

NEXT
LEADERSHIP NETWORK

DERWIN L. GRAY

THE

HD
HIGH-DEFINITION

LEADER

Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World

Foreword by Matt Chandler



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

PRAISE FOR *THE HIGH-DEFINITION LEADER*

Pastors listen to pastors who do pastoring well, and churches ought to listen to churches that do church well. Theory sounds better on paper more often than it works, but churches that have learned how to be the church in a fast-changing America deserve our ear. Transformation Church in Charlotte and their courageous leader, Derwin Gray, deserve our ear for one reason: they are mapping the path that leads to the multiethnic church, to a high-definition vision of what the church must become in an America increasingly filled with racial tension. Both Derwin's story and Transformation Church's are visions of a new kind of church. No vision is more needed in the United States of America because if our churches don't become multiethnic the word united at the federal level will be mocked by the word *divided* in the churches. Derwin Gray has a better idea: let local churches lead by becoming united churches as a prophetic voice for a more united nation.

—SCOT MCKNIGHT, JULIUS R. MANTEY
PROFESSOR IN NEW TESTAMENT, NORTHERN
SEMINARY

Derwin Gray is one of the leaders of an emerging army of men and women who are taking courageous steps of faith to lead, live out, and model the visible unity of the body of Christ. Anchored in God's Word, *The High-Definition Leader* is a compelling, prophetic call to be and look like God's church. Derwin writes not from mere observation and analysis but from engaging credibility. The church he leads is a portrait of the power of the gospel to make us one. Thank you, Derwin, for equipping us and calling us to go beyond a "convenient success" to giving ourselves to God's holy, noble vision for his church.

—DR. CRAWFORD W. LORITTS, JR.,
AUTHOR, SPEAKER, RADIO HOST, SR.
PASTOR, FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

Derwin Gray is a provocative preacher, but an even greater visionary. He has seen what the church of tomorrow must be—indeed, what it should have been all along. This is no high-minded book about theory. He has built what he is calling the rest of us to. If we ignore the truths of this book, we do so at our peril.

—J.D. GREER, PH.D., AUTHOR OF *GAINING BY LOSING: WHY THE FUTURE BELONGS TO CHURCHES THAT SEND AND JESUS, CONTINUED . . . WHY THE SPIRIT INSIDE YOU IS BETTER THAN JESUS BESIDE YOU*

This book spoke to my soul. Theologically robust. Prophetic. Passionate. *The High-Definition Leader* will be must-read material for the young leaders I train who have the Christ-exalting, redemptive impatience to lead multiethnic churches.

—BRYAN LORITTS, PRESIDENT OF THE KAINOS MOVEMENT, AUTHOR OF *RIGHT COLOR/WRONG CULTURE*

Building and being a part of a church on earth that looks and worships like the Church in heaven is a consuming passion of mine. It is also a consuming passion of my friend Derwin Gray. This book fleshes out that passion in a way that will bless, convict, instruct, and motivate. I don't think you can remain the same after reading it! So jump in and prepare to be transformed for the glory of God and the good of others.

—DANIEL L. AKIN, PRESIDENT OF SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

We live in a world of increasing complexity and division. In *The High-Definition Leader* Derwin Gray calls the church and its leaders to a new level of conviction and a new type of leadership. This book challenges convention and challenges the reader to abandon the status quo and embrace a glorious picture of ethnic unity that is made possible only in Christ. This book is a must read.

—ED STETZER, WWW.EDSTETZER.COM

Every so often a book comes around that changes the course of the Church by merging strong, theological principles, intelligent thought, and authentic Christ-like compassion. Gray's *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World* is that book for the modern-day believer, leader, and pastor. Written to invoke the passion and DNA of the early church in the heart of those who forge ahead with the mission of grace and faith today, this book will birth a new zeal in us to build a Church that reflects the corridors of heaven. Get ready for a book that will magnify His call *in* you and *through* you!

—SERGIO DE LA MORA, LEAD PASTOR,
CORNERSTONE CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO,
AUTHOR, *THE HEART REVOLUTION*

More than a half-century has passed since Martin Luther King Jr. called 11:00 a.m. on Sunday ‘the most segregated hour in this nation,’ and his words are still true. For shame. A racially segregated church not only fails to reflect the increasingly multiethnic make-up of America, but it also fails to live up to the biblical vision of what God’s kingdom. Where is this community comprised of “every nation and tribe and people and language” that the Apostle John spoke about? But despair not, dear readers. In a moment where the church lags painfully behind the progress of society, Derwin Grey offers a clarion call for a revolution in our ranks. *The High-Definition Leader* arrives at the right moment and comes at you like a rocket—with superb precision and paradigm-exploding power. Skip it at your peril.

