

## Engage360 | Episode 11: Cultivating the Multicultural Church

Introduction: Welcome to Engage360 Denver Seminary's Podcast. Join us as we explore the redemptive power of the gospel and the life-changing truth of Scripture at work in our culture today.

Dr. Don Payne: Hi, I'm Don Payne, I'm glad to be your host for Engage360. In 2005, when the journalist Thomas Friedman released his very widely read book, *The World is Flat*, he did not introduce the concept of globalization, but he probably gave it more popular currency than perhaps, it had had up to that time, arguably at least. But when Friedman talks about globalization, of course he's speaking largely in terms of communication technologies and economics, world trade, things like that. But he also makes reference to this concept that has become very popular. Multiculturalism. One of the features of globalization is that we live in a multicultural world, not in the sense that the world was any less multicultural before it was named. But now this phenomenon of globalization has created world circumstances in which we interact multiculturally in perhaps historically unprecedented ways. So we're here today on Engage360 to talk about multicultural ministry. And I'm really glad to have my friend and our graduate Brandon Washington with us on the podcast. Welcome Brandon.

Brandon Washington: Thanks for having me.

Dr. Don Payne: Brandon, as I mentioned, a graduate of Denver Seminary, holds an MA in theology and I think before that got a BA in political science. Is that correct? It was from the University of North Texas. The green, the mean green, sorry, the mean green.

Brandon Washington: They're not so mean but.

Dr. Don Payne: But they are green. So Brandon, is a church-planter though by now I guess, you've been at it long enough that you wouldn't call it a church plant anymore, but, seven years. Okay. Brandon is the lead pastor. You've got a fancy title for that.

Brandon Washington: We call it the Pastor of Preaching and Vision. We tried to avoid lead because we have a team.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. Okay. You're the only one I know who's called that. But in my book you are the lead pastor of Embassy Church, which meets in downtown Denver. Give us the address or the location, the crossroads of that?

Brandon Washington: We actually meet on the corner of Humboldt and MLK, which is a school. We meet at Cole Arts and Science Academy. You can't miss it, it's a huge middle school in Northeast Denver, right at the border between the Cole neighborhood

and Five Points. So everyone who lives in that neighborhood knows exactly where Cole Arts and Science Academy is.

Dr. Don Payne: Come one, come all.

Brandon Washington: Come one, come all.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. So Brandon is the planting pastor of Embassy Church seven years ago. And from conversations I've had with Brandon over the years, I've realized that this was an intentionally multicultural church plant that has been, as I understand it anyway, part of the DNA, part of the, the originating vision for Embassy Church. And so you've got a pretty good track record now of multicultural ministry. And I guess we need to put the caveat on this that when we use that phrase, multicultural, lots of people use that in lots of different ways, for lots of different purposes. So we probably need to drill into that just a little bit and define what that term means. Particularly in the context of ministry and church planting and, and to what you're experiencing it. So we'll get there along the way, but, that, that'll be our focus for today. Ministry in multicultural context or multicultural ministry. And, we want to draw on Brandon's experiences, expertise in that. Tell us first, Brandon, just a little bit about your own story, how you got to Denver, what the path was here, why this?

Brandon Washington: Yeah, that was, that's the setup for this cause it's, it's essential to the, to the ethos of the church. So, I'm from Dallas, Texas and I worked for a ministry there called The Urban Alternative, which is led by Dr. Tony Evans. And, we had a conference, we did a conference every year called The Urban Alternative Church Development Conference and it had sponsors. And there was one year when Denver Seminary came as one of the sponsors and they had a booth. And that was how I was introduced to Denver Seminary. It was a foregone conclusion growing up in Dallas and having a Pastor who is an alum, Dr. Evans is the first African American to get a PhD from DTS and he's on the board. So just given that I was going to be attending Denver, Dallas Seminary, and then I realized that there was a program here at Denver. They're better suited for what my calling was. So that's how I ended up here in Denver. For context though, before coming here, for the entirety of my adolescence, I was a member of, I was a student of an Islamic cult called the Nation of Islam and was taught the virtues of segregation. And after being delivered from that through my conversion, and being brought into the church, the thing I struggled with was I didn't see adequate difference between the churches view of culture, diverse cultures, and the nation of Islam's understanding of it. It didn't make sense to me that we're claiming a relationship with the God who reigns over everyone and is calling everyone to himself. But we look like the group that does not make such a claim. So that resulted in several conversations with my pastors regarding how this is supposed to look. And I was blessed by how the message of the gospel lends itself to a broader view of cultures that are more, and more diverse perspective on what culture is. The problem was how do you get an idea to become an action? How's that rubber meet the road? So when we, when I came here and God decided after the [inaudible] process that I was going to stay here

and my, my agenda was to finish school and get back to Texas. That's how I tricked my wife into marrying me. I promised her I was going to get her back to Texas.

