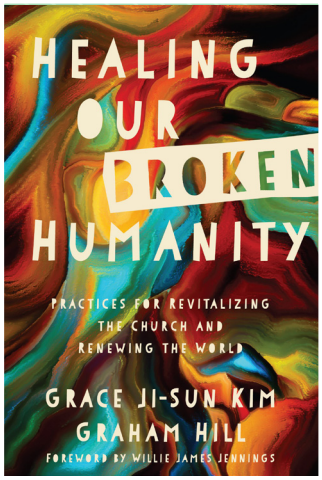
CBF Book Discussion Guide

by Kimani Francois



Healing Our Broken Humanity

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill

Overview

We live in conflicted times. Our newsfeeds are filled with inequality, division and fear. We want to make a difference and see justice restored because Jesus calls us to be a peacemaking and reconciling people. But how do we do this? Based on their work with diverse churches, colleges and other organizations, Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill offer Christian practices that can bring healing and hope to a broken world. They provide 10 ways to transform society, from lament and repentance to relinquishing power, reinforcing agency and more. Embodying these practices enables us to be the new humanity in Jesus Christ, so the church and world can experience reconciliation, justice, unity, peace and love. With small group activities, discussion questions, and exercises in each chapter, this book is an ideal one to read together in community. Discover here how to bring real change to a dehumanized world.

Meet the Authors

Grace Ji-Sun Kim: Grace Ji-sun Kim received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and is an associate professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion. She is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She is the author or editor of 14 books. Grace writes in the areas of racism, sexism, climate change and pneumatology. She is married to Perry and has three children, Theodore, Elisabeth and Joshua.

Graham Hill: Graham Hill teaches applied theology in world Christianity at Morling Theological College in Sydney, Australia. He is the founding director of the GlobalChurch Project, which encompasses resources to help Christian leaders and organizations. Graham is the author or editor of six books. He researches films and writes about trends and shifts in world Christianity. He travels worldwide for the GlobalChurch Project, interviewing and filming Christian leaders and communities. He is married to Felicity and has three daughters, Madison, Grace and Dakota.

Book Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

Reimagine Church — "as the new humanity in Jesus Christ" (page 14)

Commentary: *Healing Our Broken Humanity* begins with a call to reimagine the Church. This need stems from old divisions of strife, animosity and disunity rooted in the sense of personal and corporate identities. But "Jesus calls us to shape new identities as the new humanity in Christ" (page 22). As Paul said in Ephesians 2:15, Christ has abolished the old divisions, and we are one in Christ, but this does not "rid us of our cultures, identities, and unique contributions."

This chapter examines qualities and convictions of "new humanity churches," exploring how churches can be one body, with one Messiah, one Spirit, one life, one table, one politic, one righteousness, one peace, one mission, one faith, one hope and one love.

1. **Individual Reflection:** The author says that we are one body, with one Messiah, one Spirit, one life, one table, one politic, one righteousness, one peace, one mission, one faith, one hope and one love. Which of these resonates with you most? Why?

2. **Community Reflection:** What are some of the problems with tokenism, pragmatism, cultural accommodation and window dressing? What are some potential long-term, systemic and theological solutions to animosity and division in the Church and world?

3. **Social Implications:** The Church is a social ethic. Define and discuss.

Chapter 2

Renew lament — through corporate expressions of deep regret and sorrow.

Commentary: Lament has been a constant theme since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have lost relatives, friends, co-workers and community members. People worldwide have lost jobs, businesses, homes, life savings and a sense of community—all in the course of 20 months. There has been a lot to lament throughout 2020 and 2021. In this chapter, Grace and Graham consider nine elements of lament—a model derived from the book of Lamentations. On page 43, lament is defined as "a demonstrative, strong, and corporate expression of deep grief, pain, sorrow, and regret. Lament and repentance deal with issues of the heart."

How does this shape our understanding of lament? How do we center lament as a means of renewal? As you journey through this chapter individually and together, challenge yourself and your community to write a group lament for the deep suffering in the world today.

1. **Individual Reflection:** What do you lament privately? Have you ever lamented in public? If so, where? What was the root of your sorrow, regret or shame?