—JONATHAN MERRITT, AUTHOR OF *JESUS IS BETTER THAN YOU IMAGINED*; SENIOR
COLUMNIST FOR RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

In a time when too many pastors and too many churches are content to minister among those who look like them, we need leaders with gospel courage and a biblical insight to call us out of monochromatic apathy. Derwin Gray is the right voice at the right time. Read *The High-Definition Leader* and be energized to see the kingdom of Christ in all its vivid diversity once again.

—DR. RUSSELL MOORE, PRESIDENT OF
ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

In a time when our country is marked by great diversity and great division, we need pastors who can be “high-definition leaders” as Derwin Gray calls them. These leaders are passionate about reaching across cultures and bringing reconciliation and healing. What a timely book.

—GREG SURRETT, FOUNDING PASTOR
SEACOAST CHURCH

Leadership, true leadership that knows the times, has a vision of where we are to go, and guides a people there, is in severe short supply. Pastor Derwin Grey is a proven leader, and he outlines in fascinating detail how to be a godly leader in a multicolored, complex world. A fascinating and vitally important book that is exactly right for the times.

—MICHAEL EMERSON, PROFESSOR AND
AUTHOR, *DIVIDED BY FAITH*

The High-Definition Leader is a brilliant prophetic prescription for the church in today’s America. Gray exposes the elephant in the room: our churches aren’t diverse in a nation that is. He then tackles the all-important question of how to break the trend and lay hold of the reconciliation God so desires for his church.

—ALBERT TATE, LEAD PASTOR,
FELLOWSHIP MONROVIA

Pastor Derwin leads with conviction because he preaches what he practices. His words are timely and must be considered if we as the Body of Christ want to steward well the gospel message entrusted to us by God. If there’s anything our churches and nation are in dire need of today, it’s more *High-Definition Leaders!*

—D.A. HORTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF REACHLIFE MINISTRIES, NONPROFIT
MINISTRY OF REACH RECORDS AND
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR URBAN
STUDENT MISSIONS AT NAMB

I relish the opportunity to learn leadership lessons that are humble and sustain my faith. My friend Derwin Gray has written such a book. Instead of the church running for the hills when facing adversity, we would do well to learn from our African-American brothers and sisters. This book is such a gift! The leadership lessons in this book are game-changers for the church. Buy yourself a copy. Then get copies for every church leader you know.

—GABE LYONS, FOUNDER OF Q & AUTHOR
OF *THE NEXT CHRISTIANS*

How is it that radios have moved from flat-frequencies to surround-sound, and television has catapulted from black-and-white to Technicolor, but the church still wrestles with multi-frequency and high-definition leadership? In *The High-Definition Leader* my friend Derwin Gray challenges us to catch what has always been the gospel intention—leadership that bridges divides, celebrates difference, and calls us higher.

—REV. DR. GABRIEL SALGUERO,
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL LATINO EVANGELISM
COALITION; PASTOR, LAMB'S CHURCH

Let's be honest. We are living in very turbulent times filled with increasing racial tension and division. Fear, rather than love, is the norm. And yet, in this landscape, the Church often appears silent, apathetic, or paralyzed. I often hear from other leaders that they don't quite know how to navigate this fast-changing and complex world. In *The High-Definition Leader*, Derwin Gray has offered leaders and the larger church an important book and resource. *The High-Definition Leader* is biblical, theological, personal, and highly practical. We're reminded that we must engage this journey because the gospel invites us to be agents, ministers, and leaders of reconciliation.

REV. EUGENE CHO
SENIOR PASTOR, QUEST CHURCH
AUTHOR OF *OVERRATED: ARE WE MORE IN
LOVE WITH THE IDEA OF CHANGING THE WORLD
THAN ACTUALLY CHANGING THE WORLD?*

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To my mother, Connie Gray. As a forty-four-year-old man, who can now see people through the lens of God's grace, I'm thankful that my sixteen-year-old mother chose to let me live and not to abort me, even though she was under pressure by her school's nurse to do so. Thank you, my mom. Hey, Mom, I bet you never imagined your little boy with a big Afro would grow up to play professional football, pastor a church, write books, or be working on his doctorate. You gave me a chance at life. I will be forever grateful. I love you.

To the beautiful people called Transformation Church. Five years ago Transformation Church was a vision on a piece of paper, but by God's grace that vision became a dynamic, powerful, living reality through your multicolored lives. "Transformers," your love for Jesus and people inspire me. Thank you for the honor of serving you on this great adventure. These words of the apostle reflect you: "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:15–16, niv).

About Leadership Network®

Leadership Network fosters innovation movements that activate the church to greater impact. We help shape the conversations and practices of pacesetter churches in North America and around the world. The Leadership Network mind-set identifies church leaders with forward-thinking ideas—and helps them to catalyze those ideas resulting in movements that shape the church.

