaching my son how to drive, the first thing I told him was to always lay his wallet on the seat next to him so he could get it without reaching into his back pocket if the police pulled him over.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No, I wish I was. But that’s a snapshot of what it’s like to be a Black man—and to have a Black son—in America. If Dominic ever gets pulled over, he knows to roll down all four windows, turn on the dome light so the officer can see him, and keep his hands at ten and two. I taught him *that* before I taught him to put on his seat belt.”

“Man, we’ve been friends for more than a decade. How could I not know this? I guess I never asked.” John’s tone was apologetic, but even that felt weird.

“That’s okay. It’s something I don’t really talk about, but I’ve had some crazy experiences. I can’t tell you how many times white people have heard my presentations at different events and said afterward, ‘You speak really well . . . for a Black man.’ They think it’s a compliment.”

“That can’t be true. Can some people really be that dense?”

“It’s actually happened a lot. They also ask me if my parents are white. When I tell them, ‘No, they’re Black,’ they seem surprised. Professors at my predominantly white Christian college told me I needed to speak better than the white students to make sure I never gave white people a reason to say, ‘I couldn’t understand him because he’s Black.’ I know white privilege is a touchy subject, but I’ve felt it

when white people put me into a category that says, ‘He shouldn’t be able to speak like that. He shouldn’t be able to reach me.’”

This was the first time Reggie had talked about racism with John. “Why haven’t you spoken out about this stuff?”

“Because I’ve never wanted everything in my life to be about my race—and because I guess I didn’t think it would change anything. But now I’m having conversations that help me think otherwise. The other day, one of my college roommates dismissed the issue of racism because he said we were all fine back in college—*me*, the Black guy; and *them*, everyone else at school, I reminded him of the night all my roommates burst into my dorm room wearing white sheets and ignited lighter fluid on my wall in the shape of a cross.”

“No way that really happened! In the 1980s at a Christian college?”

“Oh, it happened. It was a joke. I knew they loved me and meant no harm. I laughed along with them at the time, which I probably shouldn’t have done. They didn’t realize how much that kind of stuff affected me. I never told them. But the worst wasn’t their jokes. Most of my friends didn’t know that Minneapolis police repeatedly stopped me when I walked home from work at night. I had to show my school ID and wait for them to verify my identity simply because I was a young Black man walking around at night. When I shared this with my roommate, the one who thought everything had been fine all those years ago, he was speechless. ‘Why didn’t you say anything?’ he asked. I was, like, ‘Bro, what could you have done?’”

John honestly didn’t know. He struggled to find the right words, then admitted, “I hate to say it, Reggie, but I think a lot of white people feel that way—like we don’t know what to do. We have assumed a lot about the lives of Black people in America. Some say that we’ve let our systems sin for us—all we have to do is look the

other way and keep living our lives, hoping that better laws and less racist talk mean things are okay. We were taught to be colorblind—not to notice or talk about racial issues—so we wouldn’t make our Black friends uncomfortable.”

“I get it. Right or wrong, we’ve all had our reasons for not talking about racism in the past, but I think we’ve come to a place where it’s something we have to talk about.” It felt liberating to speak so boldly on the topic.

“I appreciate your willingness to talk about it now,” John replied. “It’s not your job to educate all the white people of the world about racism. It has to be exhausting. I know that you don’t want everything in your life to be about race—and it shouldn’t have to be. At times, I’ve been on the wrong side of this issue, as have many other people just like me. It’s time for white people—especially Christians—to step up, listen up, and stand next to our Black friends who are leading us on these issues, so you don’t have to carry the weight alone anymore.” John paused in thought before adding, “I haven’t been a very good friend to you on this one.”

“Hey,” Reggie replied in his distinctively gracious way, “you’re showing up now. That’s where we’ll start.”



This was the first of many conversations between two longtime friends—a Black man and a white man, both in full-time ministry. Throughout our friendship, we had spoken at many of the same events, shared countless dinners, talked on the phone thousands of times, and even written two books together. Yet somehow we had never talked honestly and directly about race.

That all changed in the aftermath of the protests and escalating

violence that followed the brutal killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and many others.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, there has always been racial injustice, and we hadn't been ignoring it, but these events made it impossible for us and many others to remain passive in any way. But what was the right way to engage on this issue? We decided to search for it together. That initial conversation we had about George Floyd led to many other honest conversations about race, faith, history, and what needs to change in our nation.

As we shared our own stories and talked about the church we both love and serve, we really listened to each other and dove into the ongoing legacy of slavery and racism in America. From these conversations, we concluded that contrary to those who claim that systemic racism is little more than the rantings of liberals, whiners, and troublemakers, it is still a gaping wound in the church and in our nation that won't be quickly or easily healed. Even so, there is hope.

## **The Uncomfortable Path to Healing**

Racism in the United States is a wound first inflicted hundreds of years ago that continues to fester. At various times, we have been told to leave it in the past and just move on, but how can we move on from a wound that is full of countless shards of broken glass and is still bleeding? We can't merely wrap it in the gauze of rhetorical forgiveness—even if we quote Scripture—and hope that healing will magically occur.

Tending to the wound of racism isn't as black and white as many people want it to be, regardless of which polarized political or religious group we gravitate toward. The only path to healing is through individual and collective debridement—the painful but

life-giving removal of the shards that inflicted the wound. That is, in part, what both of us intended for our initial conversations: to enter the hard but healing process required to address racism in all its forms.

In the chapters that follow, we invite you into some of our honest conversations, as well as the historical and theological explorations that followed. The good news is these conversations aren't happening on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, around your dinner table, or at work, so we hope you can enter them with an open mind and heart, even if what you read makes you uncomfortable—and we hope it will.

Having uncomfortable conversations can feel like the worst thing. But reading a book about race that makes you uncomfortable can be the best thing for you—if you have the courage to keep reading. That's why we encourage you to pay attention to your reactions as you read, especially if you feel angry, defensive, or misunderstood. We refer to these reactions as insults. An insult can be a revelation that leads to growth and understanding. The key is to examine not just the topics that make you uncomfortable but also how you process and respond to them. Any insult you experience while reading is an invitation to be curious about why you feel this way. Ask yourself,

“Why am I so angry?”