2. **Community Reflection:** Does your church practice lament? What kinds of things do your church and culture need to lament? What needs to change for your church to renew your practice of lament together? Which of the nine elements of lament do you most resonate with? Why? Soon-Chan Rah writes, "The absence of lament in the liturgy of the American church results in the loss of memory" (page 43). What is the significance of memory in a spiritual practice of lament?

3. **Social implications:** How do we lament the sins of the United States of America (slavery, sexism, racism, classism, nationalism, paternalism and the addiction to power)?

Chapter 3

Repent Together — of white cultural captivity, racial and gender injustice and of our complicity.

Commentary: Thinking about the previous chapter, what is the difference between lament and repentance? Why do we as a church body need to repent together? As you read this chapter, center your heart by reading Psalm 6, Psalm 32, Psalm 38 or Psalm 51 aloud, hearing the rhetorical prowess and deep yearning for change within the text.

The main takeaway from this chapter is to understand the four stages of repentance: conviction, contrition, commitment and change. We cannot move into healing and reconciliation without repentance. "Renewed hearts, minds, and behaviors lead to a restored relationship with God, with people, and with the earth" (page 59). Through these four C's, it is hoped that repentance might become a practice we incorporate into our daily lives.

1. **Individual Reflection:** Why is repentance essential to the Christian's inner life in order to pursue a new humanity? How often do you repent in a week?

2. **Community Reflection:** The mixing of Christianity and nationalism is not Christian at all. What convictions and foundations of white evangelical church life need to be eradicated to prevent the mixing of political affiliations with identity in Christ? What needs to change for you and your church to repent of white (or other) cultural captivity, of racial and gender injustice and your complicity?

3. **Social Implications:** The authors say that we need to ask ourselves how our attitudes and practices disadvantage the elderly, Muslims, people of color, indigenous peoples, undocumented migrants or refugees, women, the poor, those with disabilities or other groups. How do my choices and preferences and attitudes silence and marginalize these groups? How do my political decisions compound the problem?" Discuss these questions in your group. Of what do you need to repent and how will you embrace the mind of Christ?

Chapter 4

Relinquish Power — by giving up our own righteousness, status, privilege, self- ambition, self-interest, vain conceit and personal gain.

Commentary: This chapter should wholeheartedly convict the reader. Through examples of Jesus and Paul, Grace and Graham provide critical examples of how to relinquish power. The takeaway from this chapter is the power audit exercise at the end of this section by Mandy Marshall. This exercise will help your small group recognize the power each has individually and as a unit. It enables readers to be better equipped to confront issues of injustice, whether implicit or explicit. Being an ally to those suffering at the hands of racial, political, linguistic and gender-based power is not enough; we must understand that embracing powerlessness expands our call to this new humanity.

1. **Individual Reflection:** As Jesus relinquished his own power to empower the Samaritan woman at the well by asking her for a drink of water, how might we do the same in our personal lives? How do we identify where we hold power? (This requires serious reflection and is a part of spiritual formation.) What needs to change for us to use what power we have for the sake of others and in the way of the cross?

2. **Community Reflection:** What kinds of power do you and the people in your church need to give up? What needs to change for you and your church to relinquish power (including your status, control, privilege, ambition, self-interest, political leverage, personal gain and economic influence)? How can the church embrace powerlessness?

3. **Social Implications:** Can we ask those who have been marginalized, silenced and abused by sexism, racism, white supremacy, imperialism, slavery, hate crimes or discrimination to relinquish their power? Why or why not?

Chapter 5

Restore Justice — to those who have been denied justice.

Commentary: "Justice requires us to move toward dignity, hope, and freedom for all people inclusive of all their differences. Justice requires that we leave no one out. We must leave no one's experience unconsidered in exploring and expanding our ideas of God, sin, redemption and the Church. We must leave no one's oppression unchallenged and no system of oppression intact" (pages 100-101).

How do we create a more just society in a violent and corrupt world?

1. **Individual Reflection:** Why is silence a form of injustice?

2. **Community Reflection:** When thinking about restoring justice, how should the Church respond to chants like "Black Lives Matter" and "Stop Asian Hate"?

3. **Social Implications:** What steps will you take to fully apply this practice in the long term? Think about how you can apply this practice in your life, family, small group, church and neighborhood.