Dr. Don Payne: And what could be wrong with that goal?

Brandon Washington: That was, that was God's divine plan. Here's a great thing that God did for me though, before he told me that we were staying. He told her, which helped me out quite a bit.

Dr. Don Payne: And quite often that happens.

Brandon Washington: He, God understands marriage. So through a series of events that resulted in us recognizing the need to plant a church in the Northeast, Northeast neighborhoods and Northeast parts of Denver. And we chose that neighborhood because of its diversity. It was an early, early phases of its gentrification, but I didn't fully understand what gentrification is. Gentrification is not, it's not merely the diversifying of a neighborhood, it's the desegregation of a neighborhood in the opposite direction. So we planted, celebrating its diversity, not recognizing that that diversity was a temporary transitioning point to its recertification.

Dr. Don Payne: It was actually becoming less diverse.

Brandon Washington: Exactly. It went from being a neighborhood that was predominantly African American, about 80% African American, at the turn of the 21st century to at around 18, 19% now. And so a part of our mission when we realized that that was going to be happening was what does it look like for us to stem the tide of the negative aspects of gentrification, and nurture diversity and integration in multicultural context here. And we make that a fundamental part of our gospel message and enabled it because we recognize that as a need for that community.

Dr. Don Payne: So what is it, you've alluded to this already, but say more about what it is that propels you or compels you about multicultural ministry. Not only initially but also as the years have passed. What continues to propel you about that?

Brandon Washington: There are a few things, number one, we noticed that church planting in a neighborhood that looked the way ours looked when we planted, it would be irresponsible to not think multiculturally while planting a church in that context. Because if you walk down a street at the time when we planted the church about seven years ago, the neighborhood was one third white, one third black, one third brown. And, I had a conversation with, during our proposal phase, our fundraising phase, I had a conversation with a professor, not at Denver Seminary, who told me that because of my personality type, how I look, my ethnicity, I should only, and his word was target. I should only target the black people in the neighborhood. And I, and I struggled with that because that would

amount to me walking down the street and pointing at houses and saying, yes, yes, no, no. And deciding who is and is not welcome in this body of believers. And I found that deeply troubling. And I said, he says, if you look at how radio works, look at how television works. They choose their target demographic. And my struggle with that was the gospel that we're talking about is much more comprehensive than how radio and television are.

Dr. Don Payne: It's not a target demographic.

Brandon Washington: No. And I said, and how much more should we be mindful of how the gospel is not supposed to isolate those peoples, but it's actually this, it's designed to bring them together. So let that be a central aspect of our message. If he's instituted as a significant text for our church as an identity, that's what he says in verses one through 10 of Ephesians 2, addresses how humanity reconciled to God. And 11 through 22 of Ephesians 2 addresses how humanity is reconciled to humanity. That's a whole gospel message preaches all of Ephesians 2. So we saw the diversity of the neighborhood as an opportunity versus a hurdle over which we had to.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. Let me pick up on that point and let's use that to think a little bit about what we mean by multiculturalism. Because as I mentioned earlier, lots of people use that phrase in a lot of different ways, lots of applications. How are you thinking about multiculturalism in terms of the gospel, theologically?

Brandon Washington: That's an excellent question. I love that. So, so here's what we had to do. We had to sit down.

Dr. Don Payne: Let me interrupt you because I want you to compare that to some of the other maybe popular uses of the term multiculturalism.

