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The Deeply Formed Life

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Rich Villodas is a Brooklyn-born Senior Pastor of a large multiracial church in Elmhurst, Queens. His church community comprised members from seventy-five different countries. He is the author of *The Deeply Formed Life*, a book that encourages Christians to live meaningful lives that are transformed by the teachings of Jesus. According to Villodas, many Christians today have a superficial or shallow life, and genuine spiritual growth necessitates a purposeful commitment to fundamental principles.

Chapters three and four, titled "Racial Reconciliation for a Divided World and Deeply Formed Practices of Racial Reconciliation," are areas of racial Reconciliation in which Rich Villodas delves into the problem of racial segregation in the United States and presents a plan for unification based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Villodas begins by acknowledging the reality of racial division in American society, noting that it is a deeply entrenched issue shaped by historical and systemic factors. He argues that Christians have a unique responsibility to address this issue and to work toward racial Reconciliation. He mentions the names of individuals who were victims of racial discrimination and hatred, highlighting that their deaths serve as a reminder that racial issues are still a persistent problem in America. This problem is deeply ingrained and difficult to eradicate.

A few compelling aspects caught my attention and provided substantial relevance to me. The first was Villodas' comment, "God is not in the business of saving souls; he is in the business

of creating a new family."¹ This was significant because it added to my worldview and broadened my spiritual expectation. It was always my understanding that God's desire is for us to walk in love and to be able to reconcile, hence the reason for sending his son Jesus. As the author noted: "Reconciliation is an important word. It's a biblical word."² Therefore, I concur with Villodas' viewpoint that we cannot presume racial reconciliation to be achievable without justice.

Villodas made another valid point that I concur with regarding the misconception that achieving racial reconciliation implies being color-blindness. While some may view this as an advantage, I see it as oblivion or a deficiency of understanding. To say, "I don't see color; I see people"³ is an attempt to promote diversity and equality by disregarding differences in skin color. Yes, we all see color, and it is essential to acknowledge and respect these differences without using them to dictate how we treat one another.

In the fourth chapter, Villodas emphasized the importance of practices aimed at promoting racial reconciliation. One such method which he called "The Habit of Remembering" involves facing the historical reality of racial discrimination in America, including the oppression suffered by Native Americans and the enslavement endured by African Americans. Villodas reasoned that it is impossible to fully grasp the current climate of tension without acknowledging and reckoning with the past injustices. This point struck a chord because before taking this course, my understanding of forgiveness was limited to moving forward and not dwelling on the past. I

¹ Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*. (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2020), 51.

² Ibid., 53

³ Ibid., 61

believed forgiveness meant letting go of resentment, praying for justice, and refraining from perpetuating bias since the past cannot be changed. However, my perspective has shifted dramatically after completing this course over the past four months. I now recognize the significance of keeping the dark past as a reminder of the sacrifices made by our forefathers for the benefits we enjoy today. I also agree some minorities' success is often regarded as evidence of eliminating racial oppression, but such a perspective is excessively simplistic. As observed by James Baldwin, "The inequalities suffered by the many are in no way justified by the rise of a few."⁴

Villodas offers a vision for racial reconciliation grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ and it presents a powerful message of reconciliation that can bring people of different races and ethnicities together in a common bond of love and unity. He further emphasizes the importance of community in the process of racial reconciliation. He noted that racial reconciliation is not an individualistic endeavor but rather a communal one that requires individuals to work together towards a common goal. Villodas contends that building relationships across racial and ethnic lines is essential to healing and restoration, and he encourages readers to seek opportunities to connect with individuals from different backgrounds.

I have been greatly influenced by "The Deeply Formed Life" as it has equipped me with various tools to improve my current ministry and has impacted my theology. This book has expanded my comprehension of spiritual formation by presenting a holistic approach, as advocated by Villodas. It has also prompted me to question conventional notions of Christian discipleship, enabling me to challenge common assumptions within Christian circles. Additionally, the book's focus on Christ has motivated me to develop fresh spiritual practices and prioritize my involvement in community and mission, as well as seek opportunities to serve

⁴. Ibid., 67

others and spread the love of Christ. This book is a valuable tool for those who want to enhance their spiritual life and develop their comprehension of Christian discipleship.

Bibliography

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