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**WHITE FOLLOWERSHIP AS PROPHETIC WITNESS:  
A CONVERSATION ON CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED POWER**  
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**Abstract**

*In a conversation before the Academy of Religious Leadership, three scholar/practitioners discuss their experience and understanding of power in evangelical prophetic ministry with special attention to the potential of White evangelicals to adopt a pathway of followership to persons and communities of color and women. The dialogue centers around the concept of White Followership as a mode of inverting power relations of white people vis-à-vis minority and marginalized populations. The conversation includes sources of hope and vision for future ministry.*

*Power.* The very sound of the word causes many to cringe. For some in the church, it raises images of pastoral abuse, broken trust, or marginalization of those with voices considered less important. For others, however, the proper use of power is necessary to

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influence God's people toward His preferred future for their faith community. Walt Wright, former executive director and current Senior Fellow at the Max De Pree Center for Leadership, highlights this tension well:

Power is at the heart of leadership, but power exists only when someone sees in you a reason to accept your influence. At that moment you have the power to influence. But power needs purpose. Power without purpose leaves a wake of debris. Tornados have power, but look what they do. Power needs to be leashed to a purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Power is a part of Christian leadership, whether we like it or not. But how leaders use that power is vital for moving individuals, groups, and organizations toward outcomes that are generative and reflective of God's redemptive agenda in the world. To engage power, then, requires an analysis of who has power and how that power is used. To engage power faithfully as Christian leaders necessarily involves a justice-centered prophetic witness with an acknowledgement of one's identity and social location in the interstices of power. In the United States, white people have overwhelmingly been the recipients and beneficiaries of cultural and systemic forms of power. The exercise of power among and by white people has shaped systems, structures, communities, culture, and definitions of leadership, as well as understandings of Christianity.

During the 2019 annual meeting of the Academy of Religious Leadership, we conducted a public conversation with two evangelical colleagues in the Minneapolis area on the specific ways that dominant, majority-race populations might steward their power in a more responsible and faithful manner with respect to society's marginalized. I, Craig, served as moderator of that conversation. We asked ourselves how we as Christian leaders engage power toward faithful restoration and redemption of power

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<sup>1</sup> Walter C. Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 2.

relations instead of perpetuating the marginalization of people and groups. The term *White Followership*<sup>2</sup> was coined by one of these colleagues as a posture of inverting normative power relations of white people vis-à-vis the voices, perspectives, and leadership of the marginalized. White Followership should not be reduced to a static inverse of power that simply recreates a new but equally diseased hierarchy, however. Instead, White Followership acknowledges the current imbalance of power in the United States and suggests that great benefits could result from white leaders yielding normative power to persons of racial/cultural minority status.

Investigating this topic together, we excavate the systemic layers of power while simultaneously unearthing a prophetic posture with which white people can bear witness to an authentically faithful engagement of power dynamics among diverse populations. We have come to understand that engaging systems of power requires the perspectives of people who have been oppressed by dominant systems of power. Minority voices are keenly able to illuminate the organization, operation, production, and elisions within systems. Leaders within organizations are uniquely positioned to shift the locus of power from dominant to subordinate realms in order to foster a more just and equitable exercise of power among the diversity of persons in a community.

Our conversation partners come to us from the metropolitan area of Minneapolis. They were chosen, first, because of their proximity to the conference and because of their long involvement in faith-based justice and advocacy work in the Twin Cities area. Second, and more importantly, they were chosen for the diversity of perspective they would bring to the discussion. One of the panelists, Rev. Rose Lee-Norman, is a white woman serving as an associate pastor at Sanctuary Covenant Church—a large, multiethnic church on the north side of Minneapolis. The other, Dr. Christopher Brooks, is a biracial man serving as the executive

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<sup>2</sup> Rose Lee-Norman, “White Followership: Creating a Pathway Toward Black-Centered Leadership and Experience from the Reality of White Hegemony in an Evangelical, Urban, Multiethnic Church,” Doctor of Ministry Prospectus, Boston University, unpublished manuscript (2019).

director of Merge, an organization that has helped thousands of immigrants navigate legal and cultural systems in the Twin Cities and throughout the United States. Dr. Brooks also partnered with me, Dr. Craig Hendrickson, a white male and moderator of the discussion, to organize the first Biblical Justice Conference at Moody Bible Institute in the spring of 2019. The following is an edited account of the focus and substance of the conversation.