Brandon Washington: Yes, yes. So one of the things that we, when, when I had that conversation with that, with that professor who teaches at a school in the Southeast part of the country, and I mentioned that because cultural context is significant, the part of the world from which he came and formed his advice on how this works. We had to sit down and come to grips with the definitions of these terms. And we realized that when we're talking to, when we were talking to him, he was using the word culture as a synonym for ethnicity. And they're not synonyms. They're not synonyms. African-Americans actually have more than one subculture. I learned that because I moved from Texas to Colorado. And the cultural norms that exist in the South or the Southeast part of the country are nothing like what you would experience if you go from Texas to New York. We may look the same, but, and we may even have many historical similarities, but there are, we still identify with different subcultures. So we had a study of what we mean by these terms. And we realized that, we came to the conclusion that things like the word race, whereas like the word race are complicated because they're creating a plurality where there's a singularity, we can tell there's only one race, humanity. But that one race is comprised of many ethnicities and those many ethnicities are comprised of even more cultures. So it's possible for, I have a

very good friend who is from Ghana and when people see the two of us together, they think two men, look the same. He's built the way I am, same skin color and everything.

Dr. Don Payne: They assume you have a lot in common.

Brandon Washington: And our ethnicity may be very, very similar. But our cultures are very different. So when we address culture, especially if you live in a metropolitan, cosmopolitan city, but you have to be mindful of the fact that culture has to be, you have to approach culture from the perspective of valuing multiplicity. You have to, so every culture that you're going to be engaging, has to be one that is welcomed. That helps us out in many regards. So first, so oftentimes when I have this conversation, someone will come to me and they'll ask, well, Brandon, what about those of us who live in hockey puck, Nebraska, where they're not very many people who look like me? I say you do not have to be multi-ethnic to be multicultural. That's why we have to distinguish those two terms. It is possible for you to value a culture other than your own, even if none of those who represent that culture are present. And that's where I would contend a multicultural body of believers is, I would also argue that that is fundamental to a comprehensive gospel message. And practically speaking, the reason that's a value of mine, it comes down to a matter of ethics. And I think you and I have discussed this before. I took a, took a class that was taught by my favorite professor, called Theological Method. And in that class, he, one of the things that came up was how experience informs our perspective, our view of the world. My wife drives a Chrysler Town and Country. I have never seen a Chrysler Town and Country until I bought one, and now I see them everywhere. And my wife says, because you had a Chrysler Town and Country experience, so now you see Chrysler Town and Countries, that kind of thing. Yeah, and I think that because of the different cultural experiences, we have different lenses, different perspectives on the world, and that informs our ethics as well, that I would contend that's why we have diverse views of what justice is, right and wrong behavior across cultural lines, because those different cultural identities had different experiences out of the same America. When you diversify, then my experience has become your experiences. You may not have had my experiences, but you do have me and therefore my experience has become yours and you gained my lenses.

Dr. Don Payne: And that broadens my world.

Brandon Washington: Exactly. And it broadens my view of God. I believe that that is a healthier view of the church, as a healthier perspective on the church. When the church is diverse, then even if I don't have your lenses, if I have yours, that I'm able to see the world from your perspective and that's how God intended for the church to be.

Dr. Don Payne: Love it. Tell us a little bit specifically about Embassy Church.

Brandon Washington: Okay. So we planted, we planted the church in April of 2012 and it was, there was a team of us, and we're over governed, so to the point we made earlier about the titles, I, my voice is heard with the elders. My, my voice is heard with greater weight but not with greater authority. It could just be because I'm loud, but the.

Dr. Don Payne: It could be.

Brandon Washington: Yeah. That my wife tells me all that, it could be, but that is how we're, how we're leading. And, we have, one of our distinctives is diversity and integration. We deliberately use both terms because we observed that it's possible for worship gathering on Sunday morning to be diverse. But after the benediction, everyone goes their separate way and does not, they do not engage one another. So while they look diverse on Sunday morning, the lives are integrated. So that different, that different perspective, that cultural lenses exchange doesn't occur because we just look like something that we're not. So one of the things that we value is our home groups. We call them missional communities. And we have a specific pastor responsible for missional communities. And one of his, one of his pet peeves is that you do not allow, he does not allow affinity groups. So we do not have a singles home group. We do not have any Mary's, we do not have, you know, generational, nothing like that. It's all, it's either determined by geography or preexisting relationships. And the reason he does that is he wants for it to be organically diverse so that those lives and those different cultural backgrounds can rub up against one another. And the rough spots can be smoothed out. And spiritual formation, meaning growth, and growth can occur because you're hearing how the world looks from a different angle.

Dr. Don Payne: All right. So what does the multicultural character of ministry at Embassy Church look like? Particularly in the form of some of the challenges that you faced through the years?