“Why do I feel defensive?”

“Why do I feel threatened?”

How do you know when you're experiencing an insult? Here are some of the comments we've heard from white conservative Christians that reflect insults:

- “I’m so tired of being called a racist.”
- “Everyone just needs a heart change. It’s a sin problem, not a skin problem.”
- “Systemic racism is a hoax. Show me the racist individuals and let’s stop them!”
- “Whether it’s about racism or anything else, both sides lie, and I can’t believe anything at all.”
- “All these social justice warriors are just watering down the gospel.”
- “I can’t speak up. What if I say the wrong thing? I’ll wait for more facts.”
- “I can’t say, ‘Black lives matter,’ I’m not a liberal Marxist who hates America!”
- “What about abortion or Black-on-Black crime? Where are the riots for these issues?”
- “If you support any part of the antiracist movement, you must hate police and support anarchy.”

You may have heard people say things like these or had similar thoughts yourself. When it comes to race, our thoughts can be incendiary and easily detonated. Why are we so quickly inflamed, so readily offended, so easily triggered? *That* is what we aim to address in this book: why the topic of racism tends to insult everyone who engages it—and why it doesn’t have to be this way.

## Jumping In

Neither of us has ever skydived, but we’ve seen it in movies. Imagine the big back door of an airplane opening, and you’re standing there

in your skydiving gear just waiting for the green light to step off the edge of the ramp. This moment of waiting probably produces the most anxiety and hesitation. When you're skydiving, you can't see your landing spot from twelve thousand feet in the air, so you have to trust that what feels like a blind leap into the ether is actually the first step to safely reaching solid ground.

Jumping into the unknown is also the hardest part of conversations.

There was an awkward moment in our first real talk about racism when we had to just jump in and say something. It wasn't pretty or proper. It never will be. Unlike sounding off on social media, there is no comfortable way to engage with real people on this issue. But no matter how uncomfortable it is, we really need to listen to real people and learn from them, not only in person but from reliable sources they produce. That is what we aim to help you do, which is why understanding the structure of this book is important.

The chapters in part 1, "Evaluating Our Own Ways of Thinking," are intended to help us become aware of how we've been conditioned to view issues of race. We all have various lenses or windows through which we view the world, and we need to be aware of what those are. When we evaluate our own ways of thinking, we have a chance to remove the bugs from our windshields so we can stop looking *at* the glass and start looking through it instead.

Fair warning: these early chapters might prompt an insulted feeling or two, mainly because we use terms and reference ideas you may have been conditioned to interpret a certain way or not even entertain. We want to explore not just the terms but also the conditioning. Problems must be named before they can be addressed, so we hope you will absorb any offense, if only temporarily. The way we define terms like *grace*, *justice*, and *gospel* may also feel insulting.

It might help to pretend you've never heard the words or the definitions before.

Our goal is to provide you with tools to mine deeply into Scripture, as well as into your beliefs about racism—beliefs you may not even be aware you have. This includes examining what the gospel teaches about changing the way we think and about changing the systems around us. If you are courageous enough to enter this process, you will see racism differently.

In part 2, “Taking Historical and Theological Inventories,” we engage in a nonexhaustive but robust inventory of racial history, policy, and theology. Though we will define it in much greater detail later, by “inventory” we mean an honest, fearless look at the whole of an individual’s or organization’s experiences in the world, perspectives from which they view the world, and patterns of addressing the world—some of which we are aware of, but a number of which we are not.

Many in our nation and in the church are already taking inventories on race, while many others are fiercely resisting doing so out of fear of being labeled or perhaps being found wanting in some way. Instead of resisting the process of exploring the truth about our theology and history, the healthier action is to engage in doing so together, knowing that honesty and vulnerability are not threats to the gospel but its pillars.

To take an honest inventory, we first need to understand the history and legacies we’ve inherited from slavery, our nation’s founders and founding documents, the Civil War, postwar Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, the civil rights movement, and the origin of the religious right and its eventual convergence with the white evangelical church. As advocate and author Latasha Morrison says, “When we lack historical understanding, we lose part of our identity. We

don't know where we came from and don't know what there is to celebrate or lament. Likewise, without knowing our history, it can be difficult to know what needs repairing, what needs reconciling."<sup>2</sup>

Each chapter opens with a portion of a real conversation between the two of us, sharing stories from our own experiences and the experiences of people we know or have met. These are not intended as scripts for you to use in conversations about race, because that rarely works. Instead, we hope that sharing a few of our conversations might help you see points of entry into similar conversations in your own context and give you courage to engage in them. While many conversations about race—the good kind—are not as plentiful as we'd like to see, many others—the destructive kind—seem to be happening all around us. Perhaps reading our conversations will help you discover solid footholds for climbing upward, while avoiding hazardous footholds that will send you crashing to the ground.

Throughout the book, our focus is primarily on what tends to insult white people, particularly white conservative Christians. However, this is not meant to be one-sided, reverse racism. We are not suggesting that all white people are racist or that there is any reason to feel guilt or shame over being born white. At the same time, we have to reckon with the fact that there is great insult when white people—especially white people within the church—refuse to even acknowledge the existence, much less the injustices, of systemic racism.

This book predominantly deals with issues of racism as they relate to white and Black Americans, but we acknowledge that this is not the only cultural relationship with a complex history, present, and future that needs addressing and change. These principles and conversations will also be helpful in fighting the sin of racism that affects Latinos, Asians, and the many nations of indigenous

peoples in the Americas—or individuals and communities of any other ethnicity. Not addressing each of these in this book does not mean that they are not equally important. It means only that our time and context constrains us to this primary topic.

You will also notice that we capitalize the term *Black*, but not the term *white*. We are not elevating one race over another. Later in the book, we will deal with the social concept of race, including the concept of whiteness as distinct from cultural origins like Scottish, German, or Norwegian. From biblical and historical perspectives, we will explore whether whiteness even exists. But our reason for capitalizing *Black* comes from the shared cultural experiences of Black people in America who have been oppressed by the majority culture, which uses the concept of whiteness to create fear and suppress minorities.