*Craig:* "Chris and Rose, could you share a little about yourselves. How have you have been engaging systems of power in your roles, and what led you to the form of ministry you each currently serve in?"

*Rose:* I am honored and grateful to be with you. I serve as an associate pastor at The Sanctuary Covenant Church based in North Minneapolis. We are an urban, multiethnic church founded about sixteen years ago by Efrem Smith. I've been there for nine years.

Before coming to Sanctuary, I received my master's degree from Fuller Seminary and was ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Overall, Sanctuary Covenant Church has been a great place to grow and learn as a leader. I have had various roles and been mentored by amazing leaders who helped me find my voice in leadership. But this topic of engaging systems of power is very important right now for the broader church because it has wielded its power in really toxic ways in the past, and even today. As leaders, as pastors, as professors, or whatever your role might be in the church, we need to examine the use and effects of power. As we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, it's important that we ask "Who is it Good News for?" Who is deemed powerless and needs the power of the Good News?

Thinking about power, my question for us to consider in this conversation is "Who gets to define power?" I ask this question because many of us can look at power in very normative ways, especially when we have privilege in society. When I think of power and how I engage it in various contexts, I consider it in terms of a dichotomy: on the one

hand, a disembodiment of power, and an embodiment of power on the other. As a white person, I understand power in a disembodied way because I am largely unaware of how my whiteness<sup>3</sup> affords me greater power. I assume I have power and take it for granted because I am white. Because of the cultural transparency in my race, I have the ability to ignore or normalize how my power as a white person is exerted in the world. So, there is a disembodiment that I experience because I'm not aware of it. But on the other hand, when I am most aware of my identity as a woman, especially a woman in ministry, I have a keenly embodied sense of what power means because I've felt its absence; I've experienced powerlessness.

Therefore, when I consider how I engage power, I try to keep those two identities in dialogue with each other. When I am aware of my normative white power<sup>4</sup> along with the marginalization of being female, that integration affects my leadership, vocation, and witness in the church.

*Chris:* My sense of power and of powerlessness really comes from my heritage. My father was a state wrestling champ

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<sup>3</sup> Whiteness is an intricate montage of social and cultural meanings constructed over time that elevate “white people over people of color” (Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3(3) (2011): 56), providing us with a location of structural and racial advantage and privilege. It involves the formation and maintenance of an individual and collective consciousness, providing a standpoint from which white people view ourselves, others, and society at large (DiAngelo, 54–70).

<sup>4</sup> White normativity is the thought that whiteness should be understood as the racial norm, or the default culture of American society. Within this construct, white is the race to which people of all other races are compared, essentially considered the “other” alongside the dominant culture (W. Doane, “Rethinking Whiteness Studies,” in *Whiteout: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, eds. A. W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3–18). White normative power, then, refers to the “power constructions that exist to perpetuate a White dominant mindset” within sociocultural and institutional structures (Allison N. Ash, “The Ecology of White Anti-Racism: Administrators and Racial Justice in Christian Higher Education,” dissertation submitted to the School of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, Azusa Pacific University, Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education, 2018: 21).

from Iowa. He was a strong, tough guy raised on a farm. His family is full of Marines; his brothers have all done multiple tours of duty. My mom comes from rural Jamaica. She was “discovered” by missionaries and was brought to the United States and attended what used to be a Bible college housed inside the University of Minnesota. My dad was at the university, and my mom was at the Bible college; they met and got married. What I’ve been tracking during my life, as a biracial, multiethnic guy, is what I call “weaponized Christianity.” It is also known as imperialism or colonialism. Basically, it means that we have created Jesus in our own image and used him to conquer others.