Together with HarperCollins Christian Publishing, the biggest name in Christian books, the NEXT imprint of Leadership Network moves ideas to implementation for leaders to take their ideas to form, substance, and reality. Placed in the hands of other church leaders, that reality begins spreading from one leader to the next . . . and to the next . . . and to the next, where that idea begins to flourish into a full-grown movement that creates a real, tangible impact in the world around it.

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Foreword

Revelation 7:9–10 is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. It reads in the ESV this way: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” This text has become one that I quote often and ponder on consistently. We’re not there yet, but we are closer than when you first picked up this book. This is really going to happen. Men and women from every background, ethnicity, and language imaginable will be gathered together to worship and praise our Savior. As a man who reverse engineers to get things done, this image is burned into my imagination as something I am to think on, pray for, and work toward now. I am convinced the multiethnic church has been purchased by Christ on the cross and is God’s heart for his people. It’s not the gospel and should never be elevated to that level, but it is a serious implication and benefit of the gospel . . . but how do we get there?

The truth is I pastor a church in the middle of a predominantly white part of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Our elders grew convicted that we had not given ourselves over to pursue racial reconciliation

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and work toward seeing The Village look more like Revelation 7 and less like a bleached-out Mayberry in a snow storm with a couple of brown dots. For the last five to seven years, we have sought to understand theologically, philosophically, and practically what it will look like to make becoming a “multiethnic, Christ-centered, gospel-shaped church” and have given ourselves over to that prayerful and difficult pursuit. The fruit has been stunning, and we are a more mature, more passionate, more worshipful church because of it.

I am more grateful that I can express for my brother and friend Derwin Gray. A deep zeal for Jesus can be felt just hanging around him. *The High-Definition Leader* is a real gift to anyone who earnestly desires to lead effectively in our world that is growing increasingly more diverse. *The High-Definition Leader* avoids all the pitfalls that can be present in books on multiethnic ministry. Derwin writes biblically, he stays tethered to the Scriptures, captures the nuances of the gospel brilliantly, and is fearless about the doctrines that drive this issue. He faithfully shows us that multiethnic ministry is God’s plan from the beginning. Many books on this subject stop there. They have their place, and I am grateful for how they shaped my understanding on this issue but *The High-Definition Leader* doesn’t stop there. This isn’t just a theological idea book, but one rooted richly in doctrine that moves us into best practices. If you’re like I am, I was compelled by the theological truth long before I knew what to do with them. Derwin dances between the theological, philosophical, and practical implications better than anyone else I have read. That’s why I’m confident that wherever you find yourself on the journey toward a more multiethnic church, this book will serve you.

Because you are reading this, I am hopefully praying that you

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are a part of a new generation of “courageous pioneers” like those Derwin reminds us of in the church at Antioch. This journey won’t be an easy one. There is much hurt, skepticism, and unresolved anger and pain that still affects how we view each other. You’ll need to be fearless, rooted in the gospel, zealous for the fame of Jesus, and willing to lead us forward. Before Derwin takes over, take a second and read Revelation 7 again: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

Can you imagine it? We *will* get there! God always accomplishes what he purposes.

Matt Chandler

Lead Pastor, The Village Church

President, Acts 29 Church Planting Network

Acknowledgments

I wrote *The High-Definition Leader* in seven weeks in the midst of my doctoral studies, a capital campaign at Transformation Church, and my normal pastoral and family duties. The only way this could have happened is through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. I want to acknowledge and thank God the Papa, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is only by God's grace that you are holding this book in your hands.

I want to thank my best friend, Vicki, my wife and ministry partner; simply put, Vicki is a superhero. She is not only an epic mom, she's an awesome church planter and leader.

I want to thank Angela. She was crazy enough to join Vicki and me as the initial church planting team of Transformation Church in 2009. Ang, you are the best!

To my daughter and son, you two have taught me how to love unconditionally. Thank you.

Pastor Paul and Pastor Tim, thank you for being my friends and fellow elder-pastors of Transformation Church. Your love, wisdom, and humility have made me a better man and Transformation Church a beautiful multiethnic, Jesus-saturated church.

I also want to thank all the staff of Transformation Church. You all live out our motto, "Team work makes the dream work." This book is a part of that dream.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Esther, thanks for being my friend and agent, you're awesome.

Whitney, I appreciate your behind-the-scenes work.

Chris, this the third book you've edited for me. You're not only a superb editor, but I have the honor being your pastor. I've baptized one of your sons, and your husband makes me fabulous roasted almonds!

Editorial team at Thomas Nelson, thank you.

I want to thank Kristy and Judy, my former executive assistants. You guys kept me on point.

