

LOVING  
COURAGEOUSLY  
FOR RACIAL  
HEALING  
AND JUSTICE

# UN LIVING DIVIDED

CHUCK MINGO + TROY JACKSON  
WITH HOLLY CRAWSHAW



# LIVING UNDIVIDED



LOVING COURAGEOUSLY FOR  
RACIAL HEALING AND JUSTICE

**CHUCK MINGO AND TROY JACKSON**



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From Chuck:  
to Maria, Nathan, Samuel, and Isabel

From Troy:  
to Amanda, Jacob, Emma, and Ellie

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You were instrumental in this book being written.  
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and encouraging writing partner.  
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# FOREWORD

by Dave Ferguson

Nearly forty years ago, I went on a two-week mission trip to Haiti, an experience that became a spiritual reckoning. Seeing that level of poverty firsthand was as eye-opening as it was distressing. Racism is a defining characteristic of Haitian society, and it was a kick to the soul to witness its malignancy in the lives of Haiti's poorest families and children.

There was this guy in our group from a different church named Troy Jackson. Troy stood out to me because he asked all the tough questions out loud that I was wrestling with internally. I wanted to get to know him. So I did.

The following summer, Troy came to Chicago to visit. While in town, a few of us attended a Kool & The Gang concert. I'll save you the Google search and tell you that you've already danced to their biggest hit, "Celebration," at a family member's wedding. "Celebrate good times, come on!" Yes, that's Kool & The Gang.

Somehow, between ministry and jamming out to funk, Troy and I forged a bond. God allowed our paths to intersect again a few years later. We were both headed on mission trips to different parts of the world, but we met up in Miami. I asked Troy to do an internship at Community Christian Church—a church I was planting in a suburb of Chicago. I don’t know if it was Troy’s great taste in music, the draw of his insatiable curiosity, or a prophetic nudge from God, but I knew he was a man I wanted to continue to learn from.

And for the last three and a half decades, that’s exactly what I’ve done. I’ve had a front-row seat to Troy’s quest to answer the same question he asked in Haiti: *Why racism?* He’s become one of the first people I tap to talk about issues relating to racial justice or civil rights. Troy pushes me. He challenges me. And he coaches me. Troy is the person I call and ask, “Hey, what do I need to know about this issue? How should I think about this?” Because I trust his research, his heart, and his integrity that much.

Another great gift my friendship with Troy has given me is Chuck Mingo. I first met Chuck at the 2018 Exponential Conference. Chuck did most of the talking. I immediately felt a connection. As I got to know him, I discovered that he brought a rare combination of gifts: a passion for racial solidarity, a results mindset, and a world-class ability to communicate in front of a small group, a camera, or an audience of thousands. Plus, Chuck is just a really good guy!

From my vantage point, especially when it comes to addressing our perpetual racial challenges in this nation and the church, you can’t find more knowledgeable, passionate, or Bible-minded people than Troy and Chuck and their team.

I wasn’t surprised when Chuck and Troy combined their skill sets and passions to launch an organization called UNDIVIDED,



a movement for racial healing, solidarity, and justice. One of the encounters hosted by the organization is called LivingUNDIVIDED—a seven-session journey where they get people together in mixed-race groups to share their stories and perspectives. After walking more than ten thousand people through their LivingUNDIVIDED journey, Troy and Chuck have inspired countless others to make a difference in their communities.

It wasn't long after UNDIVIDED started that I found myself with a problem and Chuck and Troy were the solution. The fall after George Floyd's murder, I helped plan about one hundred roundtable events across the country for church leaders to come together to discuss racial reconciliation and solidarity. While I knew how to deliver content in a roundtable setting, I didn't know how to create meaningful conversations on race and racism in such a polarizing time. I had the proverbial cart in front of the horse!

So, with a few thousand leaders ready to come to these roundtables, my need was significant. Chuck and Troy assured me that with their combined experience through UNDIVIDED, they could facilitate meaningful discussions between those church leaders. And they totally delivered.

Over the last couple of years, my relationships with Chuck and Troy have become more important to me than ever. As a country, we've watched in heartache and horror as the stories of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and countless others have unfolded, stirring Americans to ask the same questions Troy asked in Haiti in the mid-1980s.

After my own small group participated in the LivingUNDIVIDED experience, I remember looking around to see a room full of Black, Brown, Asian Pacific Islander, and White people. The White participants looked exhausted yet eager. They'd had their eyes opened. They had been challenged to the core

of who they were. But the People of Color in the room spoke up and said, “Hey, what’s been a chapter in your life has been our entire story.”