This morning I went to my daughter’s school and taught her second-grade class about Jamaica. We went into Jamaican history, and I told them how Jamaica was passed from the Spanish to the British, and it became a missionary outpost for Evangelical Christianity. Eventually, Jamaica was given its independence. But even as the country experienced freedom, its cultural and social systems were heavily influenced by colonial evangelicalism. Recently, I was talking to an older, prominent Jamaican who leads a nonprofit that grants microloans. From his perspective as a financial leader, he stated that “As Jamaica became more and more evangelical, it became more and more unjust.” It is a painful statement for those of us who consider ourselves evangelical. But in order for the church to be faithful in evangelism, we must de-weaponize Christianity, tell the truth of our ugly history, and open up pathways for racial justice and reconciliation.

*Craig:* What has helped you engage systems of power in your reflection and action, and how do you see yourself moving forward in this regard?

*Rose:* As I shared in my opening remarks, having mentors of color has been life-changing for me. Through my time at Sanctuary, all of my supervisors have been African American men; to be under their mentorship has been a rich and

defining experience for me as a white woman. It's helped me view power in a very different way. It's also brought a lot of texture and deeper understanding to what it means to be a disciple of Christ. It's helped me rethink Jesus' first command: "Come follow me." So often white evangelicals, like me, do more dominating and dictating than following and listening. For me, to follow the example of people of color and of marginalized voices has profoundly deepened my understanding of what it means to be a disciple and proclaim Good News.

*Craig:* Could you elaborate on that? For those of us coming from a Eurocentric background, it might be difficult to understand what it means practically to follow people of color.

*Rose:* Yes, there are times when we can be so well-intentioned, but we exercise our power in ways that are unhealthy and unhelpful because we take for granted the normative status of our power, over and against the power of those in a minority position. Practically, being mentored by persons of color entails a lot of listening so that I consider more fully what my supervisor is sharing with me, intentionally grapple with different perspectives, and commit to learning new ways of being. It's nothing flashy, but sitting under leaders of color has taught me to listen more deeply, more humbly, and self-reflectively.

*Chris:* From my perspective as a colleague of color to Pastor Rose, it's been fascinating to watch her development under leaders of color. When Pastor Rose arrived at Sanctuary church, she seemed a little quiet and timid. But now that she's been at the church for several years, she has found her voice and her power. Even though she is small in stature, her voice is like a tsunami!

Likewise, if you are willing to go on the journey of listening to, submitting to, and being led by people of color, it can transform you into a true change agent. There is a lot of talk right now in politics and in the church about allies,

about submitting to mentors who are of different races, ethnicities, and genders. Let their story become your story, since we are all part of the body of Christ. You'll become a significant ally to minority communities.

*Rose:* I appreciate that Chris brought up the term *ally* because that is a popular term in the vernacular of social justice. We've also used terms like *advocate*. These are helpful terms in engaging power and addressing justice. But if injustices like racism have to do fundamentally with the issue of power, then I believe terms like *ally* and *advocate* don't adequately address power systems and structures. To advocate for someone or a group still implies a power over someone. Being an ally might suggest a more egalitarian posture but does not address power as pointedly as I believe it should in the work toward justice. Right now I am studying at Boston University, pursuing a Doctor of Ministry in Transformational Leadership. My dissertation addresses power dynamics in justice work. Instead of advocate or ally, I'm curious what White Followership might look like. Might that get at a more authentic posture toward justice? If Jesus' first commandment to his disciples was "Come follow me," then white evangelicals—to speak directly to my own community—need to consider how much talking, dominating, and centering we've done instead of listening, yielding, and following. The question my dissertation poses, especially within the evangelical tradition, is "What does White Followership look like?" In this humble journey of submitting myself very intentionally under people of color, it helps me to name it as my white, normative power. There are many times when submission to another is challenging, but it is in that tension where tremendous growth has come for me. I am led to develop this idea of White Followership not just for ourselves as white people, but for the purpose of preparing the way for marginalized voices to lead us in the work of racially oriented justice.



*Craig:* What are some of the glimmers of hope you have witnessed as you work for justice? What are some of the key practices, strategies, or partnerships that have contributed to progress in this never-ending work of prophetic witness for justice?