Finally, I want to thank you, the reader. In the pages that follow, you will be called to the epic work of building Jesus-focused, gospel-shaped, multiethnic local churches. It will cost you everything. But what Jesus restores to you and creates through you will be worth it.

Derwin
Charlotte, North Carolina

High-Definition Leadership in a Multicolored World

*He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating
in himself one new people from the two groups.
Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups
to God by means of his death on the cross, and our
hostility toward each other was put to death.*

—EPHESIANS 2:15–16, NLT

The Tsunami Is on Its Way

Times are changing. You can feel it. You can sense something in the air. America is starting to look and feel a whole lot different. For the first time in the country's history, ethnic and racial minorities “are projected to make up the majority of students attending American public schools this fall, ending the white-majority population that has existed from the beginnings of the public education system.”¹

In 1960, the population of the United States was 85 percent white; by 2060, it will be only 43 percent.² The face of America is no longer just black and white, like those old televisions from back in the day. America is in high definition now, filled with different colored people. America is now a beautiful mosaic that includes Asian and Latino brothers and sisters.

Since 1965, forty million immigrants have arrived in the United States, “about half of them Hispanics and nearly three-in-ten Asians.”³ In addition, “Intermarriage is playing a big role in changing some of our views of ethnicity.”⁴ I know this to be true from personal experience; my wife is a white girl from rural Montana, and I’m a black guy from urban San Antonio, Texas. We have two stunningly beautiful children. When our children are asked to fill out an ethnicity questionnaire, they write, “We are first children of God who happen to have a black father and a white mother.”

Not in Mayberry Anymore

What do all of these statistics mean? They mean we no longer live in a black or white America. We live in a colorful, high-definition America. It means we are not in Mayberry anymore. It means that the ethnic diversity of New York City, Los Angeles, and Houston is coming to a neighborhood near you much sooner than you think. Pastor, are you and your church ready to embrace this new community, or will you futilely attempt to maintain a homogeneous ministry in a multicolored world? The church needs new kinds of leaders, cross-cultural leaders who can guide the church into a multicolored America and world. Are you that leader? For the sake of the gospel and Jesus’ church and glory, I sure hope you are this leader. Or at least desire to be this kind of leader.

Just Before a Tsunami

Before a tsunami hits land, the water level drops as water pulls away from the shore, leaving a wide chasm and exposing the seabed. Denominational leaders, pastors, church planters, and elders of homogeneous churches, I want you to know that the seas of change have pulled back from the beach and the tsunami is coming fast. The church needs a new kind of leader who can see this sea change coming and prepare the church and God's people for it. Don't let the tsunami crush Jesus' church.

Blackberry Churches in an Android/iPhone World

Blackberry used to be synonymous with the word *smartphone*. From 2000 to 2007, Blackberry phones were considered cool and were nicknamed "Crackberries" because of their addictive nature. Celebrities and Fortune 500 leaders clamored to own one.

But times changed quickly for Blackberry. In 2011, this once innovative global company had more than 17,500 employees; in 2014 they were down to 7,000.⁵ What happened? How did Blackberry go from dominating the smartphone world to being a relic of the past? Google and Apple happened. Blackberry was blinded by its past success and was out-innovated by Google and Apple. As happened with the typewriter and the VCR, the Blackberry was left behind because the company did not adapt to changes in demand and technology happening around them.

We are no longer in a black or white America. We are in a multi-colored, high-definition America. Therefore, we need cross-cultural

leaders who act as ambassadors of love, reconciliation, and unity across ethnic and generational lines. I believe the fastest growing, most innovative, community-transforming local churches in the future of America will be multiethnic, Christ-centered, gospel-shaped churches.

Won't Diversity Just Happen?

Just because America is becoming more ethnically diverse doesn't mean that local churches magically will become ethnically diverse along with it. As humans, we tend to be tribal and ethnocentric. We like being with our kind. Our kind is like us, and it's easier to love someone who is like us.

One of my great concerns is that we will find ourselves in a multi-colored environment throughout the workweek, yet worship in monocolored, monoclass churches on the weekend. Perhaps you're thinking, *What's wrong with that?* That's a fair question. My prayer is that as you read this chapter and the chapters that follow, your heart would be captured by God's dream of filling America and planet Earth with churches that reflect the ethnic diversity, unity, love, and reconciliation that we will find in the new heaven and the new earth. God desires the church of today to be a picture of that great eternal tomorrow.

Blinded by Success and Imitation

Often the leaders of homogeneous local churches are blinded by success. A homogeneous church is a church where 80 percent or more of the individuals are of the same ethnicity. Often what we view as

ministry success blinds us to God's perspective of successful ministry. Ministry success is an opiate that can take you so high you won't even see the storm of epic change that has *already* arrived. I believe that God, in his providence, has seen fit to raise up leaders who will plant and build multicolored local churches that will challenge the status quo and disrupt the norm. I believe these new high-definition leaders are measuring successful ministry by a different standard.

