

# MULTIETHNIC CONVERSATIONS FOR KIDS



Mark Deymaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi  
ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLOTTE C. BLACK

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**wesleyan**  
PUBLISHING HOUSE  
wphstore.com  
Fishers, IN



Copyright © 2022 by Wesleyan Publishing House  
Printed in the United States of America  
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House  
13300 Olio Road, Suite 100  
Fishers, Indiana 46037

ISBN: 978-1-63257-512-8  
ISBN (e-book): 978-1-63257-513-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022942419

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## INTRO

# JESUS PRAYED FOR US

**I**n prayer, we share our deepest thoughts and feelings with God. When we are feeling upset or scared, our prayers are extra important. So, imagine Jesus as He was about to go to the cross. Although He knew what He needed to do, He was worried about what would happen. What do you think His big prayers were? What might have been on his mind?

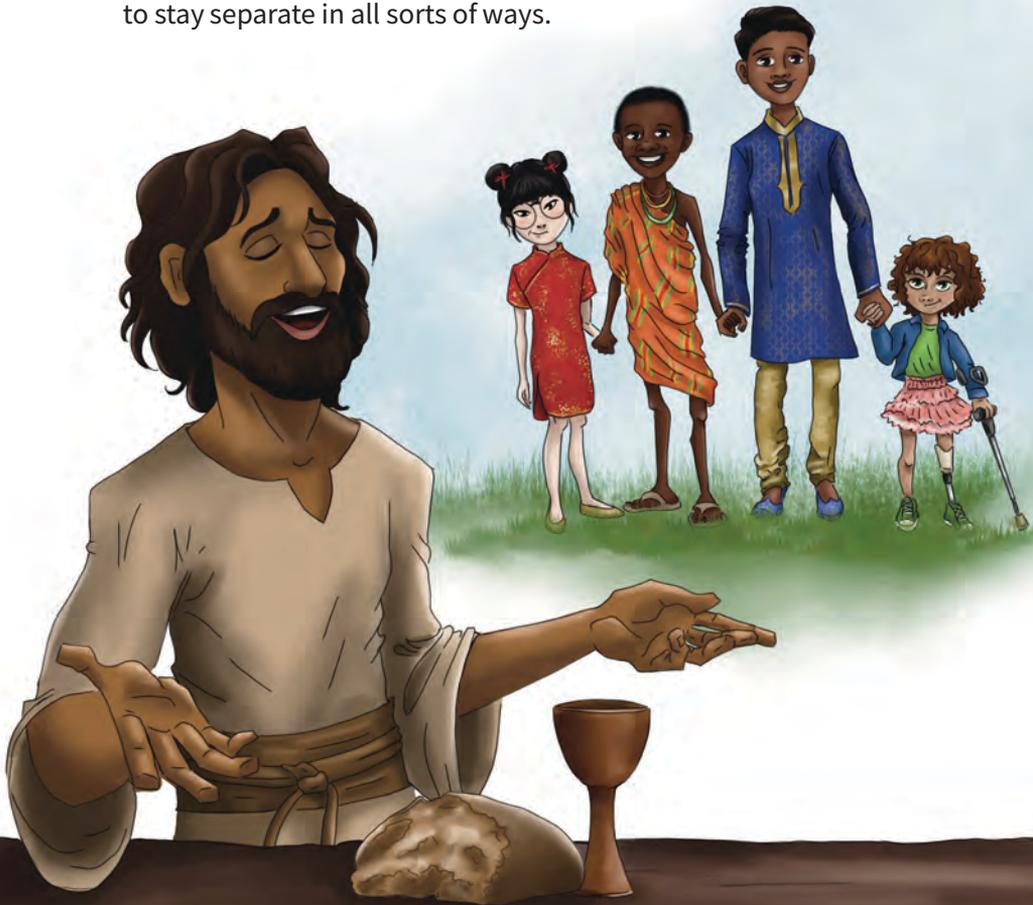
We actually don't have to guess, because John 17 tells us. He prayed with all his heart for us to be one. He wasn't asking for us all to become one person—it's certainly not possible to squish us all together! Instead, He was focusing on the idea

Father, I pray they will be one, just as you are in me and I am in you. I want them also to be in us. Then the world will believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me. I did this so they would be one, just as we are one. I will be in them, just as you are in me. This is so that they may be brought together perfectly as one. Then the world will know that you sent me. It will also show the world that you have loved those you gave me, just as you have loved me.

—*John 17:21-23*

of unity. Unity means being joined together in purpose—sort of like a sports team working together to win a game. Jesus and God the Father are the perfect example of unity. They care about the same things. They agree with each other on everything. Jesus even said that He doesn't do anything unless He sees His Father doing it!

Jesus prayed that everyone who believes in Him would be just as united as He and His father are. And He gave us a big promise in this prayer: If we are united—if we act, think, and live as one—the whole world will believe in Jesus! Unfortunately, we are not always united. Too often, even people who love Jesus use their differences to stay separate in all sorts of ways.



