

Reading Report for  
*The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*

A Paper Presented to:  
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In his book, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, Rich Villodas uses scripture and practical examples to suggest that Christians cannot fully live out their faith in Jesus Christ by compartmentalizing key areas of their lives including relationships, emotions, sexuality, ministry and occupation. Instead, he says, these facets are interconnected and must be understood and operated from a deeper spiritual level—not just the surface.

According to Villodas, “There’s a severe lack of depth in our lives and communities because we have allowed ourselves to be swept up by a world under the influence of addictive speed.”<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Christian spiritual life has been operating from a shallow place. That shallowness has impacted the Christian faith in such a way that believers think that doing for God is the same as being with God. It also hinders Christians’ ability to have deep relationships with each other; engage nonbelievers; and most importantly, model Jesus in their lives in such a way that people would want to follow him.

In the book, Villodas, pastor of New Life Fellowship in Queens, New York and an alumnus of Nyack-Alliance Theological Seminary, uses five key principles as the foundation of his argument: monastic value, emotional health value, health sexuality value, multiracial value and missional value.

Regarding monastic value, Villodas said Christians must establish a life rhythm that allows sufficient time to reflect: “It’s only when we leave the world that we can truly be at home

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<sup>1</sup> Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2020), 7.

in it.”<sup>2</sup> In terms of emotional health, Villodas stressed the importance of “interior examination,” and uses Psalm 139:23-24 to make his point:<sup>3</sup>

Psalm 139: 23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

That scripture has been the cry of many Christians, including this writer, as it forces them to turn the mirror on themselves instead of anyone else. Using an argument he had with his wife as an example—one that led to him breaking his cell phone—Villodas emphasizes how important it is to reflect on certain patterns of our behaviors. As he so aptly stated, “Limited reflection leads to dangerous reactions.”<sup>4</sup>

In terms of healthy sexuality value, Villodas stressed how important it is for covenant marriage partners to make love outside of the bedroom.<sup>5</sup> In other words, sex is not just about the physical act, but has spiritual and emotional implications before, during and after lovemaking.

In addressing multiracial issues, Villodas asserts that, too often, Christians attempt to separate racism and injustice from the spiritual realm. He does not agree. Instead, he believes that racism and injustice are sinful and uses an iceberg to illustrate his point.

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<sup>2</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 98.

<sup>4</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 103.

<sup>5</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 165.

Specifically, Villodas said that only a small percentage of racism—10 percent—is overt racism that is socially unacceptable. This includes things like the KKK, Swastikas, racial slurs, the N-word and hate crimes. According to his illustration, however, 90 percent of racism is unseen (beneath the iceberg) and is not overt. This includes mass incarceration, racial profiling, racist jokes, housing discrimination, police brutality, covert racism (socially tolerated).<sup>6</sup>

This is similar, he says, to the invisible powers those that Paul spoke of in Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.<sup>7</sup>(NET).

Villodas principle of missional value presents that, “The deeply formed mission is fundamentally about becoming a particular person and offering that person to the world. This kind of mission is not just about activity; it’s about being Christ for another.”<sup>8</sup> Mission is not just about doing, it’s about being. Being that Christ-like person that helps draw people to him.

In terms of the book interacting with my present or anticipated ministry context, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, confirmed my worldviews that the Bible does indeed have practical solutions. Villodas addressed so many things that I wish more of our churches would address regularly.

For instance, his material about family of origin is crucial. As I read it, I began thinking about myself, my cousins, my parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents—all of us. Although I was reared by a loving single mom, I clearly see how trauma has manifested itself in some very

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<sup>6</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 58.

<sup>8</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 172.

ugly ways in our family. Adding to this mix is my father's family and other children (of whom I am becoming closer to as an adult).

As Villodas said, "One of the major tasks of family-of-origin examination is the naming and rejection of certain scripts in favor of life-giving messages."<sup>9</sup> Many of our traumatic scripts have been, unbeknownst to us, reproduced in many areas of our lives and caused tremendous damage. I agree wholeheartedly with Villodas, and think the church should be a place where families get the tools to help them reject certain scriptures and give life to others.

As a single woman, I wish a pastor had presented sex from the spiritual perspective (outside of the bedroom like Villodas did). I absolutely connected with Villodas on this point and wish I had this information 30 years ago! Hence, the practical nature of the book. The most I heard from church about sex when I was a teenager was that fornication was a sin (and it was and still is), but that's a surface explanation for a spiritual problem. While it is a true answer, as Villodas said at the onset of the book, "the goal of this book is not a quick-fix strategy to solve all our problems but rather a long-term vision to help us have greater depth and maturity as we engage our problems."<sup>10</sup> That being said, I can attest that celibacy for Christian singles in their 50's is not a quick-fix strategy. By no means is it easy, but is a moment by moment reliance on the Holy Spirit to live holy.

Another area that I agreed with Villodas was balancing doing for God and being with God. This is an ongoing balancing act for me, but I am improving. I thank God for this, because

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<sup>9</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, xxiv.

as Villodas said, “ Over and over in the Gospels, Jesus conveys the power of God, and then he returns to be in communion with the God from whom that power flows.”<sup>11</sup>

Sometimes, we have to decline ministry requests. I am learning to do so, because when I haven't, it has been detrimental to my time with the Lord. There's no doubt in my mind that I am at peace and stronger spiritually when I have spent time with him. This peace then spills over into my relationships.

One of those relationships is my working relationships. As Villodas noted, we spend a significant amount of our lives at work. As a result, our workplace really should be viewed as a place of ministry.<sup>12</sup> I have had very challenging workplace relationships and asked the Lord to search me and my role in those relationships, as per Psalm 139:23-24. Doing so has improved them tremendously.

In terms of how this book will impact my theology and current ministry, I am still developing my own theology and views about racial reconciliation. I agree with Villodas from the sense of looking at institutional racism as a sin. I also greatly admire the differences of political and social opinion that are present at New Life Fellowship.

I admit, however, that sometimes my political and social views are conservative. Other times they are liberal, and in some instances they are in between the two. I wrestle with that, and I pray that the Lord helps me form an answer.

The only thing that I disagreed with Villodas about, and it really isn't a disagreement, but I wish he had delved into the homosexual and transgender issue. While I recognize that it could, and deserves, a book of its own, I believe it is worthy of more attention than he gave it.

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<sup>11</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, 205.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Villodas, Rich. *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2020.