



# THE COLORS OF HOPE

BECOMING PEOPLE  
*of* MERCY, JUSTICE,  
AND LOVE

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Study Guide and Discussion Questions

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## INTRODUCTION:

### ON BECOMING ARTISANS OF HOPE

1. Did you see *Schindler's List*? What emotions did it stir in you?
2. Where do you see gray in your life?
3. Which area in your life is currently injected with the color of hope?
4. When have you asked, "Is this all there is?" How did you answer?
5. How does the author's definition of religion correspond to your view of Christianity? What resonates with you in this definition? What disturbs you?
6. Where do you see color in your context?
7. What does living outwardly mean in your context?
8. What messes might you want to clean up before stepping into God's story?
9. How do you respond to the bad press that the church gets? How does it influence your spiritual life?

## **PART ONE: VISION**

1. How do you respond to the author's thesis statement in the third to last paragraph of the intro to "Vision"?
2. What does being an artist look like to you?

### **Part One, Chapter 1 Cure for the Common Consumer**

1. When have you almost missed a life-changing event?
2. What experiences do you have with children? What do you learn from them?
3. What do you do with the hearing you receive on Sunday?
4. The author writes, "We seem to move inexorably toward habits of consumption that wound, sometimes fatally, our creative self." What does this look like for you?
5. How does the risk of failure influence your life?
6. When has information changed for you from academic to "life and death"?
7. When have you seen scripture misused?
8. Can you think of a time of transformation in your life as a result of a better understanding of scripture?
9. What words would you use to describe the "canvas of our world"? What do you have to offer it?

## **Part One, Chapter 2**

### **Canvas: The Art of Waking Up**

1. In what areas have you learned how to see? What impact has that had on your Christian faith?
2. When have you been the recipient of a label? What impact has that had on your identity?
3. What is the relationship between seeing beauty and creating beauty?
4. How open are you to learning new things that may re-form your theology? What barriers are there to your openness?
5. How do you interlace your Christian faith practices with the society around you?
6. When, as a child, were you hurt by something that was taken from you?
7. How good are you at seeing the hidden places of your heart? What's at stake?
8. What is a loaded label that you need to confess and forsake?

## **Part One, Chapter 3**

### **Subject Matters: The Art of God's Reign**

1. When have you experienced something not describable by words?
2. In what ways do you see "eternity in the hearts of all"?
3. Why is Jesus worth leaving everything behind? What is disconcerting about this question?
4. What have you found to be good starting points for conversations with the unbelievers in your context? What doesn't seem to be a good place to start?

5. What is an example of two entities in your context that it is hard to imagine as united under God's rule?
6. What stands out to you in Isaiah 2:2-4?
7. When have you caught a glimpse of God's hope?
8. What "kingdom stuff" is reflected in your Christian faith?
9. What unique skills, gifts, and calling do you have that helps make God's reign visible in your context?

## **Part One, Chapter 4**

### **Own or Rent: Gaining Perspective**

1. How do your life and ethics flow out of your relationship with Christ?
2. What have you experienced as next steps during your relationship with Christ?
3. How do you live like a tenant in this world? How do you live like an owner?
4. What role do you play in caring for the earth? How important is caring for the earth to you?
5. In what ways do you invest in important things, even though they will pass away?
6. What does discipleship look like to you? How does it impact your interaction with the world around you?
7. Where have you seen artisans of hope on a global level? A national level? In your community?
8. Who do you see as your co-artisans?

## **PART TWO: THE PRIMARY COLORS**

1. What is your favorite color?
2. How do you bleed the “color” of Micah 6:8 in your daily responsibilities?

### **Part Two, Chapter 5**

#### **Do Justice: The Horrible Sounds of Silence**

1. Where have you witnessed injustice? How did you respond?
2. How does your understanding of why Jesus came correspond to Isaiah 61:1-2?
3. How is Matthew 25:34-37 reflected in your life?
4. Where do you see Christianity void of justice in your worldview?
5. How does being in the world’s wealthiest 5% sit with you?
6. What injustice shakes you? How do you deal with it? Does it compel you to action? Why or why not?
7. How do you interact with the marginalized? How do you insulate yourself from them?
8. How could you incorporate the color of justice more fully into your context?
9. How might you step out of your context in order to “do justice”?