It was a moment that solidified our commitment to the UNDIVIDED organization. In fact, the experience was so powerful, we have now held multiple cohorts and hope to lead our entire church through the LivingUNDIVIDED experience.

One moment I will never forget from the experience was something my longtime friend Eddie said to me. During the weeks we were together, eight Asian Pacific Islander women were murdered in the city of Atlanta in a tragic mass shooting. Eddie is from a Korean background. As we were processing what happened in our LivingUNDIVIDED group that night, Eddie said something that may be the most poignant moment of our relationship. He looked at me and said, “I wish this made you angrier.”

It took a lot of courage on his part to say this, and it struck a deep chord within me. Eddie’s words reminded me that this fight was personal for all of us, because the impacts of racism were deeply wounding my dear friend. It moved me from being intellectually opposed to racial injustice to being emotionally engaged. Eddie’s courage moved the work from my head to my heart—and I’m so grateful for that.

I pray this happens for each of you as you read this book.

Addressing racism is hard. It’s weighty. You may not feel like an expert. I’m not sure anyone does. But as leaders, we must create space for what’s important—and taking a stance on injustice is critical. It’s vital to the church at large, and it’s important to God.

The root of why some of us avoid initiating conversations or leading others on race is fear. That fear is standing between us and realizing God’s dream of racial unity and peace. That fear

is robbing us of a richer life experience. That fear is limiting our spiritual growth. Second Timothy 1:7 says, “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”

We may feel incapable on our own, but God in us is capable. Through God, we have the authority and ability to participate in and facilitate these crucial conversations on race and justice. So lean in with the power, love, and self-discipline given to you through God’s Holy Spirit. Combine God’s gifts to you with the messages in this book and link arms with your brothers and sisters in Christ, moving closer to God’s intention for his people.

When I think about why UNDIVIDED is really important, I come right back to the gospel. My understanding of the gospel is that Jesus is King, and he has a kingdom, and his kingdom doesn’t look like I do. It looks like a diverse group of people all coming together, worshiping him. In fact, that’s exactly what’s described in Revelation 7:9, where it talks about a gathering of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. The UNDIVIDED movement draws us closer to God’s dream.

Racial solidarity is possible. But not without our full participation. I encourage you to read this book with an open mind and a soft heart. You may have to reexamine some long-held viewpoints and philosophies. You may even have to realign and adjust some of your theology. In fact, I hope you do.

As you continue your Living UNDIVIDED journey, I pray that you have an encounter with Jesus’s courageous love—a love with the power to change us. A love with the power to heal us.

# NOTE TO READERS

Throughout our time together, we will be using words, phrases, and capitalization to describe groups of people, movements, and organizations. We have applied research and consulted with others to choose our words and usage both carefully and intentionally.

Unless otherwise noted, we will be using the following terminology to describe certain races and ethnicities:

Asian Pacific Islander

Black

Brown

Indigenous

Latin American

People of Color

White

We will also use the term Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC for short) to describe these people groups collectively.

Language is fluid, changing over time, and often contested. In our use of terms, we strive for sensitivity and accuracy for our readers and to be guided by the Holy Spirit.



# INTRODUCTION

Did you know that an Apple Watch will automatically call 911 if it detects that the wearer’s heart rate is unusually high? I (Chuck) discovered this feature during an early morning run while crossing a bridge.

It was a warm summer morning, and the sun had just risen over the Ohio River. Glazed in perspiration, I was feeling that “runner’s high” as I was out that day with my good friend Chris—that is, until we approached a bridge. As we started across the narrow path on the edge of the bridge, to quote Eminem, it was a “Yo! His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy” moment.<sup>1</sup> And then as I was already feeling that flip-floppy, woozy, reeling thing that happens when you’re on the brink of something that scares you, my watch and phone started barking at me. When I looked down to check what was wrong, I saw that after detecting my elevated heart rate, my watch had automatically dialed 911 . . . and the operator had picked up the call! After an awkward conversation that added embarrassment to fear, I knew it was a run, and an Apple Watch feature, I wouldn’t soon forget.

I've been a runner for over a decade, and still, every time I cross a bridge, it causes my pace to quicken and my heart to pound. Fear is like that, right? It's emotional. It's visceral. Fear grips your heart.

Today, when I think about how folks across the country are feeling about race, often the predominant emotion is fear. Whether it's the fear of being harmed, the fear of being canceled for speaking up or speaking out, or the fear that the racial divisions will tear our communities apart, the gravity of fear continues to hold us down.