Blackness emerged from African victims being unjustly forced into slavery. Over time, their shared experiences, in both religious and community contexts, developed into a sense of Blackness that fostered safe places in a system of oppression. As we have learned to be sensitive to the inventories of others whose experiences differ from our own, we want to show appropriate honor and sensitivity to our Black brothers and sisters, many of whom bear the surnames not of beloved patriarchs but of brutal slave masters. This is why we have capitalized *Black*. We know there are other ways to handle this. But we researched both the writings of our Black brothers and sisters and current journalistic standards and made this decision out of respect for the sensitivity of this topic. Our goal is to listen and respond in the present with respect and empathy, even if perspectives on the terms we use continue to morph over time.

As this preview of just one issue demonstrates, conversations on race are nuanced and complex. We hope that as you read, you

will be challenged to embrace not only new ways of thinking but also new ways of acting. We hope that by the time you finish this book, you will be open to thinking differently as a gospel practice, and that the knowledge you gain about racism will equip you for whatever you choose to do in response.

We know the odds are pretty slim that those who think systemic racism and social unrest are little more than conspiracy theories or left-wing ploys will read this book. However, if this describes you, we are grateful that you are willing to be a part of these conversations.

Even if this doesn't describe you, chances are that it describes a person you know. Whether you are someone's child, parent, coworker, pastor, or friend, we encourage you to take this journey yourself before handing the book to that person and saying, "Here! Look how wrong you are!" Let us save you the time and heartache: that won't work. But if you are willing to take your own journey first, perhaps afterward you'll be able to humbly hand that person the book and say, "I'm learning and growing in this area, and I still have a long way to go. Can we grab a coffee and talk?"

We realize that what we've written might cost us some friends and gain us some foes. Many think we should just leave well enough alone. But we choose to talk about these topics because the gospel does—it addresses both racism and the disposition of those who encountered and affected it. Beyond that, it affects all of us. It affects you, whether or not you realize it. It takes humility to see this.

We are doing our best to share from a posture of humility. As you will discover, we are just two regular guys who have worked extensively with adults and kids in public schools and churches. We have varied experiences as a Black man and a white man, along with diverse insights into history, theology, and community. We want to humbly share from where we are.

There are many other authors, leaders, and theologians—Black and white—you should be reading and following. They have spent their careers studying and addressing racism in America. Their books, research, and posts have inspired and informed us, and we hope the resources we share will inspire and inform you as well. We would love nothing more than for you to read what they've written and follow them, because their ongoing work has paved the way for others like us.

Following the deaths of George Floyd and others, an estimated 15 to 26 million people in the United States participated in demonstrations. In terms of the number of participants, this may well be the largest civil rights movement in American history.<sup>3</sup> No matter how we feel about the messy middle of such demonstrations, we can't deny that something significant is happening.

We are also engaging racism as fathers. When our kids look back on this turbulent time, we want them to know that even though racism was a volatile issue, their parents chose to listen and engage with grace and truth. We have taken seriously the admonition of scholar and advocate Jemar Tisby to “create something. Write a blog post. Write a book. Write a sermon. Do a Sunday school class. Host a forum. Write a song or poem. Create something that speaks to social justice. As you do it, remember that it always helps to get feedback from a person from a different racial or ethnic background who is willing to help.”<sup>4</sup> We can't necessarily change the world, but we can do something. We can refuse to remain unengaged.

We stand at the edge of the ramp with you, waiting to jump out of the plane, just as we stood at the edge of an uncomfortable conversation with each other. If you feel mired in confusion or anger because racial problems seem like black-and-white issues, yet you wonder whether there may be more shades (even some grays) to be

explored, we invite you to step off the ramp and keep courageously reading all the way to the end. You won't be jumping alone. You won't free-fall the whole way. You have a parachute, and there's a landing zone. The safety of solid ground awaits us—of better ways to think, more accurate information and history to consider, and better conversations about race to have—but only if we jump together in honesty.

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PART 1

**EVALUATING OUR OWN  
WAYS OF THINKING**

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## CHAPTER 1

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# LOOKING WHERE WE'VE SLIPPED

I forgot that you went to college in Minneapolis, where George Floyd was killed. I can't imagine what seeing his murder was like for you."

"I used to work in the same neighborhood where he was killed." Reggie's words hit John like a ton of bricks. An event on the news that seemed to be from another world suddenly felt close and real.

"When I saw that policeman with his knee on George's neck, I didn't just see George Floyd—I saw myself." Reggie took a slow breath, then continued. "I saw Dominic, my son, a young Black man just going to work every day. I saw my nephew, Donovan, and my niece, Monique. They both live in Minneapolis. Bro, it could have happened to any of us."

John wasn't sure how to respond. "Man, I've honestly never imagined myself pinned under a cop's knee. I've always been told that these are just rare incidents that happen to criminals by cops

who are ‘bad apples.’ You’re telling me that you worry about this kind of thing for real?”

“I do. I really do. I guess I’ve learned to live with it.”

“Live with it? Reggie, you shouldn’t have to live with it. What could we do so you don’t have to?” John was eager to fix the problem.

Reggie laughed. “Man, we can’t just make this go away. It’s going to take time. Like many Black people, I’m not asking for special treatment, just equal treatment. If I do wrong, take me to jail. If I rob or beat someone, or if I commit murder, put the handcuffs on me and take me to jail. But don’t arrest me on the street, try me on the street, convict me on the street, and sentence me to death on the street. Let me have my chance. Black people just want the same respect everybody else gets.”

“I guess I thought you already had it. I thought everyone in America had the chance to have it. I used to be a history teacher, and I railed against racism in theory, as if racism is only about the actions of immoral individuals. Ahmaud Arbery began to change things for me—not just that some crazy rednecks could do something so horrible, but that the system seemed to prevent justice for Ahmaud for months until the video emerged. And then when I saw the video of George Floyd, I cried—hearing a grown man crying for his mama just broke me. I told Laura, ‘I’m tired of sitting here talking about this. We need to show up for something for a change!’”