### **Part Two, Chapter 6**

#### **Mercy Mountaineers: The Challenge of Lovingkindness**

1. How do you divide your time between being a climber, barely surviving, and a guide, leading and encouraging others?

2. What in your “backpack” weighs you down?
3. Where have you seen beauty break out in the midst of ugliness?
4. What experiences have you had with the U.S. criminal justice system?
5. When have you had a difficult time moving beyond an experience when someone has wounded you? What makes it difficult to forgive?
6. How easy is it for you to enter into the stories of the Rwandan genocide?
7. How do you respond to the forgiveness and reconciliation that was required in order for a county to move on in peace?
8. When have you given or received a false apology? What was the fallout?
9. When have you wrestled with a need to forgive someone who has deeply wounded you?
10. How has your inability to forgive restricted you to lower ground?
11. The author quotes Miroslav Volf: “I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners.” Where do you see yourself in Volf’s admission?
12. When have you experienced reconciliation? How did it come about?
13. How easy or difficult is it for you to see victim and perpetrator on level ground before the cross?
14. Where do you need to ask forgiveness?
15. Where do you need to extend forgiveness?
16. What do you need to give up in order to take the next step toward forgiveness?



17. What labels do you need to drop in order to see individuals for who they are? How can you take steps to do that?
18. Where have you been shackled by bitterness? What will it take to let go of the bitterness?

## **Part Two, Chapter 7**

### **Intimacy: Cosmic Mentoring and Empowerment**

1. Who do you know who bring out the best in you?
2. When has someone not let you quit?
3. Is it easiest for you to see God as example, lover, or parent? What is the hardest for you? Do you know why?
4. In what ways do you want to emulate Christ?
5. Which ways of Christ seem impossible or unreasonable to emulate?
6. What fruit do you see a result of your intimacy with Christ?
7. Where do you desire Christ's presence within you to bring transformation?
8. How did you fare the transition into adulthood, when you became free to make your own decisions, good or bad?
9. What is the "broccoli" in your life? What do you need more of? Less of?
10. How has your life taken unexpected turns?
11. How have your dreams changed over the last 5, 10, or 20 years? How does that make you feel?

12. Where do you see God's hand in your vocational decisions?
13. When has self-denial played a role in your decision-making?
14. What is uncomfortable to you about self-denial?
15. Are there current desires you need to say no to in order to say yes to God and what He has for you? Can you name them?

## **Part Two, Chapter 8**

### **Pastel Fantasy: God's Use of Deep Colors**

1. When has following Christ been difficult?
2. Did you ever go to summer camp? What was the highlight?
3. When have you experienced a mountaintop moment? How long did its impact on your life last?
4. When have you come to realize that your childhood was protected?
5. Can you think of a time when your world was rocked? How did it impact your faith?
6. Where have you seen yourself in the stories of scripture?
7. When has tragedy permanently altered your life or the life of someone you love?
8. What is appealing about the prosperity doctrine? What makes it irreconcilable to reality?
9. How do you reflect hope in your context? When have you entered a "blood-stained" world of a friend? How did you respond?
10. What role does fear play in your behavior and interaction with the world?

11. What are you afraid of?
12. How important is control to you? In which areas of your life are you most concerned about losing control?
13. What impact has suffering had on your capacity to hope?
14. How well do you live fully in pain as well as comfort?
15. When have you experience both joy and sorrow?
16. What ideas about suffering do you need to relinquish in order to step into a more deeply-colored life?

## PART THREE: CREATING ART WHILE LIFE HAPPENS

1. When have external circumstance altered the course of your life?
2. Can you name people who have dropped seeds of hope into your life?