Brandon Washington: Yeah. So a couple things on that. Number one, the way our leadership team is deliberately diverse, unapologetic about that. Unapologetic. I have been accused of the word tokenism may have been used a few times, but for me tokenism is you choose someone because of their ethnicity. Well, you don't, your ethnicity does not qualify you for a leadership role at our church. It's, you have to be qualified for it. But I do want different perspectives that are backing that [inaudible]. So that's the first thing. The second thing is the manner in which we do worship is deliberately culturally diverse. So when people, when we gather on Sunday morning, we don't have one Sunday where we sing black gospel songs. And then another Sunday where we sing hymns and in another Sunday where we sing contemporary Christian songs, we do them all in the same gathering and don't emphasize the transitions between them.

Dr. Don Payne: So it's kind of jarring.

Brandon Washington: Yeah. We don't, and after a while, no one notices the differences between them anymore. It's just they the.

Dr. Don Payne: They're not thinking, Oh, now we're doing this. Now we're doing this.

Brandon Washington: Exactly. The, there was a Sunday, you were at church this Sunday. It was for anniversary.

Dr. Don Payne: Yes. I was there.

Brandon Washington: And we have a young man artist named Ben who sang A Mighty Fortress as a part of our.

Dr. Don Payne: I remember that.

Brandon Washington: And the first time he did that he had to, he had to adjust to the call and response behavior of the African Americans in the room.

Dr. Don Payne: Because as I recall, he was like a trained University trained to vocalists.

Brandon Washington: Exactly right. Yes. He's a, he's studied opera at University of Denver and he's, he's just accustomed to getting up and singing a song and when he's done everyone applause. But while he was singing, people stand up and they are engaging him while he's doing it.

Dr. Don Payne: And threw him off his game.

Brandon Washington: Honestly did. The first time, the first time, and now he wouldn't know what to do if everyone was quiet, because the lines of distinctions, those lines blurred over time. And it was just a matter of us saying, let's acknowledge all these different cultural norms. Christ is the center in every one of the acts, we don't want the culture to be the center, or the culture to be the means toward celebrating him, God and making God famous.

Dr. Don Payne: I like the way you put that.

Brandon Washington: But we do want to have a diversity of means so that after a while those cultural barriers, while big, they still go, they don't go unnoticed, but they don't become jarring anymore. So when you're out in the world, you're able to be, you have to be multicultural and how you engage people for the sake of the gospel message.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. So over seven years time, what has been most difficult about this? What have been some of the just relentless challenges that you faced?

Brandon Washington: Yeah, that is a good question. The biggest challenge we faced is I never appreciated how many people love the language of diversity, multiculturalism on paper, and push back when it's time to carry it out. So I can't tell you how

many people have come to us. So one of the big other thing that happened was when we planted the church, because the church was still, the neighborhood was still predominantly African American, where we planted. The majority of the church was African-American when we planted, but as the neighborhood diversified, the church's demographic follow the neighborhoods demographic. And people would come to us and say, there are too many white people here now, and they would leave the church because of that. That has happened more times than I would care to admit. It's been deeply disappointing. It made me realize how much culture is an idol for us. Our specific cultural identity is an idol force. So when you ask someone to lay some of their identity on an altar, so that someone who is not like them can feel welcome here, not the entirety of your identity because you're not multicultural. I have to lay the entirety of who I am down. But if you had to put someone on an alternate, so if someone was not like you can be here, and hear the same gospel message you're hearing, some people say we're unwilling to do that. There are people who will come and they will, they will struggle with how many African Americans are there, which I find interesting because now the church is probably 40% African-American because of the diversity, but that they'll push back against that. The other one is a subtle one, and that is people will assume that the church, having a black preaching pastor is all that is necessary for the church to be diverse.

Dr. Don Payne: Really?

Brandon Washington: Yes. So we have a, there's this, there's this influx of, there was a point at which diversity became a celebrated term. So a bunch of young white students would come to the church and they would celebrate being a part of a church with a black pastor because having a black pastor means that they're at a diverse church and I said, and I explained to them that.

Dr. Don Payne: Was that kind of a, I don't mean to be catty about this, but was that kind of a cool thing?

Brandon Washington: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. Don Payne: It was, it was hip.