“That’s what we really need,” Reggie quickly replied. “We don’t need white Christians and leaders standing on the sidelines cheering us on. We need you guys on the front lines with us.”

“I’m trying. But I have to be honest. When I first heard ‘Black lives matter’ back in 2014, my reaction was, ‘Wait, don’t all lives matter?’ I didn’t think of myself as racist, so it offended me because

it felt like someone was insinuating that I was. I didn't cause slavery and I certainly didn't condone all this horrible violence, so I didn't know how to handle taking responsibility for possibly contributing to it in some way." There it was. John knew that he was stepping into honesty in a way that could offend his friend.

"What changed your mind?" Reggie asked.

"Well, it's still changing, but it began with my wife loving me well enough to tell me the truth. I was making a lot of logically sound points, but I wasn't doing the one thing our Black friends were asking me to do: listen."

Reggie was silent for a moment. Then he said, "Bro, she nailed it."

John chuckled. "She always does. It helped me start thinking differently. I stopped being more offended at the idea of being called a racist than I was over racism itself—at the way racism actually affects people whose lives are different from mine. People like you. At first, I was offended because I hadn't done anything wrong. Now I'm seeing that, well, I hadn't done anything at all."



Systemic racism. Reverse racism. White supremacy. White privilege. White guilt. Virtue signaling. Black Lives Matter. Blue Lives Matter. All Lives Matter. The Lost Cause. Jim Crow. Civil rights. Unconscious bias. Affirmative action. Black-on-Black crime. Police brutality. Law and order. Mass incarceration. Segregated churches. Mass repentance. History. Heritage. Hate. Reparations. Revenge. Reconciliation.

These are hot-button terms that can ignite heated and even fiery discussions. Just reading them may have evoked an emotional reaction for you. That's because all of us have deeply held, intensely

emotional opinions related to our way of seeing the world—even if we don't realize it.

In recent years in the United States, our deeply held opinions have coalesced around polarized mindsets, one conservative and one liberal. Clashing ideologies have split our nation, trapping us in cycles of mindless and heartless debates that play out in the news and on social media. In his book, *Faithful Presence*, former two-term Republican Tennessee governor Bill Haslam addresses the way various sources affect our perceptions: "Today, many news entities have an economic incentive to outrage. Stoking the fires of disagreement can be very profitable. Networks like CNN, Fox, and MSNBC have all learned that there is money to be made from emphasizing only one side of an argument. The madder I get at one side, the more I watch whoever is telling me how horrible that side is."<sup>1</sup> All this madness shapes the loud statements political and religious leaders make or omit (after all, saying nothing is a big statement). And yes, this also results in awkward conversations around many family dinner tables.

We are eyewitnesses to the death of meaningful dialogue. Conversation has devolved from a mutual exchange of ideas into something fruitless and harmful. In the media, it's all endless opponent bashing, feckless name-calling, or reckless grandstanding. Sadly, Christians aren't faring much better than anyone else in this dumpster-dive into insult that we now call public discourse. The new and accepted norm is to portray complete certainty about what's right and who's wrong in all matters, even when we know little about them. We have become too smart to listen, and thus too smart to learn.

Never have we been so entrenched in zealous yet unfruitful ways of thinking.

We are certain about everything, Christians especially. White

Christians have too often expressed their certainties in ways that sound much more like political beliefs than gospel ones. The conservative Christians among us have railed against “woke” Christians—anyone who is concerned about social issues—viewing them as misguided fools who have been hoodwinked into white guilt or a radical definition of *Black power* (a term most white people don’t have any real context for). After all, we have a Black friend or coworker who agrees that all this social upheaval is just bad political theater. As a result, we feel no tension when attacking others in conversations or on social media because we believe we’re defending Christianity or America, which to us go hand in hand.

While some of us rage against the woke machine, others of us retreat. We feel lost, with no idea how to rightly engage, so we either remain silent or settle for posting memes that are a watered-down scriptural version of “Can’t we all just get along?” Even then, someone attacks us, leaving us to question whether there really is a race problem or if it’s all just woke bluster. We feel immense pressure either to retreat or to join the name-calling game everyone else is playing.

When the only options are attack or retreat, there is no room for conversation, much less for the real or lasting change. But what if we told you that the gospel has so much more to offer than just a passive “Can’t we all just get along?” It invites us into a whole new way of thinking, speaking, and being that truly is good news for those of us who feel trapped between dueling monologues. The gospel offers a path to healing, but we must believe it rightly to walk it. When what sounds like good news for us sounds more like bad news for those outside of our political tribes, the problem isn’t with the gospel but with the way we’re viewing or applying it. Not everyone will accept the gospel, but it should be good news for all.

If we are courageous enough to look at the way we think and talk (and do not think and talk) about race, we will discover that while we definitely have a racism problem, we have an even bigger gospel problem.

This is where you might be tempted to think, *Well, since I believe the gospel already, this doesn't apply to me.* Or worse, you might feel insulted that we've insinuated there is a problem with the way you think. This is a small glimpse into the bigger problem we are addressing—the binary, reactionary extremism that teaches us that we're either all right or all wrong, with nothing in between. This is the harmful kind of black-and-white thinking, and as we will see, it leads away from the belief in absolute truth we think we so strongly hold. This is why it is common these days for conservative Christians to respond to hard-to-dismiss challenges to their logic or viewpoints with “Well, you can't believe anything you hear these days, so who can know what's really true?”

Somehow, the loudest advocates of absolute truth can quickly deny it without creating tension within themselves. Why? Because they subconsciously believe that facts can be errant, but their thinking cannot. They would rather dismiss the facts than evaluate their way of thinking, believing, and being. This is not the way of the gospel.

Scripture reveals that only a fool (even a Christian fool) refuses to examine the way he or she looks at things. Take it from two Christian fools, this is actually good news.