Chapter 6

Reactivate Hospitality — by rejecting divisions and exclusion and by welcoming all kinds of people into the household of God.

Commentary: This chapter addresses the need to reactivate hospitality. Rereading your notes from the chapter Reimagine Church while reading this chapter will be refreshing and helpful in conversation. Grace and Graham claim that the world is changing, requiring the Church and individuals to be hospitable. We must embrace hope, love and renewal. We must reject tribalism, nationalism, paternalism and evil. We must become one and welcome the other. This means to embrace diversity in all forms: ethnic, linguistic, cultural, gender, racial, social-economic and theological.

1. **Individual Reflection:** Can you genuinely practice hospitality if you do not love your neighbor?

2. **Community Reflection:** The authors say, "The gospel suffers from a form of cultural captivity in the West. But the renewal of world Christianity has lessons to teach us all. The de-westernization of Christianity may, if we allow it, help us address the western cultural captivity of the gospel" (page 115). Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. **Social Implications:** Diversity requires new levels of hospitality. We must welcome and embrace the foreigner, the stranger and the other. Ruth Padilla Deborst says that this involves four things: (1) building homes and living sustainably in them; (2) planting gardens, caring for creation and food sourcing; (3) cultivating families and churches that provide "fertile ground for converted covenantal relations;" and (4) seeking the welfare of the city. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Chapter 7

Reinforce Agency — by supporting people's ability to make free, independent and unfettered choices.

Commentary: "By empowering and profiling the voices of those often neglected, this church witnesses to God's extravagant love and justice by breaking down the dividing walls of animosity, hatred, fear, discrimination, and exclusion. Reinforcing agency is another way of talking about being a transformed, healthy, missional church—one that welcomes the stranger, offers good news to the broken and poor, shines in the darkness, and practices lavish welcome, hospitality, and embrace."

This chapter's main takeaway is the realization that those in power must deny themselves and be humble enough to listen to the local leaders in places of suffering. Those in power must empower.

1. **Individual Reflection:** Consider the example given at the beginning of this chapter that includes the Australian Prime Minister John Howard's implementation of the Australian federal government intervention program, "Little children are sacred," into remote aboriginal communities. Reflect on the danger and the harm one can do when trying to fight injustice in a society where they do not reside. What are the harms done when you rob oppressed people of their agency?

2. **Community Reflection:** How do church systems, traditions, practices and structures sometimes quash personal, collective agency?

3. **Social implications:** Why do those in power often treat minority or disadvantaged groups like helpless victims, robbing them of their autonomy and agency?

Chapter 8

Reconcile Relationships — through repentance, forgiveness, justice and partnership.

Commentary: Reconciliation takes work. It is a slow and painful process that can take years, possibly centuries. But in the end, it is worth it. We can do it through the love of Christ, the work of our hands and through changed hearts. If we are to be reconciled to each other, we must be reconciled to God.

Brenda Salter McNeil says that, "Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish." This chapter centers this definition and elaborates on ways we can work practically towards reconciliation.

1. **Individual Reflection:** Amal and Maya Nassar gave up cultural standards to represent what reconciliation looks like. What types of power must be relinquished to do the actual work of reconciliation to commune together? Are there ways you can do this in your life?
2. **Community Reflection:** Why do we need a biblical view of reconciliation that frames our purpose and posture in reconciliation? How do we develop this biblical view of reconciliation?
3. **Social Implications:** In the violent and divided world in which we live, how do we lean into being an alternative community of peace, hope and reconciliation?

Chapter 9

Recover Life Together — as a transformed community that lives out the vision of the Sermon on the Mount.

