

# MIGHT from the MARGINS

**The GOSPEL'S POWER to TURN  
the TABLES on INJUSTICE**

**Dennis R. Edwards**

Study Guide written by Jessica Edwards



Harrisonburg, Virginia

## INTRODUCTION

1. What were a couple of key takeaways for you from the introduction to *Might from the Margins*?
2. Dennis Edwards begins his introduction with a provocative declaration: “Shoot me if I ever work for white evangelicals again!” (p. 15). Have you or someone you know ever said something similar?
3. Edwards tells a story about a church’s decision to not include “neighborhood kids” in the church’s youth group. What do you think of the church’s decision? How might you have handled that situation?
4. The introduction makes it clear that the intention of the book is to center people of color rather than targeting white Christians. How does that approach impact your posture as you prepare to engage with the text?
5. Edwards ends the introduction by declaring that the power of marginalized people goes unnoticed and underutilized by the majority culture. Marginalization comes in many forms (non-white, non-male, unconventionally attractive, disabled). Even though you may be a member of a marginalized community, do you think that another aspect of your identity may wield privilege? If not, why not?

**Begin by asking yourself or your group as you reflect on each chapter of *Might from the Margins*:  
“What stood out to you?”**

## CHAPTER ONE: THE POWER OF GOD

1. What is the *gospel* to you? How is that similar or different from the characteristics of a *robust gospel* that Edwards shared (p. 29)?
2. Since “sin energizes oppressive structures” (p. 30), what is the responsibility of a Christian who longs to live out the robust gospel?
3. How does solely focusing on personal sin management harm the body of Christ? Use Edwards’ story about evangelizing in the park to guide your conversation.
4. Edwards shared that a robust gospel includes the story of Jesus, therefore we cannot ignore Jesus’ Jewish identity. How does Jesus’ identity as a member of a marginalized people impact your understanding of living out the gospel?
5. The chapter wraps up with the reminder that we need community in order to live out the robust gospel. What are the benefits of working communally to “turn the tables on injustice” (p. 42)?

## CHAPTER TWO: THE POWER OF DIASPORA PEOPLE

1. Edwards begins this chapter recounting a traumatic encounter with the police. How have these types of traumas impacted your interactions with Christians of the dominant culture?
2. Reflect on and share aloud some of the similarities between Jews in ancient Rome and African Americans in the USA.
3. What does it mean when Edwards refers to people as *diaspora Christians*?
4. Edwards says “Diaspora Christians...are among the best teachers of what it means to follow Jesus” (p. 46). How does that make you feel? Uncomfortable? Hopeful?
5. Right now, Christianity functions as a religion of the powerful in the US. What could the American church look like when diaspora Christians are centered?

## CHAPTER THREE: THE POWER TO DISCERN INJUSTICE

1. Edwards declares that North American Christians have a “power problem” (p. 62). What are ways you have seen that *power problem* play out in your own life?
2. In what ways does the Pharaoh in the book of Exodus serve as an example of oppressive power?
3. What does Edwards mean by “Toxic Christianity” (p. 66)? Have you seen evidence of Toxic Christianity?
4. What are instances when you felt pressured to “work your way out of your Otherness” (p. 66)?
5. The default authority to interpret scripture has been given to non-hyphenated white males. Share some ways that white, male-dominated interpretations of scriptures are biased and deficient.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE POWER OF PROPHECY

1. This chapter recounts the role of the prophet in the scriptures and shares how prophets see what the elites miss. What are some biblical examples of this phenomenon? How might we see a similar pattern today?
2. “Marginalized people have a better understanding of injustice than those in power” (p. 82). How does the reaction of the dominant culture toward the messages of marginalized people mirror the scenarios of biblical prophets that Edwards mentioned?
3. Who are contemporary prophets? Remember to reflect on how they live, what they say, and how dominant culture treats them in order to identify them.
4. Are there prophets who we have silenced rather than amplifying their message? How can we adjust our behaviors in order not to silence them?
5. Edwards encourages us who call out broken systems—even if rebuffed—by pointing to the challenging experiences of biblical and historical prophets. How does that make you feel?