## What Foolish Thinking Really Is

Picture this scene. A fourteen-year-old Black girl who is pregnant for the second time comes home from school one day to an empty

house. Inside, nothing remains but her first little baby screaming for his mama. Infuriated that she is pregnant again, her parents have abandoned her. She will never see them again. Soon, she will be living in an abandoned chicken coop with her *three* little babies because, although she doesn't yet know it, she is pregnant with twins.

When you imagine this young girl, what do you see? What conclusions do you draw about her? Is she an immoral person getting what she deserves? A casualty of her impoverished upbringing? A drain on the welfare system? Someone who should pull herself up by her bootstraps?

The things we see that aren't necessarily visually evident make up our assumptions, our biases, and our ways of thinking. Before we can see real people on the other side of our black-and-white lenses, we must first recognize what distorts those lenses. It's important to become aware of distorted viewpoints because they become the viewfinders through which we look at the world and other people in it. Our goal is to be wise, not foolish, in the way we view the world, especially something as significant as racism.

If we think our way of seeing the world is already crystal clear, we are modeling the biblical definition of foolishness. "The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice" (Prov. 12:15 NIV). The English Standard Version says, "The way of a fool is right in his [or her] own eyes." Foolishness is not about errant facts; it's about the way we hold tightly to what seems right to us.

If it offends you to even consider that you might be foolish, this could be the start of really good news for you. Not because you aren't in fact foolish but because the Bible is an equal-opportunity offender—we all walk in foolishness at times. If you trust Scripture, then it's worth paying attention to anything in it that makes you feel

insulted. This feeling reveals something important that we should take note of.

It's also important to understand that Scripture, especially the book of Proverbs, uses the term *fool* in multiple ways. When a proverb characterizes a person as foolish, it is not necessarily declaring that the person is foolish at all times and in all ways. Instead, many proverbs comment on the foolishness of specific situations, behaviors, and choices. Which means a person might be foolish in some situations and ways of thinking, yet not in others. For example, we may be wise in the way we handle finances but foolish in the way we speak to our families; or we may be wise in the way we work hard but foolish in refusing to accept instruction or advice. Both can be true.

As a first step in evaluating your thinking about race, we ask you to be open to the idea that you may not be wise in every thought and action. That idea should not be insulting; it's just a fact of the human condition. We need to grow in wisdom, just as Jesus did (Luke 2:52). Walking in God's ways (a phrase we will explore later) begins by being humble enough to examine—and to keep examining—not just your actions but also your thinking.

The consequences of failing to do so are evident in our society today. We do not listen because we no longer know how. We're so busy yelling and posting and shaming that there's no room for listening. We pick up the talking points of our favorite pundits or preachers and amplify them. We feel so insulted at even the prospect of entertaining differing viewpoints that we defend our own at all costs.

Proverbs again has something to offer: "*Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions*" (18:2 NIV, emphasis added). Could a passage be more apropos for today? When was the last time we took pleasure in understanding someone else's

opinion? Expertly broadcasting one's own opinion has become the highest, most hallowed accomplishment, a pathway to numerous followers, monetized ads, and even public office.

How might things be different if we took more pleasure in understanding issues and the people they affect than in sounding off? What if we paid more attention to whether our personal or organizational sentiments about racism sound more like Scripture than our favorite pundit's one-liners? What if we endeavored to respond with informed humility, sincere empathy, and a growing historical, theological, and relational understanding of racial matters? What if we desired to make a difference with both passion and gentleness?

This might sound too high minded for practical application, especially when civil unrest erupts and the internet burns hotter still. And yet these are not just sentimental musings but biblical principles and critical elements of the gospel. If we ignore them, we will descend into new depths of foolishness.

Think again of the fourteen-year-old girl. If we apply biblical wisdom, we attempt to examine not just her situation but the way we see her. Wisdom examines both what our eyes see and the eyes with which we see it. In the next chapter, you'll meet this girl in a way that might help you engage in this practice.

We don't have to be insulted by the truth that we might be foolish in some areas of life, that we might need to examine our ways and learn to think and act differently. Doing so positions us to receive the best news. This kind of thinking leads us away from sweeping statements of dismissive and sometimes cruel certainty into compassion, empathy, and wisdom—the kind of wisdom that doesn't just acknowledge how far everyone in our society has fallen but also sees where we've slipped.

## Where We've Slipped

Misunderstanding or foolishness is not necessarily a failure, but it is a consequence of the human condition. Remember Peter's response when Jesus wrapped a towel around his waist and began to wash the disciples' feet? Peter was offended and initially refused: "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8). He didn't hesitate to rebuke Jesus, the Son of God, for challenging his self-defined standard of righteousness. Peter was convinced he was in alignment with God, even as he opposed him. He misunderstood what Jesus was both offering him and asking of him.

We are just as susceptible to misunderstanding. Resisting God's ways comes from being fallen human beings, a consequence of living in a broken-but-being-redeemed state. Peter failed initially, but not ultimately. He listened when Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me" (v. 8). Peter's response was immediate and wholehearted: "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" (v. 9).

Again, misunderstanding is not necessarily failure; it is simply human. The failure is in refusing to listen or in denying the misunderstanding. Imagine Peter telling Jesus, "No way, Jesus. I have to stand my ground because you're wrong on this one." We fail when we defy biblical teaching with our own standards of righteousness, when we keep doing the same foolish things while expecting different results, when we pride ourselves on an unwavering commitment to our points of view.

Peter thought he was too humble for the humble Christ to serve him, too right for the Righteous One to wash him. He thought Jesus was wrong, but he really needed to address his own deep wrongness: the conviction that his way of thinking couldn't be wrong.

Many in Christian circles speak of racism as a sin problem—*someone else's sin problem*. We say things like “Racism has always been an issue and will always be until the end of the world.” We act as if racism is immutable, a reality that exists without our consent, and therefore we have little or no obligation to address it. But this view contradicts Jesus' teaching, as we will see.