We Reproduce Who We Are

As leaders, conference speakers serve as examples and models for others to learn from and emulate. Overwhelmingly, I began to realize I was about the only African American pastor–church planter at the conferences at which I spoke and the only pastor–church planter who had planted a multiethnic, gospel-driven, missional local church. I chose to stop going to conferences as an attendee for several years and only went when invited to speak. I felt as though I was hearing the same stuff from different leaders that produced the same result: homogeneous, middle-class, predominately white churches. In this context, I would share with pastor friends, “Surely my brothers realize America is so much more than the white, suburban, middle-class church? Surely my brothers realize that nonwhite people also live in the suburbs? Surely my brothers realize that performing Asian skits was offensive to our Asian brothers and sisters in the audience who had to endure a white guy poorly acting Asian?”

Don't get me wrong. I've learned a lot at conferences and I'm so appreciative of the support system they offer. I am who I am today because I stand on the shoulders of others. However, thousands and thousands of pastors and church planters in America weekly are

learning and imitating others like themselves who lead homogenized churches, whether black, white, Asian, or Latino. Leaders learning from homogeneous church leaders, therefore, are learning to do ministry and lead churches in a way that perpetuates the homogeneity of the local church. In a multiethnic America, we need a new kind of pastor-leader who desires to be an agent of reconciliation and to build multiethnic local churches because reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel.

Reconciliation at the Heart of Paul's Ministry

When the bride of Christ—his blood-bought, grace-covered, missional ambassadors of reconciliation—remains homogeneous in Christian ghettos, we dishonor King Jesus and the unsearchable riches of his gospel. Sociologist Michael Emerson has found that homogeneous local churches reproduce inequality, encourage oppression, strengthen racial division, and heighten political separation.⁶ I also believe that when ethnic diversity is possible and local churches remain homogeneous, the church loses credibility. How can we say Jesus loves everyone when our churches choose to create ministry models that ensure they will remain homogeneous? How can we be obey Jesus' instruction that his people become one when we remain segregated? (See John 17:21–23.) Our unity is a witness to the fact that God the Father sent Jesus to rescue the world and that God the Father loves us the way he loved Jesus.

Homogeneous local churches can perpetuate sins like racism. When you are only around your tribe or your own kind, you don't have to interact with other ethnicities, so your potential racist attitudes

go unchallenged. Homogeneous local churches can perpetuate the sin of classism and inequality. When we choose to be with people of our socioeconomic tribe, we can become callous and dismissive of the plight of others. Homogeneous local churches can perpetuate the sin of systemic injustice. If we know only people like ourselves, our hearts shrink and concerns for others and their struggles never teach us to carry one another's burdens. Homogeneous local churches can perpetuate the sin of economic injustice. We must shift from "Let's help the poor" to "Let's be among the poor and do life with the poor." There is a great opportunity for mutual and beneficial exchanges to take place. When we stay segregated and separated, we find ourselves as Christians living in different worlds even though we may be right next door to one another.

On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old black teenager was shot and killed by a white police officer named Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of Saint Louis. Before Michael Brown encountered Officer Wilson, he had robbed a convenience store and was walking down the middle of the street. On November 24, 2014, a grand jury decided not to indict the police officer for Brown's death. Riots ensued across America. Black evangelicals and white evangelicals interpreted this situation very differently. For black Americans, the horror of black men being lynched came to mind. Anger, fear, and sadness have a context.⁷ And for black Americans that context is the oppression and pain of slavery and injustice that their people have experienced in America for four hundred years. We will continue to interpret events like the Michael Brown shooting very differently as long as we stay segregated in the tribal worlds of black churches and white churches.

What if black and white evangelicals (and Asian and Latino for that matter) were members of multiethnic churches, living together in community? If this Christ-exalting life were to become our reality, we could address racism, oppression, and injustice in a unified voice of love. What if evangelicals of all ethnicities shared life with one another in a local church community and heard each other's stories and walked in each other's shoes? If this Christ-exalting life were to become our reality, I believe our suspicions and mistrust would be abandoned and replaced with love for one another. The church could actually speak with credibility about the sad events of the Michael Brown shooting if we were living examples of ethnic and class reconciliation.