### Part Three, Chapter 9

#### The Artist's Identity: Finding Your Voice

1. Do you know someone who has found their niche? How did they get there?
2. How much time do you spend thinking about your purpose in life?
3. Have you had a stake in the ground moment when you committed your life to God?  
What was the result?
4. How has your relationship with God shaped your vocational life and/or direction?
5. Do you see a connection between your relationship with God and your daily activities?  
Why or why not?
6. When have you been surprised to discover something you enjoy doing?
7. Can you think of something that you need to say "yes" to? What is holding you back?
8. When was the last time you risked? Why did you risk? Was it worth it? Why or why not?
9. When did you last avoid risk? Why? Any regrets?
10. How "safe" is your safety net?
11. Can you think of areas in your life to which you pay too much attention?

12. How is attention to barren soil in your life keeping you from cultivating areas of potential fruitfulness?

### **Part Three, Chapter 10**

#### **Overcoming Failure: Finding Our Way to the Land of Grace**

1. Can you think of a work of art you created as a child? Do you know where it is now?
2. What role does art play in your life currently?
3. What discourages you in your Christian life?
4. How do you address the reality of your shortcomings?
5. How easy is it for you to forgive yourself? Why?
6. Where have you seen God work in spite of shortcomings?
7. How easy is it for you to “show up” before God?
8. Can you think of a time when God has used you in spite of yourself?
9. Can you name some areas of your life where God would maybe like to use you, in spite of your sense of inadequacy?

### **Part Three, Chapter 11**

#### **Obstacles and Resistance: The Artist as Warrior**

1. When have you questioned what you thought was the voice of God because the fallout was less than rewarding? How did you respond?
2. When have you met with resistance when doing what you thought was the will of God?

3. When has resistance changed your course?
4. What might you be putting off that should be addressed now? What are your excuses?
5. In what areas of your life do you need to exercise perseverance?
6. Where do you see vision for one area of your life demanding your limited resources of time and energy? What other area of your life is the extra time and energy being taken from?
7. What are the big rocks in your life? Why are they big rocks?
8. Can you name your roles?
9. How does each role help you to be a better person? What is the cost?
10. How do you attempt to balance your roles?
11. If all the unimportant stuff was burned out of your life, what would be left?
12. What are you doing now to cultivate the areas of your life that would withstand the fire?

### **Part Three, Chapter 12**

#### **Change: Grappling with the Preacher in Chair 8**

1. When have you been jolted by the realization of your own mortality?
2. Can you think of a molten moment in your life that you wished would never end?
3. What changes in your life have been pleasant? What changes have been unpleasant?
4. How adaptable do you consider yourself? What makes it difficult? What makes it easy?

5. In what ways has life not turned out the way you had hoped? How has it impacted your dependence on God?
6. Who has exemplified the art of hope for you?
7. Who do you know who canvas has shrunk? How have they responded?
8. How have the changes and challenges you have faced enriched you as an agent of hope? How have they chipped away at your hope?
9. When has your context changed? Why?
10. Through all the contexts of change, what do you see as your calling?

### **Part Three, Chapter 13**

#### **Art in the Garden: So Sow**

1. Do you have a favorite place in nature that you return to often? How have you seen it change?
2. How enjoyable is it for you to work in the dirt? Do you know why?
3. What seeds of vision might be planted in the soil of your heart? How easy is it for you to trust that they are germinating in spite of outside circumstance?
4. Who do you know who is finishing well? Can you identify characteristics that have contributed to their faithfulness?
5. Have you made choices that get in the way of the germinating of the seeds that God has planted in your life? What limits have you put on the germination process?
6. When have you experienced a “thin place”? Who contributed to making it a thin place?

7. Can you think of a time when you have contributed to the creation or maintenance of a “thin place” for others? What role did you play?
8. Have you ever planted a seed in another’s life? What has happened? What are you hopeful will happen?
9. How has the ordinary character of most days caused you to lose sight of a vision you may have?
10. What does “a long obedience in the same direction” look like to you right now?
11. What can you do to fertilize the seeds of your heart within your current context?

## EPILOGUE

1. How is your dream different than your call? How would your life be different if you were living your dream rather than your call?
2. How do you find in Christ what you need for life and calling?
3. What do you need to let go of in order to more fully embrace Christ?
4. In what areas of your life do you need Christ’s mercy and strength, new every morning?





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