

DETAILS



Discipleship as Holy Collaboration *Helping Others Follow Jesus in Real Life*

May 14, 2024 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0619-1

Yolanda M. Solomon is the director of discipleship at Epiphany Church in Brooklyn, New York, where she teaches and creates discipleship curriculum and resources. She has also worked in campus ministry at Columbia University in New York, where she was blessed to serve undergraduate students for seven years. Yolanda is a disciple of Christ, a Brooklyn native, and a lifelong Knicks fan, which richly fuels her prayer life. She lives in Brooklyn with her family.

How Do We Make Disciples?

Many Christians don't disciple others because they think it's the church leaders' responsibility. But Jesus commanded *all* his disciples to go and make disciples. If we're honest, many of us hesitate to disciple others because we don't feel qualified, fear we'll do more harm than good, and think we don't have time for it. Yolanda Solomon provides a practical guide to help us become disciples who are empowered by Jesus to make disciples.

Through biblical exposition and personal narrative, Solomon describes the beauty of discipleship in a way that will (re)ignite your passion to disciple others. *Discipleship as Holy Collaboration* describes the traits of a disciple and examines how disciples are made as people encounter a love that empowers and compels them to continue Jesus' mission. She walks us through the life of Jesus, pointing out numerous examples of embodied discipleship that we can implement in our own context. Solomon describes Jesus' call to make disciples as an invitation to collaborate with God in a sacred group project. The book also includes a discussion guide and multiple step-by-step praxis activities to encourage and equip you to answer the call.

"For years, Yolanda has been reconstructing villages that will raise disciples of Christ who love Jesus, justice, and mercy, who walk humbly with our Thrice Holy God. In Discipleship as Holy Collaboration, Yolanda Michelle Solomon has gifted the church with a clear instruction manual on how to wield the sword of the Spirit with grace and truth in order to do the kingdom work of making disciples. May we all join Yolanda and partner with God in this divine village reconstruction project, which the American church so desperately needs."

-**Ekemini Uwan**, public theologian and coauthor of *Truth's Table: Black Women's Musings on Life, Love, and Liberation*

"Yolanda Solomon has been a beacon of light and wisdom for years. Her godly insight and reflections are collected here to help us all continue our own transformative journey with Jesus and others."

-**Lecrae**, recording artist and author of *I Am Restored: How I Lost My Religion but Found My Faith*

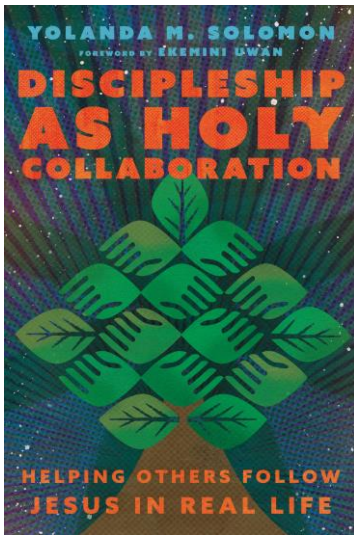


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We Follow Jesus Together

Christ-centered community is a major key to making disciples because it's a living witness of the gospel that proclaims that the kingdom of God has come on earth. When we make disciples and help people grow in spiritual maturity, we love our neighbor out loud and reflect the abundant generosity of God with our lives. The God of the Bible isn't stingy with who he is. To redeem creation, God revealed himself to his creation through Christ, to give us access to the triune Godhead. The Son reflects the Father's generosity by giving his life away on the cross to save people, and the Father sends the Spirit to reveal God's will to us and progressively transform us to look like Jesus.

When our faith is disembodied and more about mental assent to a set of beliefs and less about presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, it's difficult for people to believe that Jesus is working on earth. If people can't see the arms and legs of "Christ's body" working, how will they believe that the head exists?

Most pastors know that discipleship is God's mechanism for the growth of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16) and that since Jesus prioritized making disciples in his ministry on earth, then Christ's body should do the same. But the rest of this book isn't about that. It's about the beauty of discipleship. There are many things that we know are good and right that we don't do. I know that leafy greens are good for me, but I will choose a Popeyes biscuit over a spinach salad anyway because fat and salt on bread is beautiful. Jesus' discipleship calling is a command that is good and true, and it's also beautiful because following Jesus = following beauty and truth. When we engage people with the good news of the gospel, we should remember that people are drawn to what is beautiful before they care whether it's true or not. Reason comes in afterwards. On this topic philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote, "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of. . . . We know the truth not only through our reason but also through our heart" (Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensées*). The road to making disciples goes through heart transformation, and we engage people's hearts when we illustrate the sufficiency and beauty of Jesus and the kingdom of God as a beautiful, coherent way of life. Many people are hesitant to make disciples because they've fallen out of love with Jesus. In this book I want to engage your heart as we look at Jesus in the gospels, rediscover his beauty and in doing so reignite a zeal for the beauty of discipleship. In the pages to come, I want to cast a vision for the beauty of Jesus' discipleship calling by exploring how making disciples of Christ is a way to participate (right now) in the abundant life that Jesus calls us to.