*Chris:* I'm a big fan of unlearning and relearning. The best white followers that I have met, some of them in their eighties and nineties, are currently unlearning. I have a friend in his nineties who is reading everything he can by James Cone, Cornel West, and Soong-Chan Rah. And he just weeps. He can't believe it. And he thinks back to the mission trips he went on; the millions of dollars he's used to fund Christian ministry and mission; and some of the stuff that we as American Christians have exported to other global cultures. While it is sad that it has taken him this long to begin pursuing this understanding, I also find it incredibly hopeful that a ninety-year-old white man is still willing and able to unlearn what he has believed his entire life, and instead relearn what it means to follow Jesus more faithfully under the influence of scholars and authors of color, including me.

*Rose:* The hope that I have comes from the fact that so many people—especially young people—are engaging in inquisitive conversations like the one we are having now. For example, our youth pastor at Sanctuary is a young woman of color, and she doesn't wait for people to authorize her power or ask permission to lead; she just does. For me and other people my age and older, accepting our authority took us a lot longer. We needed so much mentoring; we needed to be convinced of our power. It's as if we had to have someone give us that power even though we already had it. Many young people don't look for that; they are not waiting for permission. I find that hopeful, and I hope that we listen to them.

*Craig:* In your work for justice, how have partnerships and

collaborations been important? How have your alliances with other communities and organizations been life-giving and effective?

*Rose:* From my perspective, in the early years of Sanctuary, we were burned by many of the attempts we made toward collaboration. A church like Sanctuary can give other types of ministry efforts, especially with respect to suburban ministries and organizations, the street credit they need in the inner city. The message was something like this: “If Sanctuary endorses us, then we must be doing something right.” In many cases, partnership was in name only. So, we grew suspicious of organizations that asked us to partner with them on collaborative projects.

But to be honest, we at Sanctuary had to be honest about our own ministry because missional outreach can feel very transactional. It can be seductively easy to think that we are in a superior posture to those we serve because “we have something that they need.” We decided to re-vision our missional efforts, and we renamed it “neighboring.” Our outreach team became a “neighboring team.” Words matter, and renaming something changes what that thing is. In this case, our understanding of and engagement with collaboration changed to be better aligned with our vision of racial justice. We stopped trying to replicate what other nonprofits were already doing because doing the exact same thing as other organizations can foster a counterproductive competitiveness rather than partnership and collaboration. We reenvisioned evangelical outreach in terms of collaboration with neighbors. Together, we discern what the assets are in our community and try to understand the type of power that people already have so that we can merge forces rather than continually using each other in ways that are not authentic to the Gospel.

*Chris:* I agree wholeheartedly with what Pastor Rose said, but I’m going to reshape it just a little bit. Right before joining you for this conversation, I was at a law firm on the

forty-seventh floor in downtown Minneapolis where I—a biracial, multiethnic guy—a Hmong leader, and a white corporate leader are exploring co-founding a bank as a missional endeavor to assist the Hmong community in their rise out of poverty. When many of the Hmong community come over, they are animists. So, there are religious and cultural barriers that keep them from participating fully in economic activities that are taken for granted in many other communities. They need an economic engine that is culturally specific and ethnocentric so that they can build enough economic power to generate wealth and social power in their community. Our small group believes that for any community that ultimately rises up out of poverty, there should be a bank in the center of that rise.

We hope that our efforts become a shining light to other minority communities to develop what will initially appear to be ethnocentric and exclusive economic systems but will eventually lead to a more fair and just economy that allows the Hmong greater economic equality in the Twin Cities. Each of us brings unique value to the table, so we've created a value exchange among us. The magic is in the middle, even though we individually have an indispensable role to play. The partnership we have formed with the Hmong, then, is greater than the sum of the three of us. Theologically, we describe the trinitarian relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as perichoresis in which Each moves in, through, and with the Others in a mutual dance of generative love.