If our society wore an Apple Watch, it would have been calling 911 every single day since the murder of George Floyd in 2020 sparked another racial reckoning in our country.

Yet, while George Floyd's murder was a keystone event, as history demonstrates, it was not the first. I serve on the pastoral team at Crossroads Church, a large multisite church of more than thirty-five thousand people, in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2015, our church demographics were about 80 percent White and 20 percent Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. On July 19 of that year, body cam footage from a traffic stop just five miles from where I pastored showed the tragic last moments of the life of Samuel DuBose.

A White University of Cincinnati officer pulled over DuBose, a Black motorist, for a missing front license plate. Their exchange ended with the officer firing his gun, killing DuBose.

When local news stations broadcasted the body cam video, I joined a few of my colleagues to watch. As the only Black man in the room, I felt both in community and also alone. In community because Crossroads is a church that cares about changing the world. We were growing in diversity and being intentional about our staff and volunteers reflecting the makeup of the community. And yet I also felt strangely alone. Why? It

was because as I watched the footage, as a Black man and a pastor, I felt a special weight of responsibility that was unavoidable and would require something unique from me.

I knew no one else in that room, as well-intentioned and heartbroken as they were, would be taking the mantle to lead our church in this time of crisis and division. Not because they didn't care deeply (they did), and not because they weren't qualified (some were more qualified than me), but because *God was calling me*. But this calling came with that bridge-crossing kind of fear that much was at stake. As I discerned how to lead our community well in this moment, the weight made my heart sink to the pit of my stomach.

I was standing at the edge of the longest, highest bridge I'd ever crossed. I had a choice to make. Would I allow fear to keep me stagnant, or would I move forward, flowing toward racial healing, solidarity, and justice by taking a more active role in the struggle?

I chose to move forward. I chose to step into the struggle and allow my position and leadership to become a conduit for the flow of racial healing and justice that God was birthing in me and in our church.

Not surprisingly, there was a divided interpretation of the facts of that deadly traffic stop and whether a church should be talking about it. Flowing meant teaching and preaching honestly about racism, its spiritual roots, and its impact in our community. It was showing up at marches in my city to be a prayerful and faithful presence with others crying out for justice. It meant following brave lay leaders in my church like Carolyn and Elizabeth, who organized a "Jericho prayer walk" with hundreds of people seeking a just outcome in the case of the officer who shot and killed Samuel DuBose. It meant leading prayer outside the justice center as the jury deliberated amid a fraught and potentially explosive environment.



Why was it important to show up in the middle of such tension? Because in the Gospels, this is where we find Jesus over and over again. Jesus chose to be with those most affected by the injustice in his day, chose to stand in the gap, chose to be present where there was pain. In order for our lives to be touched by the lasting racial healing and justice that flows from the throne of God, we must make the same choice—to stand with those most affected by racial injustice. This is what it means to live undivided.

See, this isn't another book on racism in America.

Okay, so this isn't *just* another book on racism in America. This is a book about you. About your life, your walk with God, and your future. This book is also about us, together—about our shared future. This is also a book rooted not only in ideas but also experience through ongoing action in congregations, organizations, and communities.

We believe that pursuing racial healing and justice is a shared project of fierce love and humility that requires all of us.

This book is about how we can be a “sign of coming attractions” of the picture God painted of the kingdom in Revelation 7:9—a picture created with strokes of many glorious colors, a picture of joy and justice and human flourishing. We're inviting you to get into the flow for racial healing and justice that God is already bringing about through his people—a flow of fresh water into the dead sea of society.

This book is an invitation to all.

This book is a challenge to all.

We're inviting and challenging you to come alive in the story of racial healing and justice that God is writing. We're calling you out of the isolating and parched desert of fear with an invitation to step into the life-giving flow with us. Why? Because we've seen the life-changing results of thousands upon

thousands of people coming alive to this invitation and challenge, beginning with the two of us.

## **UNDIVIDED Is Born**

I (Chuck) met Troy in the atrium of my church. Within the first few minutes, this White guy told me he just got back from marching in an event to elevate the life and experiences of Black people in Ferguson, Missouri. Immediately, he shook all the preconceived notions I had about him. But I still didn't know him.