The Spirit-filled community of the king is the foundation of discipleship. Discipleship is a corporate expression of obedience to God and love for neighbor that allows people to see what Jesus' love looks like in practice. When Christians prioritize discipleship in community, we make Jesus easier to see. The greatest commandment (love God and love people) empowers us to fulfill the Great Commission (make disciples of all nations). In the book of Acts, we see Spirit-filled communities continue the ministry of Jesus as they proclaim the good news of the gospel and embody the love of Jesus. Those communities are an attractive witness of the power and presence of Jesus because their lives make visible "the abundant life" that Jesus promised. Communities have the power to form (or deform) and shape us. The past ten years have shown me the great harm and heart (de)formation that happens when professing Christians fashion Jesus in their own image to gain power and then call that wanton pursuit of power discipleship. In this book I will discuss how healthy, Spirit-filled Christian communities proclaim the good news of the kingdom by appropriating God's love and grace into the life of the believing community and then bending it out into the world.

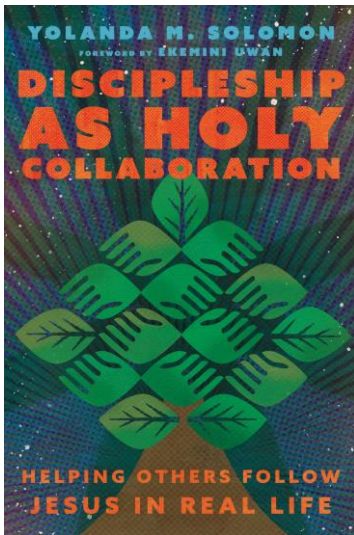


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I will also put my business in the streets and describe how different faith communities have shaped my own discipleship journey and spiritual formation (for better or for worse). At the core, I will provide practical tools for anyone who wants to take Jesus' discipleship call seriously—whether you're a new Christian, pastor, college campus minister or lay leader in a local church.

My disciple-making philosophy is simple. Imitate Jesus as you're empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our ability to make disciples is directly related to how we imitate and participate in the divine life that Jesus invites us into. In John 21:1-22, Jesus appears to the very disciples who deserted him, to commission them to follow in his footsteps and "make disciples" of all nations. Jesus doesn't ask why they deserted him, and he doesn't scold them. In fact, before Jesus commands Peter to "feed his sheep," he feeds them breakfast.

Jesus knows it's impossible for the "most problematic inhabitants" (Colin Gunton, *Christ and Creation*) of creation (aka humanity) to make disciples of Christ apart from being disciples of Christ. After denying Jesus, Peter had to experience Jesus as a forgiving shepherd before he could shepherd anyone himself. Peter had to experience Jesus as a grace giver before he could testify about the power of God's grace. And the same is true for us. On that beach, Jesus fed his disciples (physically and spiritually) before sending them out to make disciples. In the same way, Jesus empowers us by the Spirit to make disciples because he knows that we can't continue his story in our own strength.

-adapted from chapter 1, "My Discipleship Journey"

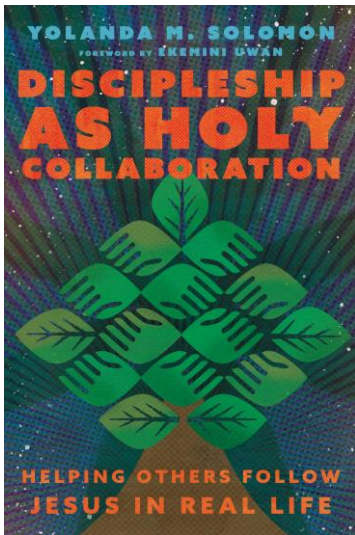


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Q & A



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America Has a Discipleship Problem

What led you to write *Discipleship as Holy Collaboration*?

Yolanda M. Solomon: I was motivated to write this book because frankly, America has a discipleship problem.

Inside churches across America are people who feel like they should enjoy following Jesus, but instead they feel like frauds because they don't. Let's call them "hungry but timid."