Brandon Washington: It was the hip thing to do. It was absolutely, and we had to explain to them that, that that's not, that's by far, that falls far short of what we mean when we use that language. What does your life look like when you're not here? Who are you engaged in when you're not here? How do you model, a globally applied gospel when you are not here? We had to have conversations about that. In fact, I made it a point, it's part of my annual preaching calendar to address that at least once in the spring. So that we don't fall back into that behavior.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. You know, you're reminding me of an experience I had well over 20 years ago when I was in Calcutta, India for a short period of time and visited Mother Teresa's main hospital there in the heart of Calcutta. At that time she was still



alive but was not there that day. But I interacted with an American physician who was in residence there and he was telling me about the pattern he had seen of young, well-meaning Americans who would come over there and do stents of work at Mother Teresa's hospital. And he said he hadn't seen the pattern where initially they absolutely loved it because it was glamorous, it was exotic, it was different. It was romantic, it was Calcutta. And then after a few weeks or months, the reality set in this is Calcutta, and they began to just loathe the place until if they stuck with it, he said, they would re-embrace it and learn to love it, but in a very different way. But they had to push past the romanticism.

Brandon Washington: There you go. Those are the words we used. We said we would tell people that, we made that, we observed that same cycle. They would come and there was a newness to it. There was, there was a certain romance to this and to be at a church where we would deliberately, carefully but deliberately, address matters of social justice, because I believe that social justice is invariably linked to the gospel. I think if you're not mindful of that, you're not preaching a comprehensive gospel message. The problem is they would think that we are a social justice church and when the romance of being in a church with something would be addressed, wears off because he doesn't, he's not talking about this every week. He's not, he's not addressing this every time we come here, they will see what the real thing is and get a broader view of our message. And some of them will either leave during the season or they would endure and fall back in love of what we're doing because they see what we're actually about now.

Dr. Don Payne: Same pattern. Yeah. Wow. So what are some of the things you've learned along the way as you've done this? What, how was your mind changed about anything and how has it changed you?

Brandon Washington: Okay, so it has definitely made me more patient. Okay. It also taught me that this kind of thing that when I say I say this, I get in trouble for it, but the, that racism and there are people who will agree with me when we discuss matters of race, but they'll take offense when you discuss matters of racism. And I also noticed that racism should be more broadly applied than we realize. We think that certain people, certain ethnicities have a monopoly on the term. And I learned in the midst of this that it is possible for someone who looks like me to despise someone who doesn't look like us, just based solely on the color of their skin. We're having to address that directly. It has taught me of, how I need to be more gracious with how I address these matters. Because sometimes you function solely out of what you were taught to do. And my responsibility is not to chastise you for how you are taught, it's to maybe give you a new perspective on what you were taught. And I had to be more patient with how I engage that. So instead of addressing out of anger, what does it like for me to be edifying and profiting, and prophetic when I, when I'm engaging these matters, I had to figure out how to do that well.

Dr. Don Payne: I really appreciate that. Yeah. If you're talking to somebody who is thinking about the possibility of intentional multicultural ministry, like what you're doing, what's the one big thing you would tell them?

Brandon Washington: Immerse yourself in some, in a, in a world other than your own. It doesn't necessarily have to be every other world, but your, your agenda there is not to know every culture in the world. It's to be more acquainted with your own, by exposing yourself to another. That I think that that is an often dismissed part of what we're supposed to be doing as a mission. When I have conversations with friends of mine regarding church-planting, I have to often remind them that they're planting a culturally specific church and don't even realize it. And so when they're preaching a gospel message, they're saying to people, why don't you just be this way? Why don't you just do this? But you're telling them to abandon legitimate parts of who they are and adopt who you are. You don't notice that you're doing it until you have to immerse yourself in another culture and become more acquainted with who you are. So before planting a church that looks like the world, expose yourself to parts of the world other than your own.

Dr. Don Payne: I want to talk about Bonhoeffer a little bit. You wrote a Master's thesis on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and people who may know Bonhoeffer's name may very well be acquainted with some of his more well known works like *Life Together* or *The Cost of Discipleship*. I'm not sure how much or how broadly his other works are known beyond those two. But you did a massive amount of research on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and we could have a whole other Podcast on that, I know.

Brandon Washington: We could.

Dr. Don Payne: But tell me just a few of the key takeaways from Bonhoeffer for how he changed your thinking and how he changed or shaped your approach to ministry?