Minutes into this first conversation, he asked me these intense questions about how I felt about race, policing, and faith. I was thinking, *Dude, we just met. I don't know you, and I certainly don't know if I can trust you with how I'm really feeling about all this.* I gave Troy "safe" answers to his questions, refusing to let down my guard. Have you ever responded that way when the topic of race entered the conversation? Then Troy told me his story—which was filled with examples of his work for the cause of racial solidarity—further dismantling the wall I'd had to build around myself as a Person of Color in a conversation with a White man.

I don't know if he said enough for me to realize he was genuinely invested or if I was just thankful for the opportunity to unload some of the internal tension I was feeling, but the next thing I knew, I was sharing honestly with Troy that I felt like we were back in the 1960s. I told him I felt called to do something but didn't know what that looked like.

Troy extended an invitation to me to get involved with the racial justice organization he was leading, which I accepted. A few months later, as the vision for UNDIVIDED was birthed in me, I invited Troy to be part of building something that could

draw followers of Jesus to the work of racial healing, solidarity, and justice—just like his conversation had done for me.

Along with Lynn Watts, Troy and I formed a diverse team of leaders to create UNDIVIDED, a seven-session experiential journey for multiracial groups of people to pursue racial solidarity and justice. Each week, we root ourselves in the Bible and draw deeper into relationships and mutual understanding through group conversations, activities, and assignments. The journey fosters belonging, hope, deep community, and faithful action.

As the program was growing in our church, we saw thousands of people connecting, lowering their defenses, and taking action.

Then 2020 came: a contentious election; a pandemic; dehumanizing rhetoric and violence against Asian Pacific Islander and immigrant communities; and the tragic killings of more Black and Brown people caught on video, including Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of two brazen citizens. It all added up to more pain. More division. More fear.

The events of 2020 also caused us to reexamine how the UNDIVIDED experience was serving the vision of racial healing and justice. God brought two incredible Black leaders, Brittany Wade and Courtney Walton, to our UNDIVIDED leadership team. Brittany is nationally known for her research on the intersection of race and faith, including findings on the effectiveness of programs like UNDIVIDED. Courtney is pursuing an EdD in the impact of race-based trauma. Guided by the two of them, we made significant enhancements to our content and experiences, and the results have been fruitful. What began as a program in one church has expanded across the country. It's a catalyst for not only activating communities into the work of justice but also encouraging the kind of deep and powerful healing needed to sustain healthy cross-racial communities.

We're seeing people faithfully heed God's call for racial healing and justice. Social scientists have validated the effectiveness of our UNDIVIDED experiences, and we've witnessed the transformative stories of communities and individuals, some which you will hear in the pages that follow. Our journey also includes the messiness and imperfections that come with every effort to address something as complex as racism.

We talk a lot about loving courageously in this book, because unity over fear is possible. It takes *courage* to get to know—*to care about*—other people and other lived experiences that make up our churches and our nation. We will also talk about our mistakes, because this work requires humility and a willingness to “fail forward” toward meaningful outcomes.

*This is how hearts change.*

If you picked up this book, it's likely you desire racial healing and justice to flow as well, and you want to discover and do your part to bring it about. Like you, we've been troubled by the stories of racial injustice and division that mark these times. We understand how it feels to want to make a difference but to be unsure or unclear of the role you're called to play. We wrote this book to be a road map for you. God is at work healing and restoring those affected by the chronic disease of racism. This book is an invitation for you to join God in this sacred work.

## **An Animating Vision**

As you start the journey with us, we want to share the biblical vision that animates the UNDIVIDED movement. These theological convictions undergird everything you will read in this book. As pastors and followers of Jesus, we want our passion for and picture of what Jesus called the kingdom of God (the reign of God) to be at the heart of our work.

### ***The Launch Party for the Church***

One of the special experiences we have had in our lives was the opportunity to visit Israel and be on the land where Bible stories took place. One of my (Chuck's) favorite memories happened in Bethlehem at a small chapel called Shepherds' Field, where some suggest the angels visited the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus as chronicled in the Gospel of Luke.

As is true at many sites in Israel connected to Scripture, we were surrounded by Jesus followers from all walks of life and from all over the world. There we all were, on a hot day in the Middle East, converging on this sacred site. Dozens of different languages were being spoken simultaneously, all of us united in excitement, awe, and wonder to be in the "little town of Bethlehem." Another common thing about the churches in Israel is that they have great acoustics! So, not surprisingly, when people are in the Shepherds' Field chapel, they sing Christmas carols.