In these same churches are people who took the risk to ask for spiritual guidance, were badly disciplined by a Christian, and were traumatized as a result. They're guarded, anonymously attend church and "peace out" right after the benediction because trusting someone again other than Jesus himself is too risky. At the end of the day, they just want to meet one or two safe people to follow Jesus with. They're "wounded sheep."

Finally, sprinkled in these very same churches are people who try their best to read their Bible, pray. And love their neighbor. They're "busy but bored believers." They're usually in church leadership but feel like something is missing in their spiritual formation. Most times they're the safe person that a "wounded sheep" desires to follow Jesus with, but they have disqualified themselves for several reasons. When I talk to "busy but bored believers" and ask if they'd be interested in connecting with and mentoring a "hungry but timid" believer or lovingly coming alongside a "wounded sheep," the response is usually some iteration of "I'm not qualified! I didn't go to seminary, and I don't want to lead someone astray!" "I don't have the time!" "I'm an introvert!"

And finally, many are disillusioned with ministry because they've seen discipleship become a means of recruiting soldiers for culture wars, and any zeal they once had to make disciples has been quenched. As that disillusionment gives way to unbelief, many gifted leaders end up leaving the church.

And all these people are in the same churches on any given Sunday, connected by the same Spirit, but separated by fear, trauma, and doubt. My motivation for writing this book is to cast a vision for the beauty of discipleship and equip the "busy but bored" believers who've quit "making disciples" and are on the verge of leaving the faith (because of trauma-induced disappointment, doubt, or deconstruction) to walk alongside and mentor the "hungry, hurt and timid" Christ follower who wants to grow in spiritual maturity.

In the recent past, I've seen firsthand how people have been disciplined into political idolatry, White Christian Nationalism, and xenophobia in the name of following Jesus. I've seen the violence that is wrought when fear of "being replaced" is the primary motivation for making disciples, as opposed to Jesus' mission which was rooted in love. In light of this, I was motivated to write about making disciples in a way that explores how Jesus exposes and rejects the idols in his cultural context and embodies a countercultural way of living, rooted in love to turn people's hearts away from idolatry.

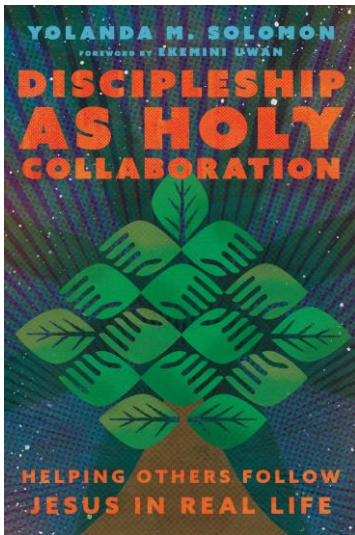


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My motivation to write this book flows from a conviction that how well we understand and embody what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God is a major key to making disciples of Jesus and not disciples of culture. In the recent past we've endured global climate change-induced natural disasters, monthly mass shootings, skyrocketing inflation, the rise of Christian nationalism, and the loss of millions of lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mostly everyone I know is traumatized. Considering this, I was motivated to cast vision for a theology of discipleship that matches the weight of the trauma that people have endured.

I was motivated to write what eventually became this book while studying the gospel of John. As I studied the life of Jesus, I began to see a pattern of Jesus inviting ordinary people to participate in the miracles that he performed, as a way of inviting them into a new way of living that was good news to all kinds of people. I was compelled to cast a vision for the beauty of discipleship that would motivate "busy but bored" Christians to see Jesus' discipleship call as an invitation to participate in the miracle that God is working in the lives of others. I want to help people see that making disciples is possible for them because it's a holy collaboration that's initiated and empowered by God as God works through us and people around us.

What do you hope readers take away from *Discipleship as Holy Collaboration*?

Yolanda:

- Making disciples is a holy collaboration, a group project. The sacred work of making disciples is initiated by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and is a continuation of the work of Jesus that disciples are invited into by Jesus.
- Making disciples is how we follow in Jesus' footsteps. Jesus provides the recipe of a sacrificial life of love and obedience, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to share Jesus' recipe with others.
- Discipleship is motivated by our love for God and others, not fear of being replaced by others.
- Jesus invites us into a divine community to help us understand how to love like he does.
- Friendship with God is a major key to the divine life. We make disciples as we introduce people to a God who calls us friends.
- Making disciples is a corporate expression of obedience to God and love for neighbor that allows people to see what Jesus' love looks like in practice.



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