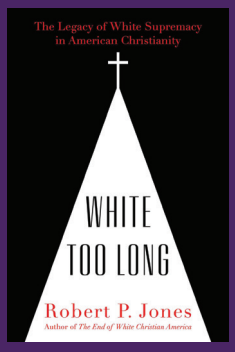
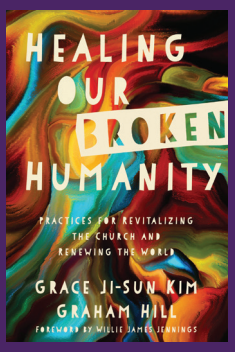
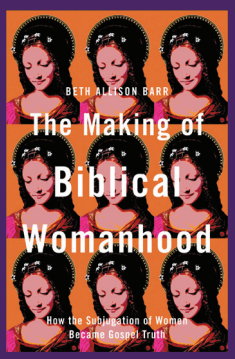
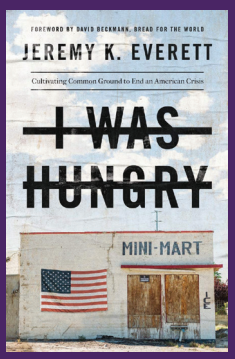
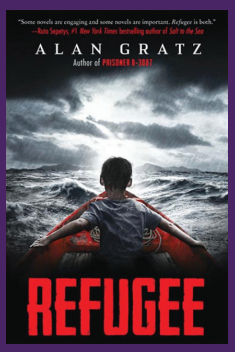
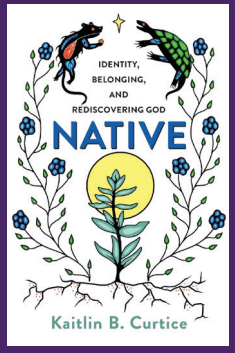
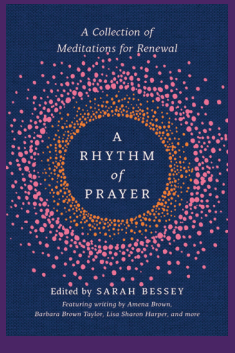
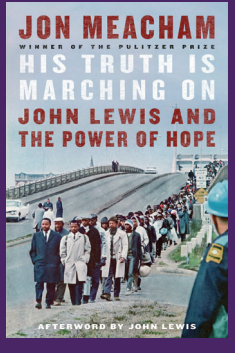
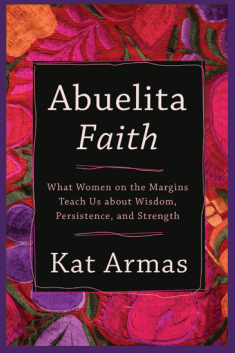
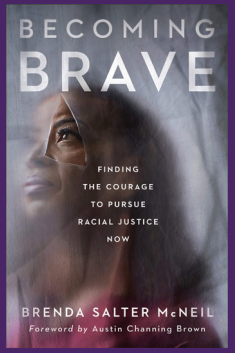
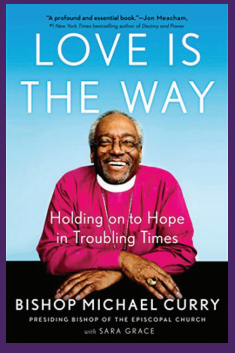
Commentary: In this final chapter, Grace and Graham ask, "How do we recover this [radical discipleship and communal] life together and in this world?" This is a difficult question to answer but, with precision and clarity, the authors provide an answer through Jesus' social ethic: the Sermon on the Mount. "The Sermon on the Mount is a vision of a community of disciples who pursue lives together and in the world and who witness to Him, to a new humanity, and to the age to come."

While reading this final chapter, focus on the real-life examples used in each section, reflecting on the significance of their discipleship within their community.

1. **Individual Reflection:** "God reconciles us to Godself in Jesus Christ, and then God reconciles us to each other and gives us the ministry of reconciliation" (page 160). In what ways have you proclaimed that you were reconciled to God but did not show true reconciliation with your neighbor? How did this hinder your witness?
2. **Community Reflection:** What would the Church be like if we focused on the Sermon on the Mount as much as we do on Paul's writings or on the Ten Commandments? What needs to change for you and your church to recover life together as a transformed community that lives out the vision and ethics of the Sermon on the Mount?
3. **Social Implications:** Why do we need a community to survive? How do we genuinely live out these practices in our secular communities?

Kimani Francois is a writer, poet, theologian and activist. She graduated from Wheaton College in May of 2019 with a degree in communications with a concentration in rhetoric and culture. She is currently pursuing her Master of Divinity at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. She is the host of "Kiki's Korner: Where Biblical Principles Meet Culture."

CBF Book Club 2021-22

We're excited to announce selections for this year's book club. With new subjects, great authors, more comprehensive reading guides and Fellowship-wide virtual events. We invite you and your congregation, Sunday school class or small group to join us as we read and learn together.

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