Most groups have enough people to fill the small chapel themselves, so each group waits patiently for their turn to go into the chapel and sing. However, when we arrived, the group ahead of us wasn't large and the people were clearly from another nation and didn't speak or sing in English. Their priest shared a brief reflection in their language, then invited them to sing a familiar tune, "O Come, All Ye Faithful." When they got to the chorus, the priest looked at me and gestured for us to join in. So there we were, in the middle of Israel, sharing a moment of common worship of a common God. And though we didn't share the same language, we were able to share the same song.

This is a picture of God's intent for the church. There's something special about experiencing the multiethnic, multicultural, multihued church of Jesus together. The fact that our

country is so racially divided and yet the church is designed to live undivided means there's a God-sized opportunity. From Genesis to Revelation, we see that God is about the work of gathering to himself a new family made of people from every nation.

Early in the book of Acts, we read how God's Spirit empowered the apostles to speak languages they had never learned so more people could become followers of Jesus. What began in the earliest days of Christianity as recorded in Acts 2 comes to full fruition in Revelation 7:9, when John had a vision that every language, every tongue, every nation, every tribe of people was gathered in unity and celebration at the throne of God.

These were people who had distinct ethnicities and languages but were united as one at the throne of God. They may not have shared the same language, but they shared the same song—one of joy and gratitude to the God who has, as it says in Colossians 1:20, reconciled “to himself all things.”

### ***One New Humanity***

This animating vision is also seen in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. We love Ephesians 2:1–10, where Paul describes how we are reconciled with God. He stresses that we are saved by grace and not by anything we can do for ourselves. We cannot boast. It's not about us. It's all about what Jesus did on our behalf. Then in Ephesians 2:14–15, Paul describes the miracle of unity made possible by Jesus:

For he [Jesus] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us, abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace.

*Through Jesus, we become one new humanity.* Paul is responding to a very real division in the early church: the split between Jew and gentile. This was a conflict along ethnic and cultural lines rooted in the political tensions of the day in the Roman Empire. Sound familiar? The new identity and community Jesus ushered in was not bound by partisan political divisions or ethnic and racial differences. The early church embraced becoming one new humanity because they believed in Jesus and experienced the richness of a diverse community united in him. The dividing walls of hostility melted away, and they aspired to live undivided.

Throughout the Bible, we see over and over again that the gospel brings people together who were once divided. We need this in our country, and it's exactly what the church can embody.

Let's be honest: racism has divided our society. Racism has divided the church. Where does this division come from? Race is a human construct, an elevation of distinctions in skin tone as a way to organize and separate people. It messes with our view of others, and of ourselves. Racism corrupts human societies and institutions. It also distorts the truth from Genesis that we are all image-bearers, created in the image of God.

The source of the problem runs deeper than this. Racism is also a spiritual problem. And spiritual problems require spiritual solutions. We aren't banking on human ingenuity to solve this intractable issue. We see the solution for racism and all its effects in the person of Jesus and the new humanity he calls us to. When we pursue becoming one new humanity, Jesus empowers us to remember and embody who we really are.

### ***A New Kind of "New"***

In these verses from Ephesians, Paul uses a unique word for *new*. The Greek language can be very specific. Often there are

multiple Greek words that we consolidate into one word in the English language. Here Paul uses a specific word for *new*, and he does so on purpose. He could have used the word *neos*, which means chronologically new—simply the next thing to happen. Instead, Paul writes *kainos*, a word that suggests a new thing that has never been seen before in human history. It's a new kind of new.

Don't miss this important point! God has worked a miracle that's never been seen before! People who were ethnically diverse and therefore different and maybe even hostile toward one another are able to come together and be one new people. It's a bond deeper than ethnicity, a bond deeper than race, a bond rooted in Jesus. You are invited to be part of this miracle. UNDIVIDED invites us all to live out that miracle for racial solidarity, healing, and justice (all words we will define shortly) in our world.

This one new humanity is the animating vision that undergirds this book and our organization. The gospel is the good news that empowers us to live undivided. This is not a burden. This is not something we have to do. This is something we get to do—and we get to do it together.

## **A Flow of Racial Healing and Justice**

When it comes to living undivided, at some point we all get stuck, which can lead to a dangerous state called stagnancy. Stagnant water has been trapped or undisturbed for a long time. Stagnant water creates the perfect environment for the growth of mold and other noxious substances that contaminate and destroy. Stagnant water attracts mosquitoes, which are associated with the spread of potentially deadly diseases like malaria, Zika fever, rotavirus, and more.