Western Individualist Gospel

Our Western, American individualist gospel is obsessed with sending people to heaven when they die, but Jesus and the apostle Paul were more interested in building a church that would bring heaven to earth through redeemed people. Of course we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:8), and I'm grateful for this eternal assurance; however, the gospel is an announcement that there is a King named Jesus who established a kingdom through a multicolored, regenerated people called the church, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to embody heaven on earth as a foretaste of that which is to come on that great day (see Revelation 5:9–12). This means that as much as we look forward to heaven, there is important, rewarding work to do here on earth. Preeminent New Testament scholar Scot McKnight said this about the local church: "God's desire is for us to experience multiethnic

fellowship now in the local church as it will be for eternity. God's heart is total reconciliation."⁸

One of the most beautiful aspects of the gift of salvation is reconciliation, which means enemies have become friends. Through the sinless life, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, God made humanity, which was once his enemy (see Romans 5:8–11), his friend. Thus an ethnically diverse, racist, brutal, unjust, fearful oppressive humanity can be family and friends with one another as a heavenly community on earth.

As I wrote this book, I stood on the shoulders of the leaders who knew that the heart of the gospel is reconciliation. God reconciles humanity to himself and humanity to humanity. I'm thankful to those who have gone before, laboring to see multicolored local churches of love and reconciliation become a reality in America.

I Heard About a Church

In the early 2000s, as God was shaping and molding me, I shared my ideas and dreams of church that would look like heaven and how I could be a living witness to God's grace and human flourishing. Some friends told me about a multiethnic church in Redmond, Washington, pastored by a former NFL player, Ken "Hutch" Hutcherson. Two things in their description immediately grabbed my attention: the possibility of a church that looked like heaven and the fact that it was led by a former NFL player. Several years passed before I actually met Hutch.

In 2008, I was asked to preach at the Antioch Bible Church's men's retreat. This turned out to be a life-defining moment for me. As I stood in the pulpit to proclaim the gospel to these men, I looked into the eyes of multiethnic men, and their communal witness showed me

the kind of community the gospel can create. Antioch Bible Church is a heavenly looking community on earth, and it was founded and planted by a reformed racist.

Hutch grew up in Alabama. He hated white people and believed they hated him. He experienced racism and was racist toward white people. The only one who could deal with his racist, hated-filled heart was the one who had a grace-filled, love-filled heart: Jesus. During Hutch's senior year in high school, Jesus tackled him and transformed him. And Jesus took a former racist and planted a church that was 65 percent white and 35 percent black: Asian, Hispanics, and bi-ethnic. Hutch said, "And I married one of the whitest women in the world—a German woman—and we have four beautiful chocolate German children!"⁹

At the men's retreat, Hutch and some of the elders prayed over me. They commissioned me to be a multiethnic church planter. I don't think I understood the significance then, but I do now. Hutch has gone on to be with Jesus now, but the impression he left on my life is as strong today as it was when I worshiped that weekend at Antioch Bible Church. As I sat next to Hutch and his wife, my heart was exploding. At Antioch Bible Church, I knew a multiethnic church forged by grace and the blood of Jesus could be planted. I saw it. I experienced it. Thank you, Hutch; you were a mentor and a friend.

Australian New Testament scholar Michael F. Bird wrote: "The gospel is lived out when Christians practice reconciliation among themselves and exemplify it before their neighbors. The Ambassadors for reconciliation have the opportunity to promote peacemaking in communities rife with factions, distrust, and mutual suspicions."¹⁰ Isn't that beautiful? Our world needs more beauty like this coming from our local churches.

Right now, the church in America does not exemplify reconciliation, which is the heartbeat of the gospel and God's longing for humanity. The average church in America is ethnically and socioeconomically segregated; granted, sometimes this is because of demographics, but most of the time it's by choice fueled by *indifference, prejudices, petty preferences, or ignorance of the gospel*. Instead of being fueled by Jesus' heart for reconciliation, we are fueled by the status quo.

Preeminent New Testament scholar N. T. Wright said that the apostle Paul's "aims and intentions can be summarized under the word *katallage*, 'reconciliation.'"¹¹ Paul, the original high-definition leader and champion of multiethnic, Christocentric, missional church planting, wrote these Holy Spirit-inspired words in an ethnically and socioeconomically segregated Greco-Roman world:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)

Pastor, church planter, elder, and Christ-follower, you have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation! This calling is not optional. This calling is not debatable. The only question is, Will you be obedient and accept this divine invitation to walk in your calling as a reconciler? Will you learn how to be a high-definition leader who leads the church into our multicolored world?

Please listen to the apostle Paul's heart. Hear him cry out, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). God, through Paul, has implored us to be ministers of reconciliation just as he implored the Jews and Gentiles in Corinth to be reconciled as one body in local churches! Our vertical reconciliation to God infuses us with the indwelling life of Jesus and the sealing presence of God the Holy Spirit, which empowers us to live in horizontal relationships in the local church with ethnically and socioeconomically different people for the glory of God.

The apostle Paul envisioned and built local churches of reconciliation where ethnocentrism, classism, and sexism were crucified on the bloody cross of Christ and by his resurrection power. "There is neither Jew nor Greek [ethnocentrism], there is neither slave nor free [classism], there is no male and female [sexism], for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Do you feel the weight of this gospel reality?