In writing this book, our primary objective is not to end racism in the world (though that would be incredible) but rather to do our part to end racism in the church—to root it out of church people and church systems so that Christians, Black and white together, can rightly influence our cultural systems instead of harm them. This is a goal all Christians should not only support but also wholeheartedly believe is possible and expected of those who follow Christ. Jesus' goal is a united family of devoted disciples who are devoid of racism, so it shouldn't seem too lofty an endeavor. According to the apostle Peter, “[God's] divine power has granted to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis added). We simply need to access the divine resources we already have. As pastor Thabiti Anyabwile says, “It's time to end the partisan and racist foolishness that blemishes the church.”<sup>2</sup>

Then let's just do it, right? Well, it's not as simple—not as black and white—as we might think.

The United States prides itself on being a nation of courage and action. But it often takes more courage to listen than to take action. Doing rightly begins with believing rightly, which leads to speaking rightly. Right doing naturally follows right believing and right speaking. So the order is right thinking, right speaking, right doing. No other sequence can work, which is why Scripture is replete with examples. Moses had to adjust his self-condemned thinking

when God called him. Bold words to Pharaoh eventually followed, as did a lot of action—from both Moses and God (Exodus 3; 6–12). Zacchaeus thought differently about his thieving lifestyle as a tax collector and spoke words of repentance, which were followed by the action of repaying with extreme interest those he had cheated (Luke 19:1–10). Rinse. Repeat.

We bypass this sequence when we rush headlong into “Just tell me what you want me to do about it.” The danger is that we end up exercising a form of alternative political correctness (though we rail against political correctness) when we say or do things for the sake of social boundaries or appearances (such as believing that systemic racism is a hoax or ranting about being called racists), rather than out of changed hearts, minds, or systems. At worst, it is a cursory nod to civility while civilization burns to the ground.

Our nation has already tried this approach without success. Now we fight over the terms we use more than we fight against racism itself. Instead of cycling through right believing, speaking, and doing, ours is an endless cycle of attacks—attacks on social media, attacks from church pulpits, attacks on news outlets, attacks between political parties, and attacks when civil unrest erupts. It’s time to stop chalking racial issues up to semantics or the actions of the evil right or evil left. As followers of Christ who affirm that all people are created in God’s image, we do not have the option of treating others as subhuman or holding anyone in contempt. There is no place for the kind of thinking that says, “Either get on board with *our* way of thinking or get out of *our* country—or *our* churches.”

Too many of us have spent our lives believing that positive legal changes and a general decrease in racial slurs or racist jokes means that racism is largely dead and buried. But there are aspects of racism we’ve not been burying so much as planting. Racism has continued

to grow in unseen places for some of us, and in more visible places for many others.

An old African proverb says, “Look not where you fell but where you slipped.” We can’t address a wound or problem without examining its causes and ongoing contributing factors. Yelling about where we’ve fallen is easy, but looking where we’ve slipped takes humility, courage, and patience. It’s time to look where we’ve slipped in the past and where we are still slipping today. We need to deal with the ideological and historical root systems of injustice, bitterness, ignorance, and stubbornness over which we continue to trip. We must seek to understand before we seek to be understood. And we must do so with humility so we can see our role in the bigger story of racism in the United States without being insulted by the idea that we have a role in it.

We cannot receive from Jesus what we do not think we need. It’s time to examine our individual and collective needs.

## **“Black Lives Matter” and Social Justice**

Many of us are unable to begin the process of self-examination because we’re hung up on hot-button words or phrases. Politics, the media, and churches are rife with battles over phrases like “Black lives matter” and “social justice.” It may help to briefly address these terms here.

Some see “Black lives matter” as an expression of truth needed to help us move past the disproportionate level of violence committed against Black Americans, while others see it as the dark epicenter of the liberal agenda—the first of many toppling dominoes that will lead us into a socialistic society of dystopian chaos. If you have concerns about the phrase “Black lives matter,” you may wonder

how we, the authors of this book, interpret it and whether we are aligned with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

To be clear, “Black lives matter” began as a hashtag after the tragic death of Trayvon Martin in 2012 and the subsequent jury acquittal of the man who shot him, George Zimmerman. It developed into something much bigger. The movement is hard to define, but the phrase is part of it, as is the official BLM organization and its networks that have arisen since the phrase was conceived.

While we do not fully support the Black Lives Matter organization or its political ideologies and objectives, we do affirm the truth of the statement “Black lives matter.” Some Christians support BLM’s positive attempts to raise awareness about racism, but the phrase is a sticking point for many conservatives and Christians despite the fact that respected leaders and organizations also affirm this expression as both true and worthy of repeating as a sign of empathy and openheartedness on the path to ending racism. Denominations that have publicly supported the truth of the statement include the Southern Baptist Convention,<sup>3</sup> Presbyterian Church (USA),<sup>4</sup> Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ,<sup>5</sup> United Methodist Church,<sup>6</sup> and many more.

Ironically, almost every major white denomination mentioned either originated in response to the issue of slavery or experienced a major split over it. Southern Baptists were called Southern not just because they lived in the South but because they broke away from other Baptists who opposed slavery. This blatant racism within our nation’s church history tragically mirrors the racism we will later explore in our American history. The church should have been a prophetic voice challenging slavery and racism, but instead it often was complicit and remains so today, mixing racism and nationalism with the gospel, even though they are incompatible with it.

Most of these denominations have publicly repented of their racist beginnings, something to remember when we discuss whether repentance is only for individuals. Even so, these histories still affect the demographics of churches in America, which remain largely segregated and divided over issues of race.

Black lives should matter as much as any other lives, but in this country, many Black people have experienced humiliations and violence that reveal otherwise. To affirm that Black lives matter does not mean we are critical race theorists, liberals, socialists, Marxists, social Marxists, or the lighters of virtue-signaling fires. We believe that both Black and white people are capable of committing crimes, that not all police are bad apples or brutal racists, and that the destruction of property and the harming of innocent life, of any color, are wrong.

We just don't believe that these things should be used as excuses to stop listening or addressing racism, especially as it affects the church. This leads us to another phrase that is often misapplied to this conversation: "social justice." It is all too common for anyone concerned about our nation's history on racism, racial inequities, or the concept of systemic racism to be labeled a "social justice warrior" or "social justician." To be clear, in Christian circles, these are not compliments.