For example, people come in many different skin colors. This is because people long ago lived in different places—some hotter and some colder than others. God designed melanin to protect people’s skin who lived in hotter places. More melanin makes a person’s skin darker and more protected from the sun. Less melanin makes it lighter and less protected. Hair also helps protect people from the sun. Thick, curly hair protects more than thin straight hair does. Over time, some people noticed differences in hair and skin and divided people into groups they called races. Because of this, many have treated the groups differently, being kinder to some and meaner to others. We often have separate churches based on these differences too. This has kept us from being one. We have let other things keep us from being united too, such as what country we are from, our culture or way of doing things, and even how much money we have.

This is not what Jesus prayed for.

## **Jesus and God the Father are the perfect example of unity.**

That’s why this book exists. As you read, have conversations with your grown-ups about how we can all come together. You can read a chapter every night for twenty-one nights or three chapters a week for seven weeks. Either way, as we explore Bible stories about being one, we will learn how to bring unity even with differences. By doing this, we have a part in being the answer to Jesus’ prayer!



## KNOW

**WE ARE DIFFERENT PARTS  
OF THE SAME BODY**

**T**ogether, the people all over the world that follow Jesus are one body. We are not an actual, physical body, but God wants us to work together, exactly like the parts of a body. The fact that we are one body doesn't mean everyone is the same. In a body, all the parts are different, but they work together to get the job done. What would it be like if eyes tried to be a different body part? Eyes are great for seeing, but they wouldn't do a very good job as stomachs or feet! It's the

Suppose the foot says, "I am not a hand. So I don't belong to the body." By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. And suppose the ear says, "I am not an eye. So I don't belong to the body." By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body. The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you!" The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

—1 Corinthians 12:15–21

same with the Church as the body of Christ—if we try to make everyone the same, nothing will work very well.

Too often, the people who gather together for church are all the same in some way. Perhaps they are from the same country, like Korea or Mexico. Perhaps they are all the same race, like Black or White. Maybe they all live in the same neighborhood and work at jobs that are alike. When this happens, we end up trying to smell with feet, because we don't have all the parts of the body. We miss what people who are different from us can offer.

Instead, we can all get to know people who are different from us in some way. We can learn what they do well and show them what we do well. An arm on the ground by itself isn't very useful; arms work very well connected to a body. We are better together!

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 What is something special about you? What do you have that you could teach someone else?
- 2 What body part do you think you might be in the Church? For example, I might be an eye, because I see things others might miss, or I might be a mouth, because I love to sing.

## BE

## LOVE WELL

In the New Testament book of Galatians, we learn about the fruit of Spirit, which includes nine characteristics the Holy Spirit helps followers of Jesus grow in their lives. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In some of our readings, we will talk about these characteristics. Today, we will talk about love. If we are loving, people can believe God is too.

If we say that Jesus loves everybody, but we do not love other people, especially people that are in some way not the same as us, our words make no sense. Our words are like a noisy gong and people will not pay attention to what we have to say about God. . . . But the best thing you can do to help others believe in God and feel welcomed in the church is to love them just like Jesus loves them, no matter who they are, what they look like, or from where they've come.

—1 Corinthians 13:1, 13  
(paraphrase)



A man named Paul once wrote about love in a letter he sent to people living in a city named Corinth. These people, called Corinthians, believed in Jesus and went to the same church. When Paul's letter arrived, they read it together.

Many ships sailed to and from Corinth. In fact, ships were coming and going from its harbor day and night, bringing food, clothes, furniture, and more to the city from faraway lands. On these ships were sailors and passengers from many different places in the world. They were men and women, old and young, rich and poor. Because they were from different places, they did not all speak the same language, and they had different ways of doing things. Many different kinds of people came to live and work in Corinth because of these ships. And the church in Corinth was made up of different sorts of people too.

Even though they all loved Jesus, Paul wrote his letter because he wanted to make sure they all loved each other too.

Why was it important to Paul that the Corinthians loved each other even though they had differences in their age, culture, and country of birth? Paul knew that if everyone did not love each other, other people living in the city might not believe their message that “God loves all people.” When we demonstrate genuine love for all people, not just some people, we make Jesus happy. When the way we act matches what we say, we make it easier for others to believe in God too.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Why do you think it's important to be friendly with other people that might not look like you at school, on the playground, or at church?
- 2 Is it hard to talk to people different from you or to be their friend? Why or why not?



## DO

## COMMIT TO UNITY

**P**aul wrote letters to Christians living in many different places. He wrote these words to people living in a city called Ephesus. Like the Christians in Corinth, Christians in Ephesus were also people of many different countries and cultures. But that didn't stop them from loving each other. They were patient and gentle with one another. In fact, everyone in the church in Ephesus was committed to unity and peace, despite their differences. That's why Paul was so proud of them—and he told them so. Their faith in Jesus changed their minds. Their love for Him made loving one another possible.

Once, a certain man asked Jesus, “What is the most important thing God wants me to do?” Jesus told the man to

For this reason, I too, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks and praying for you.