When it comes to race, our avoidance and passivity result in dangerous stagnancy in our congregations, neighborhoods, and nation. Every day we avoid confronting this evil, people are wounded. Some even die. The impact of a racially divided community gets in the way of every system and structure that surrounds us. Stagnant lives, stagnant communities, and stagnant churches drive the shared racial crisis we are now experiencing. Exploring this toxic stagnancy demands being confronted with some hard truths. Those tough realizations may look different depending on your race, point of view, and lived experiences.

As we work for racial healing and justice across the country, we often meet people who are ready to give up. Honestly, we sometimes find ourselves wrestling with despair. We also know the cost of losing hope and are reminded again and again that in the end these three remain: “faith, hope, and love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

Moses Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher and physician from the twelfth century, is credited with saying: “Hope is the belief in the plausibility of the possible rather than the necessity of the probable.”<sup>2</sup> The author of Hebrews intertwines faith and hope: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Hope is not easy, and it’s a revolutionary act that often defies current conditions. Hope is also much more than wishful thinking. We have reasons to be hopeful.

Our hope rests first and foremost in God, who has faithfully acted in Scripture and throughout history by defying the necessity of the probable. God delivered the Hebrew people from bondage in Egypt, parted the Red Sea, gave David the hope and courage necessary to overcome Goliath, and yes, God raised Jesus from the dead!

We hope because God moved in history. God led faithful people to resist slavery, develop and lead the Underground Railroad, and

fight for the abolition of slavery. We hope because God activated people to end apartheid in South Africa and an overthrow of colonialism throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas. We hope because of the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before in the struggle for justice. As the Negro Spiritual says, “I’m so glad trouble don’t last always.”

We also hope because we are not alone. We’re part of a growing UNDIVIDED community grounded in hope, and when one struggles, we lean on one another. Isolation leads to despair. True community keeps hope alive.

This book rests in hope, rooted in God, evident in history, made tangible through community.

### ***A Word to Our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)***

#### ***Siblings***

We recognize that when we talk about race, it can often be traumatizing or even retraumatizing to our BIPOC siblings. We may share stories in this book that are triggering. There may be times when you need to put the book down, take a breath, and process what you’re thinking or feeling. Please do so when necessary. We’re grateful you’re reading this book, as your voice and perspective are important in the journey toward living undivided. We also recognize that the sin of racism has infected us all, but in distinctly different ways. We invite you to examine where God wants to open your eyes and heart through what follows.

### ***A Word to Our White Siblings***

We know that engaging race as White people can be unsettling and even scary. We’re reminded of what one White leader shared with us about how people can feel when wrestling with race: “You can’t win, you CAN lose, and you can’t quit.” His honest reflection speaks to how fraught discussions of race

can be for everyone involved. For our White siblings who are choosing to engage, thank you. Your voice, your story, and your unique perspective are so important for the redemptive and restorative path God desires to take us. Our encouragement to you is to approach this book with an open mind and an open heart. Listen to where God is getting your attention, then pause and reflect on what he's calling you to do to further the vision of one new humanity.

### **Stepping into the Flow with Hope**

The UNDIVIDED vision, or what we call our North Star, is *a flow of racial healing and justice that repairs wounds and cultivates equitable systems where all people flourish*. In a world that continues to struggle with the evil of racism, we have hope for a better future. The language of flow appears throughout this book, and we contrast this with the state of spiritual or relational stagnancy. This language of flow is biblical and reveals the preferred future of a just world where all people will flourish.

We see this flow of hope in the vision the prophet Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 47. He saw a vision of fresh water flowing from the temple of God in the city of Jerusalem. This fresh water, as it flows through the streets of Jerusalem, causes lush green trees to sprout up and grow. And of these trees, Ezekiel says, “Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing” (v. 12). Whose healing? What healing?

The answer is found in Revelation, where once again we see this flow of water from God's throne and these trees. But this time we get a clearer picture of the healing God has in store, when in Revelation 22:2, it says, “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” The nations! That means all of us! We're all invited to be healed in our relationships to God and one another.

Ezekiel's vision gets even better. As this fresh water flows through the desert and to the Dead Sea, where nothing grows, something even more miraculous happens: the fresh water from God's holy temple literally brings the Dead Sea to life! People fish on its banks and lush trees flourish in the middle of the desert. We believe that this flow, through the power of God, looks like a nourishing racial solidarity that heals the wounds of the past and cultivates a new, life-giving state of living undivided.

What Ezekiel imagined is not simply a restored temple, with an impact contained by the walls of the new structure. Ezekiel was able to imagine a community filled with healing and life, where all flourish. This is what the church could do today.