We agree with pastor and New Testament professor Esau McCaulley, who said, "People keep warning us about the potential dangers of pursuing social justice while ignoring the absolute havoc the opposition to justice and ongoing racism has *already wreaked* on the unity, mission, and theological coherence of the church."<sup>7</sup> McCaulley addressed what we aim to explore in great detail: what in theology and history we are choosing to see and what we are choosing to ignore.

Modern discourse weaponizes hot-button terms and directs them toward an opponent, thus canceling their value in the eyes of anyone who might be tempted to listen to more than one side. Many Christians and conservatives see no need to listen to anyone who has been labeled a liberal, a social justice warrior, a critical race theorist (someone espousing CRT), and other pejorative terms. Attorney Justin Giboney, president of the AND Campaign, said, “Do you know what’s more effective than creating statements condemning critical race theory? Actually dismantling racism so CRT is obsolete. Evangelicals still can’t see that their lack of credibility on racial justice lends credence to the things they condemn.”<sup>8</sup>

Giboney’s insight reveals the tragic state of much of our thinking and discourse today. By directing our energies only against *anything* opposed to our viewpoints, we have little energy left to direct toward *something* of gospel substance, which renders us effective at *nothing* of value. We end up living in an either-or mindset in which only one conclusion can be correct and all others are utterly wrong. There is no room for nuance here. Real life doesn’t work this way, but our modern conversations and ideologies most certainly do.

Many of us have become so reactive that we refuse to even hear a story or viewpoint other than those that affirm our ideological tribes or personal points of view. When we do this, we ignore not just one problem but two, and the one between our ears is the greater.

### Changes in History, Hearts, or Systems?

Just as there may be hot-button phrases we need to hurdle to reach deeper understanding and more fruitful conversations on race, there are hot-button concepts that can hinder the right kind of thinking.

We will preview two of them here and expand on them in later chapters: (1) disputed versions of history, and (2) whether racism is a heart issue or a systems issue.

### *A Glimpse into Rewriting History*

Conversations about race inflame many white conservatives because they are being told that someone is trying to rewrite history. For those who love this country and celebrate its founding, this can be especially insulting. But if our minds are open to gospel-driven change, we will be able to explore how our viewpoints may unknowingly be informed by errant historical narratives, especially concerning racism.

One such example is the Lost Cause, named after a book written in 1866, which sparked an ideological movement that has persisted for more than a century and a half. It was an effort to recast the Civil War narrative by portraying the Confederate cause as a just and noble one. In the aftermath of the war, Lost Cause proponents claimed that the secession of the Southern states wasn't about slavery but about protecting their way of life, including their Christian values.

The Lost Cause deified Southern military leaders such as Robert E. Lee and Nathan Bedford Forrest while characterizing Ulysses S. Grant as a hapless drunk and battlefield butcher. In truth, Grant, considered the premier military strategist of his time, was a surprisingly radical voice for racial equality as a two-term president during the Reconstruction era.

Today we lack understanding of the complex narrative regarding the Civil War and slavery that has informed modern history and the church, as well as recent events. Emerging from this limited view is a narrative that sums up slavery and Reconstruction in succinct, sanitized ways, blurring many of the facts about racism, discrimination, and the atrocities that set the foundation for race relations

in America today. The events of the past are still haunting us—and it's not a liberal idea to admit it. It is a biblical one—again, Scripture calls us to take pleasure in understanding, not in merely expressing our opinions apart from hearing all sides.

We will engage in a deeper examination of the Lost Cause and other historical perspectives later. But this examination can benefit us only if we open our minds not to new ideas about our history but rather to old ones that ideologies like the Lost Cause have sought to distort and rewrite.

### ***A Glimpse at Heart Transformation versus Systemic Change***

Another hot-button concept that can hinder our thinking is whether racism is a heart issue or a systems issue. Some people believe that a heart change is the only way to end racism, while others believe it requires systemic change. The heart-change view is promoted on social media and proclaimed from pulpits around the nation. It asserts that everyone just needs Jesus, not racial equality—or that if we all get saved, racism will disappear without requiring us to listen, repent, or work together to repair our divisions. Those who embrace this view believe that racism exists only in the heart, and so long as you're a Christian who intends no harm, you can rest assured you're free of racism.

The systemic-change viewpoint asserts that despite legal and social progress toward racial equality, discrimination is still embedded in our judicial, governmental, and social systems in ways we may not realize or intend. For example, Black people experience a disproportionate number of traffic stops and searches, harsh drug-offense sentences, and police brutality.

Understanding the distinctions between these viewpoints, as

well as the various ways *system* is defined, will shape how we read the rest of this book.

The key distinction between the heart-change view and the systemic-change view lies in this simple statement: people have hearts, but systems do not.

Fortunately, we don't have to choose between hearts and systems. Both need to be addressed, just not through the same means. We need hearts to change, but we can't wait for heart change to occur before we address unjust systems. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It may be true that the law [the system] cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless. It . . . cannot make a man love me but it can keep him from lynching me and I think that is pretty important, also."<sup>9</sup>

Some Americans, including Christians, defend our social, governmental, and justice systems as if the systems themselves are not inanimate—as if they have hearts. When the systems they consider sacred are questioned or criticized, they feel compelled to defend America, and even the gospel. Yet, as we'll learn, our country's founders intended our systems of governance to be examined and adjusted when necessary. Great freedom comes from choosing right responses toward people (from the heart) as well as right responses toward our systems (by taking action). But we first need to be clear about the distinction between the two.