The Book of Romans

Even the glorious book of Romans is not about our Western arguments about Calvinism, Amyraldism, and Arminianism. The book of Romans is about how the gospel empowers Jews and Gentiles to express God's glory by living in harmony as a diverse community of reconciliation on earth as God's fulfillment of the covenant promise made to Abraham in direct opposition to the brutal first-century Greco-Roman world:

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another [Jews and Gentiles], in accord

with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

*“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”*

And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

And again,

*“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”*

And again Isaiah says,

*“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:5–13)

Pastors, church planters, and Christ-followers, if you care about the future of the church in America, you must care about learning how to partner with the Holy Spirit in creating multicolored, Jesus-exalting, missional congregations that can reach a changing America

and give a foretaste of Jesus' eternal kingdom. If the church in America is not just to survive but to thrive, it must be multiethnic in the twenty-first century.¹²

Reaching Back into the Past

One of the gospel innovations that caused the early church to flourish and experience rapid growth in the first-century world was that the Jesus movement “overwhelmed ethnic barriers” and God birthed a new multicolored ethnicity, called the church.¹³ Paul, the apostle of high-definition leadership, boldly proclaimed God’s heart for reconciliation in the face of violent opposition:

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might *reconcile* us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:14–16, italics mine)

The local churches of 2050 will be the churches of today that reach back to the first century and rediscover the Christ-exalting, gospel-shaped, missional innovation of the early church led by Paul that produced multiethnic local churches. The churches of that time were made up of Jews and Gentiles (Africans, Asians, Greeks, Romans, barbarians, etc.) as well as rich and poor. This diversity shocked and rocked the harsh, segregated Greco-Roman world. These early diverse

congregations displayed a better way to live, love, and be human. The early church was a picture of what was to come for Jesus' blood-bought, Spirit-sealed people:

*And they sang a new song, saying,
“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for
God from every tribe and language and people and
nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our
God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Revelation 5:9–12)

We can do the same. We must do the same.

Diversity Is Everywhere But the Church

Marinate on this sad reality: only 13.7 percent of churches in America are multiethnic.¹⁴ This means that 86.3 percent churches are homogeneous.

And here's more to be sad about: churches are ten times more segregated than the neighborhoods they are in and twenty times more segregated than the nearby schools.¹⁵

Our neighborhoods are ethnically diverse, but the local church, which is supposed to exist as a community of God's reconciliation, is not. Our public schools are ethnically diverse, but the local church, which is supposed to exist as a display of God's love for all people, is not. Our military is multiethnic, but the local church, which exists as a showcase of Jesus' unifying power, is not. Our nightclubs are ethnically diverse, but the local church, which exists as God's new humanity brought into being through life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, is not.

Doesn't this seem hypocritical and beneath the gospel? Doesn't this seem shallow and a mere shadow of the early church?

What We Need

We need multiethnic churches with ethnically diverse leadership, as in the early church in Antioch (see Acts 6:1–7). We need multiethnic churches that address all sin issues, including racism, injustice, and oppression from a gospel-inspired perspective like the early church (see Acts 6:1–7; Galatians 3:24–28; Colossians 3:11; Romans 15:6–7).

We need multiethnic churches in urban, suburban, and rural areas. We need multiethnic churches that show the world what reconciliation looks like (see Colossians 3:10). We need multiethnic local churches that give America hope that humanity can live in love and harmony (see Romans 15:5–12). We need high-definition leaders.

What Is a High-Definition Leader?

We need high-definition leaders who can lead the church into America's multicolored future. Just as high-definition television allows one to see colors vividly, clearly, and beautifully, we need church leaders who can build multicolored local churches through the Spirit's power so America can clearly see God's character vividly, clearly, and beautifully through his diverse people.

A high-definition leader is a leader who is so passionate about the glory of God being revealed through the local church that he or she is willing to learn how to be a cross-cultural, gospel-of-grace preaching, organizational-strategizing, leader-developing disciple of people who partners with the Lord Jesus in building local churches that reflect the future of the church in the present. (See Revelation 5:9–12.)

A high-definition leader learns from the apostle Paul, therefore, the book of Ephesians will be our road map, along with other selected texts. We will journey with Paul as he builds a heavenly community on earth in the local churches at Ephesus, which is now modern-day Turkey.

Every great football coach I had held the ability to teach us the game by saying the same things in different ways. Throughout this book, I will do likewise; I will share the same gospel truths in different ways. So if you think I am repeating some things, I am! I want to drive the truths of this book deep into your heart.