As another tangible example of a perichoretic relationality in this world, I work for an organization called Merge. Merge focuses on the first or second generations of the immigrant community here in the Twin Cities who do not yet know Jesus. We estimate that this community numbers more than nine hundred thousand people and constitutes more than a quarter of our metropolitan area. Merge partners with a church called Eagle Brook Church,

one of the largest churches in America with more than sixty thousand people in attendance on Easter Sunday. Each of their multiple campuses are in white, wealthy suburbs with very similar congregational demographics. They wanted to have some sort of mission in the city, but they recognized that they do not have the subject matter expertise. So, they came to us, and we forged a partnership. They are experts at training pastors to develop a visionary strategic plan for mission.

Eagle Brook has said, “We know what we have to offer, but we know that it is significantly incomplete. And even though we are one of the largest churches in America, we know that when it comes to people of color, we can’t get there.” The pastors around the table have said, “We know our people. Our part of the value exchange is quite clear. We understand the context, we speak the language, and we don’t get offended by the way people smell. We can eat the food. So, we’ll take your training, our indigenous subject matter expertise, and we will meet in the middle and make some magic.”

We at Merge are learning from their training, but we are chewing the meat and spitting out the bones. We want to reach the lost and grow the church through evangelism and not through cannibalism where Catholics and Lutherans become evangelicals and we call that church growth. With Eagle Brook’s help, we are developing a contextualized version of their training for the Hmong community, for the African immigrant community, and maybe down the road for the African American community. As a result of this perichoretic dance among us, I believe we are going to see some high-growth, immigrant-led churches in our metro area in the next few years. This is going to transform the narrative of the church in the Twin Cities-metro area, which has been stalled out for quite a long time. I think the proper contextualized evangelism of our day is that we reallocate resources to indigenous leaders and watch them go.

*Craig:* These stories are wonderfully inspirational. They give me hope for what collaborative partnerships can be. I wonder what sources of inspiration help you shape your praxis to engage more deeply, to grow spiritually, and to follow the leading of the Spirit.

*Rose:* Two people in particular have been key in shaping my understanding of power. The first is Howard Thurman. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, he said:

The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in a mind of the Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Howard Thurman has totally reformed and reshaped my understanding of power. He argued that the church has distorted its God-given power. We, as evangelical white churches, have used it in horrifically oppressive ways. Thurman exhorts us to get back to a more robust and more authentic Gospel because that is ultimately where our true liberating power lies and where the Good News is actually good news again, instead of wielding destructive and enslaving power. Thurman's words echo Jesus' mission as defined in Luke 4:16–19: the good news is good news for the poor. It liberates the oppressed and sets prisoners free. It is spiritual good news that encompasses and transforms social, political, and economic dimensions of life.

The second source of inspiration for me is Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills. In *The Racial Contract*, Mills asserts that those on the bottom of systems of power and

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<sup>5</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 166.

oppression are more likely to have an accurate perspective on the workings of those systems than those on the top.<sup>6</sup> This has significantly shaped my thinking around White Followership, following leaders of color, and engaging power faithfully in my vocation. Mills's perspective is referring to "Standpoint Theory," which asks the questions: "Where do you stand in society?" and "Do you understand your place, your role, and the power that you have in society, an organization, or a system?" Within standpoint theory, there is this notion called "epistemic advantage" that considers the place or role we have in society. Mills contends that marginalized people have a better epistemic advantage. They are the ones who are most able to authentically see the whole interworking of systems of power given that they are at the bottom and have to navigate the system for their survival. They have an advantage in the sense that they are better able to authentically understand, perceive, critique, and also transform systems of power that oppress them.

Charles Mills's perspective has helped me understand the importance of listening and following leaders of color. And if I want to address systems of power, especially toxic power, then it will be the marginalized who will best illumine the whole of the system and its effects on various component parts of the system.

*Craig:* Great. Thank you, Rose. Chris, how about you?