Why do we believe in this preferred future? A flow of racial healing and justice where all people flourish? Because according to the Bible, this isn't merely possible, it's inevitable. We also believe it because we see the firstfruits in the stories you'll read in this book. Honestly, these stories from our community help sustain our hope.

## **Tamika**

Tamika is a Black woman who participated in one of our LivingUNDIVIDED cohorts, and her struggle to find an identity lost is representative of so many Black and Brown people in America.

Here's what Tamika says:

I was raised in North Carolina in a small, predominantly White, rural town. There, I was too Black. Then I moved to Baltimore when I was thirteen. There, I wasn't Black enough.

I moved into adulthood and entered the corporate world, where I still struggled to fit in. People would always say to

me, “You talk so properly!” What they really meant was that I sounded *White*. At one point in my career, I changed my name to Tammy to fit an online persona I was trying to present in an attempt to claim some sort of an identity of my own.

To say I was having an identity crisis when I began the UN-DIVIDED cohort would be an understatement. I didn’t feel like I’d ever been accepted in any environment, and I wasn’t even aware of all the pain I’d been in. But I decided to participate because I thought I might be able to contribute something to the conversation on racial justice in my city.

What I found was an environment that I could share in—and for the first time, feel comfortable sharing. What I didn’t expect was the level of healing I would experience. God literally used the space of UNDIVIDED to heal me in areas I hadn’t faced before. Now I’m on this journey to discover my own racial identity and how it impacts the woman I am today.

In fact, my UNDIVIDED experience inspired me to cut off all my hair! In an effort to conform to societal norms, I’ve done everything with my hair—from weaves to braids to relaxers. Looking back, I can see that I was chasing after whatever identity I could fit into. But I felt so free leaving UNDIVIDED, so confident and empowered, so unbound by all the expectations that had restricted me before, that cutting off my hair became my declaration of freedom.

Tamika’s story is a microcosm of what’s possible when we live undivided—what’s already happening, in fact. Lives changed, identities found, healing experienced.

## **Carolyn**

Carolyn is one of our LivingUNDIVIDED participants. Here’s Carolyn’s story:

When I think about my life before LivingUNDIVIDED, I was very passionate about racial reconciliation, and I was very passionate about learning more—about trying to help make things better in our city, because historically we’ve had a lot of racial unrest.

I did a lot of digging, trying to reeducate myself and expose myself to different voices. I would say I was very much on my own at that time. I was leading myself . . . trying to understand race, so I was very much limited.

After LivingUNDIVIDED, I had a community around me. Then, even more than that, I had a small group of people that grew into a large group of people in the justice team that was formed out of UNDIVIDED.

With that community around me, my perspective and my experience in regard to race and racial healing changed significantly. It changed from a solitary experience to a dynamic, fun, loving, challenging, bold experience. Those relationships are everything. They were the foundation of how we were able to change access to high-quality preschool in our city through Issue 44.

Those relationships are the foundation of how my family, which is now a multiracial family through adoption, can be healthy by having so many great perspectives and relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds. Those relationships are . . . my friends.

Before LivingUNDIVIDED, I was spending most of my time with people who had a similar cultural background to mine. Now I have a much more vibrant life experience. But even more than that, I feel like I have a pathway for how to make life more equitable in our city through the experiences I had with the LivingUNDIVIDED justice team and learning from different organizations like the AMOS Project. I was able to learn how to take some of those fundamental concepts from LivingUNDIVIDED and put them into action.

So much of that has to do with relationships. Before Living-UNDIVIDED, I had a strong desire to improve things in our city to bring healing and equity to our people, but I had no idea how to do it. I didn't know who I was supposed to do it with. And after, I feel like I made lifelong friends. I was able to explore a pathway through community organizing to help slowly build a more equitable city for my family, myself, my friends, and my neighbors.

LivingUNDIVIDED changed a lot in my life. I think of the experience as the springboard for a lot of big changes, a lot of healing—not just for myself, but for our entire community.

### **Solidarity, Healing, Justice**

Any conversation about race in the twenty-first century is greatly helped by defining some key terms. We repeatedly use the following terms in the book and want to define them now.

*Solidarity.* We as human beings were made for humanity. Before sin entered the world in Genesis 3, God had already declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). This invitation for solidarity, especially across differences, showed up in the early church when people from different languages “who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). In Acts 13, we see a multiethnic congregation of Jews and gentiles who were in solidarity together embodying the possibility and promise of community and a shared mission.