Here is how pastor Osheta Moore, author of *Dear White Peacemakers*, described what it means to approach people and systems differently: "I've learned that systems of oppression detrimentally affect the ones who benefit from the oppression as much as the oppressed—in absolutely different ways, of course, but still devastating—and those systems are what I hope we turn our anger and fury towards, not each other. Never each other! But when it comes to those racist systems . . . I want to flip them over and destroy

them like the tables in the temple. I think this is the hard work of the kingdom of God that we're called to in this moment."<sup>10</sup>

Separating systems from people *is* hard work, but it is the right work. The only way we can determine whether we may be ascribing a heart to a system that has none or responding in a heartless manner toward fellow image bearers of God who do have hearts is by examining how we truly think and react. Those who claim that America is too good to have widespread racism may believe they are defending America, but in their emotional responses, they end up defending racist aspects of our history and our systems as if they've forgotten that America is composed of people with hearts. For many conservative Christians, the systems have seemingly become more sacred than the people they are affecting, people who are made in the image of a sacred God. As Giboney attests, "Unwillingness to change systems that have historically disadvantaged your neighbor is conservatism [and certainly Christianity] in fatal error. Canceling all dissenting opinions and all physiological realities that complicate your narrative is progressive madness."<sup>11</sup>

We don't need to tear down our nation or history to address areas of concern within them, just as we don't need to sanctify or deify America's founders, history, or systems to honor them. In a later chapter, we'll explore a historical context for the founders' accomplishments that also acknowledges their grave misdeeds, the gravest of all being the enslavement and legalized abuse of Black Americans. The founders were people, and like all people, they were complex—not wholly good or bad. Binary, polarized thinking about the founders or anything else inevitably leads to extreme conclusions, but we don't have to stay there—in fact, staying there does more damage than we might think.

We don't want anyone to stop loving this nation, but we do want to cast a clear vision for what loving this nation *well*, according to the

gospel, really entails. Historically and biblically, mixing nationalism with faith is dangerous, producing consequences we often fail to recognize because we're too caught up in what feels like patriotism—even if the original patriots would have objected to how we define it.

If discovering that America was and remains flawed shakes the foundation of our Christian faith, then we need to examine our foundation. For Christians, our allegiance is to God, who calls us to something infinitely higher than our nation or its founders. As preacher Charles Spurgeon pointed out, “Those hopes will surely fall to the ground which are built upon men who so soon lie under ground.”<sup>12</sup>

For Christians, returning to a gospel lens, or a clearer understanding of the gospel, makes it easier to denounce racism in all its forms, beginning with ourselves and our own communities of faith. We can learn to hold multiple values and viewpoints in tension, no longer living as if one position obliterates the value of another. We can honor soldiers and law enforcement officers while also seeing the need for changing the systems within which they serve—systems created in moments of history when racial bias was not only accepted but was also enforced by these systems.

This way of thinking isn't just political; it is thoroughly Christian. When it comes to the choice of whether or not to engage the issue of racism, our perspective aligns with that of pastor and author Timothy Keller, who wrote, “Christians cannot pretend they can transcend politics and simply ‘preach the Gospel.’ Those who avoid all political discussions and engagement are essentially casting a vote for the social status quo. American churches in the early nineteenth century that did not speak out against slavery because that was what we would now call ‘getting political’ were actually supporting slavery by doing so. To not be political is to be political.”<sup>13</sup>

Have you noticed how some of us complain that our ministers

are “getting political” only when something insults our own political viewpoints? Otherwise, what they’re saying is just plain common sense, right? Such logic has even led some churches to justify hosting political rallies, though they still cry foul when those with differing viewpoints get political in church.

The late comedian George Carlin pointed out that when you’re the one driving, “anyone going slower than you is an idiot . . . and anyone going faster than you is a maniac.”<sup>14</sup> Bias is something we generally cannot detect in ourselves. We need outside help to see it. Like the apostle Peter, who insisted that Jesus shouldn’t wash his feet, we all too easily become our own standard of righteousness. With racism or any other issue, we tend to think everyone else on the road is failing to meet the standard we deem correct.

Racism is something else we tend to recognize only in others. It’s often difficult to recognize racist elements in our own ways of thinking. Statements like these make some white people feel uncomfortable, as if we are insinuating that they are, in fact, racist. The fear or anger (insult) of being labeled a racist keeps many from engaging in healthy conversations about race—as if doing so means admitting they’re racists. We want to be clear that we are not calling you a racist. We repeat: we are *not* calling you a racist. (If you are using a highlighter, go ahead and use up half the marker here.)

If it feels as if everything you hear is indicting you as a racist, you may be caught in the “racism exists only in a person’s heart” point of view, which explains why you might feel insulted. We can help you think outside your heart a bit because you may not be dealing with the actual nature of the problem, only how it affects you—specifically, your perceived guilt or innocence. The problem of racism is bigger than any one of us, whether we have contributed to it knowingly or unknowingly.

Author and pastor John Onwuchekwa points out that “when it comes to repairing past injustices, the chasm is *huge* and no one long jumps across. No single person, action, or institution can do all that needs to be done. A series of small successive steps are needed. However, let’s never confuse *first steps* with *half measures*. First steps seek to address the very nature of the problem. . . . Half-measures often propose solutions that don’t address the nature of the original problem. Rather, they provide a generous gesture to solve *a* problem (often a legitimate one), but not *the* problem.”<sup>15</sup>

In the follow chapters, we aim to address not only the problem of racism but also the nature of the bigger problem—the way we view the gospel. To do that, we need to explore the gospel with new lenses, as well as our shared history that, like it or not, has brought us all to this place. As two friends of different races, we each had a difficult journey before we found healthier spaces in which to think, talk, and lead on matters of racism. At times we felt insulted for different reasons, mainly because we each have deeply held emotional viewpoints based on our own histories, perceptions, and experiences. But we learned that by doing our individual parts to address systemic racism, we’re humbly empowered to move forward together. When we began being honest about our viewpoints and bringing them into alignment with the gospel, healthier changes began to happen in our lives.

In the next two chapters, we’ll talk about how each of us has approached racial issues and handled the pitfalls we’ve faced. Instead of starting off with one of our conversations, we’ll dive into our stories, sharing our hearts, our values, and our invitation to you to examine your life and history without insult or insecurity.

When we see ourselves as we really are, we can name the problems and face them together. What follows will be incredible.



# NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE

AN INVITATION TO HONEST  
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE AND FAITH

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REGGIE DABBS AND JOHN DRIVER

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