In this chapter, my goal is to shock your thought paradigm and introduce the idea of high-definition leadership and why it's needed. In chapter 2, I'm going to share my story and the unlikely story of

Transformation Church. In chapter 3, we're going to look at salvation from a high-definition perspective. This will increase and deepen your understanding of what Jesus actually accomplished. In chapter 4, we're going to explore seeing Christ in high definition. We will see Jesus and his work and what his work accomplished from a fuller, richer perspective. In chapter 5, we will look at being missional through a high-definition lens. In chapter 6, we are going to examine the term *gospel* and what it means for individuals and what it means for the local church. As you read chapter 6, you may throw away the book. You might even slap somebody and shout, "How did I not know this!" But I'm not presenting anything new, just the essential truth of the gospel in a different way. In chapter 7, we'll look at what it means to be the new people of God, the bride of Christ, the high-definition church. In chapter 8, we'll look at discipleship and leadership developed in high definition. And in chapter 9, we'll look at the end time from a high-definition perspective and describe the role of the church until Jesus returns.

Pastors and leaders ask me, "What have you guys done at Transformation Church for it to become multiethnic and one of the fastest-growing churches in America?" I tell them, "That's the wrong question. Ask us who we are first. Then ask, 'How did you become like you are?' Then ask, 'What are the practices you implement to build a multiethnic church?'"

In the pages of this book you will be submerged in lots of theology. The Spirit of God has used theology to shape me and Transformation Church into who we are and into how we developed the practices to best fit our missional context. Many of our ministry practices are birthed right out of the New Testament. Many are the products of

our missional context. Your context will be different from ours, but the theology will transcend and fit into any missional context. If your desire is to plant a multiethnic local church or transform a homogeneous local church into a multiethnic local church, you and your team will need to wrestle with the Holy Spirit to develop your own practices to fit where you are. However, the theology will transcend any context and will operate as your guiding principles.

Thank you for taking this journey with me. But it's not about me or you. It's about Jesus' glory, yet he uses all of me and all of you to bring forth his glory. And Jesus is most glorified when his bride, the church, reveals her beautiful multicolored face.

Here's a letter I received from a seventy-year-old white couple in our church who've been married for fifty-one years:

Dear Pastor Dewey,

I have enjoyed your first two books and am excited about *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World*.

I have actively attended and worshiped at traditional churches in America for about fifty years and am often asked why I now attend a nondenominational, multiethnic, multigenerational one that has loud contemporary music. Usually I answer, "Because people are coming to Jesus and getting baptized all of the time and lives are being transformed."

Matthew 16:18 tells us that the Rock, which is his Son, is the foundation of the church, and that is the only answer to a thriving, successful church. Christ must be lifted up to draw men unto him, and a high and lofty view of God is of utmost importance. I

find this to be evident in all areas at Transformation Church. It is a pleasure to worship there and helps me focus on him.

The thing that matters is that he be lifted up. When he is lifted up, not only does he draw men to himself, he draws men to each other in unity.

Because the church has been segregated for so many years, I appreciate the call to “intentionally” worship across racial and cultural lines. I know that when Jesus calls us to become like him, he means in all ways, and sometimes we don’t even know what that is until we are informed and inspired by others. Each step we make to become more like him is a blessing to us.

I think the reason Transformation Church is succeeding is because it pleases God. A high and lofty view of God and a continual, strong call to follow him and his desires for us from the pulpit is what is enabling his sheep to follow.

I will pray for you as you write this new book.

Study Questions, Reflections, and Prayer

1. As you read the statistics in chapter 1 about the changing face of America, what thoughts and emotions did you experience? How does your city, neighborhood, school, or workplace reflect this changing demographic?
2. In light of how diverse America is becoming, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how prepared is your church to reach the diversity in your ministry context? On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being not

- important at all and 10 being very important), how important do you think ethnic diversity in your church is to your congregation? What about socioeconomic diversity?
3. “Sociologist Michael Emerson has found that homogeneous local churches reproduce inequality, encourage oppression, strengthen racial division, and heighten political separation.”¹ Why do you think this would be true? What do you think the role of the church is in changing these facts?
 4. Read Ephesians 2:14–16. Discuss its implications in your community and church. What is one thing your church could do to encourage reconciliation among people?
 5. Read Revelation 5:9–12. As a team, discuss the implication of the statement: “A high-definition leader is a leader who is so passionate about the glory of God being revealed through the local church that he or she is willing to learn how to be a cross-cultural, gospel-of-grace preaching, organizational-strategizing, leader-developing disciple of people who partners with the Lord Jesus in building local churches that reflect the future of the church in the present.”

Prayer

Father, may your passion to bring heaven to earth through the finished work of Jesus by the Spirit’s power inspire us to have a new vision for the church, a vision that reflects Revelation 5:9–12: a gospel vision of love, grace, and reconciliation. Father, give us faith, courage, and, above all, love so we can fulfill this sacred task. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