Solidarity is walking out our shared humanity and struggles together across race and ethnicity. We do not equate our contexts or experiences, but rather, through empathy and clarity regarding what is at stake for ourselves and those we love, we bind ourselves together not as allies but as kindred in Jesus.

*Healing.* Healing is the ongoing process of repairing wounds in ourselves, our relationships, and our communities. To heal, we must pause, reflect on the cause and nature of our wounds, and take the time that repair demands. While our contexts may look and feel different, all of us, regardless of race or ethnicity, have racial wounds that need healing. We invite God’s spirit into the healing process, realizing a mix of honesty, courage, humility, confession, repentance, forgiveness, grace, and restitution may be required for healing.

*Justice.* Justice is action that cultivates equitable systems in which all people flourish. Justice must be active. Micah 6:8 calls us not to talk about justice, but to do justice. Racial justice in our context demands naming and addressing racial disparities baked directly into our institutions, systems, and culture. The Hebrew word for justice, *mishpat*, shows up over four hundred times in the Old Testament, and when Jesus launched his public ministry in Nazareth, he read from Isaiah 61, a text overflowing with the fruit of justice:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to bring good news to  
the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those  
who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (Luke 4:18–19)

After reading these words, Jesus told the congregation: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21). Justice is part of the DNA of the Good News of Jesus. I once heard a well-respected preacher say that justice is the grand symptom of a life of faith. Cornel West puts it this way: “Justice is what love looks like in public.”<sup>3</sup>

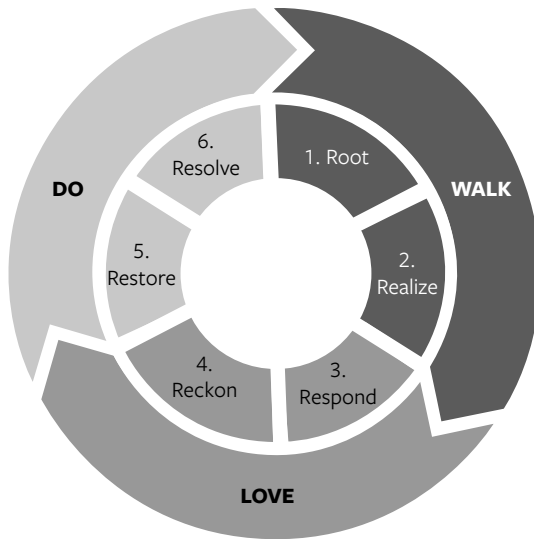


## The UNDIVIDED Circle

This book will help you understand God’s heart for racial healing, solidarity, and justice and give you a taste of what living undivided can look like in your own life through a process called the UNDIVIDED Circle. The process is ongoing. The steps of the UNDIVIDED Circle are ones we hope you choose to take over and over again. They’re part of a cycle that must always be flowing through our lives and communities each day.

On this journey together, we will move around the circle and begin by exploring our **Roots**, our stories that make us who we are and bring us to this shared work together. We will then move to **Realize**, where we explore our history as well as the nature and persistence of racial disparities in our nation.

Next, we will invite you to **Respond**, and to do so in the context of community, and then to **Reckon** as we ground our identity in Jesus as one new humanity.



Finally, we will move into action as we share the call to **Restore** what is broken in God's world and our relationships and focus on the **Resolve** and courage necessary for us to collectively live undivided.

We want to let you know up front that we have a plan and a strategy crafted through experience. We've seen transformation that gives us hope for what God can do in and through you and your people. We're asking you to link arms with us as kindred in God's family, and with God to *walk* toward a better tomorrow by learning to *love* courageously by *doing* what is good.

As Dave Ferguson writes in the foreword, our understanding of the gospel is that Jesus is King, Jesus has a kingdom, and Jesus's kingdom doesn't just look like us or like someone else—it looks like a diverse group of people all coming together, worshipping. In fact, that's exactly what's described in Revelation 7:9:

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.

The UNDIVIDED movement draws us closer to God's dream.

Because of the work of Jesus, racial unity isn't only possible, it's inevitable. At the end of time, when Jesus comes and reigns on the throne, there will be a reconciled people who are racially different but united through Christ's blood. Why not experience this right now?

Let's start living undivided!

## **EXAMINE YOUR STORY**

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1. Are you currently in a state of stagnancy or flow when it comes to the work of racial healing and justice?
2. If you're stagnant, what would it take to move you into a state of flow?
3. What do you hope to learn or gain from reading this book? Are you willing to release preconceived notions and perhaps even a little bit of pride to get there?