*Chris:* The nineteenth-century German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, developed a term called *emergent synthesis* that Dr. King referred to in one of his speeches. King said, "Truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emergent synthesis which reconciles the two."<sup>7</sup> So, I am finding my greatest learning and my greatest

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<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Clayborne Carson, senior ed., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel, September 1948–March 1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 460.

opportunities to understand what is going on in my world by crashing things into each other that would not otherwise meet. Two of my sources of inspiration are Asian-American Soong-Chan Rah and Native American Mark Charles, both of whom write from their specific cultural and ethnic identity about the capitalistic structures that continue to oppress not only their minority communities but also poor and marginalized communities of all kinds.<sup>8</sup> Hernando de Soto is another of my go-to resources. I always tell people that if I were on a deserted island and I could have one book, I would probably choose the Bible, but if given a second, I would likely choose *The Mystery of Capital*.<sup>9</sup> De Soto says that the world's poor "are not the problem, they are the solution" for the very reason that the poor are in the best position to understand the deleterious effects of capitalism and the flawed view of cultural supremacy of one race over others.

*Craig:* If you could distill our conversation today down to one or two things that you hope we take from this conversation and potentially do differently, what would that be?

*Chris:* When I think about power relations in light of racial justice, I am hopeful that there will come a day when the body of Christ leads the conversation on reparations. It's grounded in the biblical passages regarding Jubilee and gleaning laws; we can develop a great theological argument for it. Because the church was co-opted in the original founding of this nation, with the genocide of Native Americans and waves of importations of African American slaves resulting, the church is culpable. I don't expect secular society or our highly partisan government to address

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Hernando De Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

this moral imperative. The church is Plan A. There is no Plan B. I believe that with all my heart. So, regarding the reparations road that leads to reconciliation, I'm waiting for church leaders, specifically white church leaders, to say, "We are ready to give up some wealth and power and do whatever it takes for the body of Christ to be what it was always intended to be." That intention is to be a community in which if one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part rejoices, every part rejoices with it.

*Rose:* We should look at the story of Shiphrah and Puah in Exodus chapter 1. Shiphrah and Puah should be our companions along the way and in the work of understanding of power. They were the midwives who were given a specific command from Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew baby boys. But because of their devotion to God, they were disobedient to the power structure. I think that we should look to Shiphrah and Puah as examples of how we do this work. They understood, with respect to standpoint theory and epistemic advantage, where they were positioned in the Egyptian power structure. And they critiqued it, they disobeyed it, and they subverted it. I would hope that as we go from this point, we would be as devoted to our faith as Shiphrah and Puah were. We would be disobedient to the power structures that perpetuate things that are not of the Gospel. That we would ask ourselves and our communities uncomfortable questions, such as: Are we on the side of Pharaoh? Are we on the side of liberation? Often, we lift up Moses as the great liberator, which of course we should. But it was to Shiphrah and Puah that Moses owes his life; they made the Exodus a possibility.

## **Conclusion**

We began this conversation seeking to explore a complex issue—how those of us belonging to the dominant, majority-race population might steward our power more faithfully. As the conversation progressed, we discovered that adopting a posture



of White Followership could move us toward more faithful and redemptive power relations with people of color. The conversation was challenging, as panelists suggested that current power relations characterized by white normative power need to be redeemed. By listening to and learning from people of color and adopting a posture of humility, we might in fact move toward mutually enriching and generative relationships—relationships that are especially fitting for our increasingly polarized times.

As we reflect on these themes, especially what it means for white people to use power and privilege redemptively and generatively in relationship with people of color, it seems appropriate to reflect on Paul's words to the church in Philippi. As he encourages them to pursue unity and life-giving relationships with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, he exhorts them to follow the example of Christ:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6–8, NIV).

Displaying inspirational humility and servanthood, Paul refers to the Incarnation as an example not just for the Philippians to emulate in their relationships with one another, but for those of us who have traditionally wielded more power and influence due to our privileged position in a racialized social context. To learn how to lead redemptively in an increasingly intercultural church and society where the voices of people of color have been consistently marginalized and diminished, white evangelicals also need to emulate the character and actions of Jesus by learning how to give power away to, learn from, and follow our brothers and sisters of color. Doing so provides a prophetic witness to the church and society at large in a way that inverts power dynamics by prioritizing humility, service, and giving

power away. By humbling himself and ceding his divine power by becoming fully human in surrender to the will of his Father, Jesus demonstrates a prophetic pathway forward for white evangelicals—a pathway that must include followership.

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