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE POWER OF ANGER

1. Does the chapter’s message about righteous anger contradict any messages you’ve internalized in your past?
2. Edwards shares two instances in the Bible when Jesus gets angry. In Mark, Jesus heals out of his anger. How can we use this as a model in our own lives? Consider who Jesus centered in his anger.
3. How does it make you feel that white evangelicals have been known to dismiss a whole race of people they can label as “angry”? How does that dismissal lead to a weaker church?
4. What is the difference between anger from the dominant culture and the anger of marginalized people?
5. Reflect on evangelicals who long for “law and order” and draw parallels between them and the Pharisees. Consider the relationship between these religious leaders and the government in your reflection.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE POWER OF SOLIDARITY

1. What are ways you have observed the enmeshment of nationalism and Christianity? Why do you think this enmeshed version of Christianity is more appealing to some than genuine community in Christ?
2. “Churches built on [oppressive systems] cannot tolerate the prophetic voice of the marginalized” (p. 111). Instead, they need to be built on Christ. Have you been a part of a healthy Christian community? What has it looked like?
3. What are potential downfalls of oversimplifying the role of multiethnic churches in the quest for solidarity? Think of the compulsion to “bleach” oneself when reflecting on the problems.
4. What is the difference between a *segregated* and a *segregating* church?
5. Edwards shares his circuitous journey in the faith. What are some stops in his journey that resonated with you?
6. What does humility look like as a member of a dominant culture? What does humility look like as a person of a marginalized identity? What are some tangible things that can be done to humble ourselves in the quest for a healthy Christian community?

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE POWER OF WORSHIP

1. Edwards makes it clear that worship is not just an event, but a way of life. How does that change the way you view worship in your daily life?
2. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is quoted in this chapter as saying the church is the “conscience of the state” (p. 126). What does that mean? How should that look practically?
3. What does it mean that “worship can be protest” (p. 128)?
4. Reread Amos 5:21-24 and Micah 6:6-8. How do these passages demonstrate that pursuing justice is worship?
5. What are ways that we can ensure that church is something we are a part of, and not just a place we go to?

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE POWER OF HOPE

1. What are some behaviors that you engage in that are birthed out of hope?
2. “Hope is always born of lament” (p. 143). What does that mean? Do you agree?
3. Our culture blames victims for suffering but Job shows us that suffering isn’t always punishment from God, but an opportunity for hope. How can we reframe our own experiences to better understand our suffering?
4. Marginalized Christians are often told that only in the end will there be the satisfaction of justice. How does the story of Job disprove that idea?
5. Even though our future hope is in the coming of Jesus when everything will be made perfect, why should we still be pursuing justice now?
6. How do marginalized people best demonstrate *resurrection hope*?

## CHAPTER NINE: THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

1. Edwards lets us know that evil is at work in complacency in the face of unjust systems. How have you seen that to be the case? How does such complacency make you feel?
2. “Racism is ... a system powered by the spirit of the antichrist” (p. 154). What does Edwards mean by that? What are the implications of recognizing that fighting racism and other forms of systemic oppression is a spiritual battle?
3. How does the practice of nonviolence reflect the fact that our struggle is spiritual?
4. What is the difference between the “magical negro” trope and the fact that oppression is likely to birth keen spiritual awareness?
5. How is the life of Joseph, portrayed in Genesis, an example of God being present when one suffers unjustly?
6. Demonic forces are weakened when more equitable treatment is achieved. How does that change your understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit?

## CHAPTER TEN: THE POWER OF LOVE

1. In what ways have you discovered the reality that “love without justice claims to seek unity, but in actuality requires uniformity” (p. 169)?
2. Edwards speaks transparently about his struggle to fully understand how loved he is by God. What are some roadblocks that make it difficult to fully grasp God’s love for you?
3. Love for others is predicated on self-love, yet it can be hard to love ourselves when we experience *internalized oppression*. What are some examples of experiences in the church that have caused you to view your identity as inferior?
4. Marginalized people are often taught that loving someone means avoiding conflict. However, love does not mean silence. Since love shines a spotlight on injustice, how might your interactions with fellow Christians change?
5. “Forgiveness has been exploited to obfuscate injustice” (p. 178). Do you agree? What does genuine forgiveness entail, especially considering Miroslav Volf’s notion that we may “release the memory of wrongdoing” (p. 182)?
6. Edwards draws a distinction by using “racial justice” versus “racial reconciliation.” How does racial justice better show the true intention behind developing unity?

## EPILOGUE:

1. Have you felt a similar pressure to give conversations or messages in front of white audiences a happy ending? How do you react to Edwards’ point that it is not the responsibility of people of color to protect white feelings?
2. Reflect on Edwards’ conversation with a church member during the DC church’s transition. Have you been in similar conversions? How did/would you react?
3. “Whiteness is a demonic force” (p. 186). How has that been apparent in American Christianity?
4. Edwards chose to forgive the white evangelicals who caused him harm, not in a way similar to amnesia, but in the sense of “releasing the memory of wrongdoing” which freed him to serve the Lord without compromising his racial identity. How can forgiving the harm done by the dominant culture free you in your walk with Christ?
5. What are some things that can be accomplished with more collaboration among people of color in Christian institutions?