—*Ephesians 1:15–16*  
(paraphrase)

love God with all his heart and to love his neighbor in the same way he loved himself. According to the Bible, a “neighbor” is not just someone that lives nearby or someone that we sit next to at school. A neighbor could also be someone very different from us (see Luke 10:25–37). It’s someone that might be hard for us to like or get to know at first. Through his many letters, Paul encouraged Christians not only to love and serve Jesus, but to love and serve one another. Wherever they did, many others came to believe that Jesus was God and Savior of the world.

### LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Do you find it hard or easy to love yourself? If you felt about yourself the way God feels about you, how would you feel?
- 2 Do you find it hard or easy to love others? How about others who seem different from you?

#### DO!

What is a country (other than the US) where you have been or that sounds like a fun place to go someday? With your grown-up, look up information about people living in that country. Find out what language people living in that country speak; what foods they like; and what kinds of clothes they wear. What else is unique about the country you chose? Draw a picture with the information you found.



## GLOSSARY

Kids and grown-ups, you can use this section to look up terms that you may not understand.

**character**—A patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions.

**church (small “c”)**—A local community of Christians who meet together regularly to pray, worship, and help each other.

**Church (big “C”)**—People all over the world who are Christians.

**Christian**—Someone who has made God the boss of their life by believing that Jesus is the Son of God and following Him in what they do and say.

**culture**—The way a group of people does things, like their language, food, religion, or music.

**ethnicity**—Belonging to a group that shares the same ancestors (like great-great-great-grandparents) and has the same culture.

**Jews**—A group of people descended from a man named Israel (formerly called Jacob). They were picked by God to show the world who God is by living in a special way.

**Gentile**—Anyone who is not Jewish.

**gentle**—Having a kind and quiet nature. Not harsh.

**Messiah**—The leader God promised the Jewish people would save them. Jesus is the Messiah!

**neutral**—Not taking sides. Staying in the middle.

**patient**—Being willing to wait and not hurry.

**peace**—Having nothing broken and nothing missing in ourselves or our relationships.

**poor**—Not having everything that you need. Also called “destitute.”



**race**—A group people are assigned to based on the color of their skin, their hair, and other parts of the way they look. These group labels are sometimes used to treat some people differently than others.

**righteousness**—Trying to make things right with God and with other people.

**saints**—Another word for a group of Christians.

**unity**—A feeling of togetherness; joining together to do something, sort of like a sports team that works together to win a game.

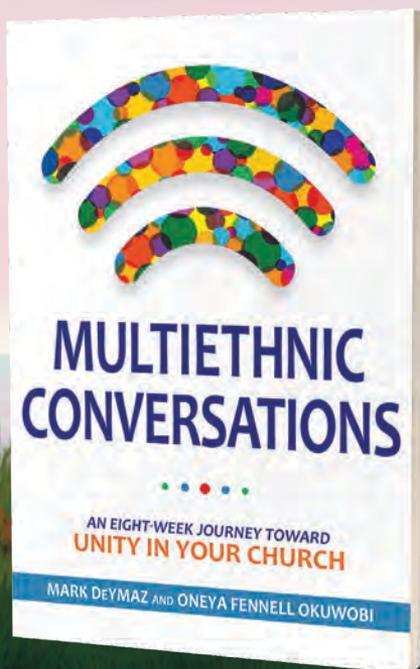


## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**A** thought-leading writer and recognized champion of the Multiethnic Church Movement, **Dr. Mark DeYmaz** planted Mosaic Church (Little Rock, Arkansas) in 2001 where he remains the directional leader. In 2004, he cofounded the Mosaix Global Network and continues to serve as its CEO and president. Mark is the author of eight books including, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church and Disruption: Repurposing the Church to Redeem the Community*.

**Dr. Oneya Fennell Okuwobi** is teaching pastor at 21st Century Church, a church plant in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is also an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Cincinnati. Oneya's research examines how multiethnic churches and organizations can improve racial equity. She is married to Oladele and mom to Cadence, whose valuable feedback shaped this work.

Mark DeYmaz and  
Oneya Fennell Okuwobi have also  
written a book for grown-ups.



### *Multiethnic Conversations*

is a proven catalyst to help transform the minds, attitudes, and actions of people in your local church and lead them to enthusiastically embrace one another in the midst of cultural change. Structured around eight weeks of daily readings and thought-provoking questions, this attractive and accessible workbook is a Christ-centered, biblically accurate guide that facilitates authentic personal exploration and small group discussion of race, class, and culture. As the centerpiece tool of the Mosaic Global Network, this book brings diverse people together beyond the distinctions of this world that so often and otherwise divide. It all begins with conversation.

published by Wesleyan Publishing House



# DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN HELP ANSWER ONE OF JESUS' PRAYERS?

**J**esus prayed in John 17 that we would all be one. He wasn't talking about squishing all of us into one body, but each of us learning to act, live, and agree with others in unity—so that people from all over the world would believe in Jesus and be saved. This book can help you learn to do that!



This book is structured for grownups to have meaningful conversations with their elementary kids as they read together twenty-one Bible stories about being one in purpose. Living in unity—despite differences—is a goal of Jesus' prayer to His Father.

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ISBN: 978-1-63257-512-8



9 781632 575128