Brandon Washington: Excellent question. I learned the difference between, I learned the difference between a principle and the application of a principle by reading Bonhoeffer. So the best example of that is that when people think of Bonhoeffer, they have this image of him running through the streets, Berlin with a plaid shirt on, and a rifle, I guess trying to find Adolf Hitler, so he can end the Holocaust. That is such an erroneous perspective on who Bonhoeffer was. He was a pacifist, unapologetic pacifist, and his pacifism was deeply informed by how he viewed human beings. The image of God was significant for him. And the idea was because human beings are so valuable, warring is wrong, but experience goes back to the how experience informs your ethics, experience didn't change that view, but it gave it nuance. It modified it a bit. And he realized that the image of God is the principle, and pacifism was its application, but it's possible for you to be a pacifist at the expense of the image of God as well. So the, so he says, how do you apply the image of God, the value of human beings in the midst of the Holocaust? He had to abandon his pacifism and become part of the [inaudible]

to keep hundreds of thousands of Jews annually from being killed. That completely changed how I view ethics, how I'm not, I'm not, situation is I'm not that person who says, you know what mood am I in this moment? I believe that behavior is objective and can have universal applications, but you have to back up to the principal and not be fixed on the application. So as you can have that authority and that universal application. Among the things that Bonhoeffer taught me, that was, that was one of them.

Dr. Don Payne: Why should people read Bonhoeffer?

Brandon Washington: Bonhoeffer was this.

Dr. Don Payne: And I, and I ask that because, lots of Christian traditions make use of Bonhoeffer very conveniently and he's become sort of like theological play-doh. People do whatever they want to do with Bonhoeffer, and some people are freaked out by Bonhoeffer. Right. Why should people read Bonhoeffer?

Brandon Washington: Yeah. One of the reasons I love Bonhoeffer is, he is one of the, I don't, I don't like creating this divide, so let the lines that divide these two [inaudible] be dotted, but, but they had to be there for a moment. The Bonhoeffer was both a theologian and a pastor. And I, I've, my experience has been that theologians are very good with the ideas. Like I have a degree in theology from this school. I am a fan of theologians, but I noticed that we are very good with ideas sometimes at the expense of their practical outworking. And I notice that sometimes my, some of my friends who are pastors are much more capable of addressing pragmatic value versus the legitimacy of the idea. And Bonhoeffer walked the tight rope that tried to keep those two worlds in a balance. So he wanted the idea to be solid, but he would contend that every idea, every last idea, to use his term, had to be concretized. I never heard that word, I had never seen that word targeted in Bonhoeffer's work. And now I can't stop using it.

Dr. Don Payne: Concretized.

Brandon Washington: Yes, he's, it's, he says, every good theological idea only has value if it's, if it can be concretized, if I cannot readily take it to its practical implications on the world, then he questioned the legitimacy or worth of the theological idea. That conviction from him, that tension between being a theologian who's also a pastor, is a conviction from me. And it's an office unto which into which I want to step myself.

Dr. Don Payne: So apart from perhaps his two most familiar books, *Life Together* and *Cost of Discipleship*, what would you want people to read from Bonhoeffer?

Brandon Washington: Everyone should read Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*. Everyone. Everyone should read his *Ethics*. He also wrote a doctoral dissertation on the body.

Dr. Don Payne: *Sanctorum Communio*.

Brandon Washington: Oh yes sir. You got a hard one. I want, I want the, I want the [inaudible] person to say it, but the, the everyone should read his doctoral dissertation [inaudible] called it a miracle. He called him his [inaudible] miraculous work.

Dr. Don Payne: You know what irritates me most about that is he was 21-years -old when he wrote it.

Brandon Washington: Yes. And that was the first of two, just want to say that for the record, he came to America and did it again, but the, I think that that one of the things that he did a very good job of was exposing people to the value and the uniqueness of the church, the universal church. And go into the concretize perspective. And again, he came to America and got an even more precise understanding of what that was by attending a black Baptist church in Harlem. During the Holocaust, a German-speaking German, came to study at Union Theological Seminary, and was a Sunday school teacher at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. And took much of the practical theology that he learned there back to Germany to resist the Holocaust and the atrocities against [inaudible].

Dr. Don Payne: Because how specific, I'm baiting you here because there's something I want you to say. How did that change him?

Brandon Washington: Under, under the pastoral leadership of Adam Clayton Powell Senior, he heard the term costly grace versus cheap grace. And it goes back to the outworking of the ideas, the outworking, the practical outworking of the gospel message he saw in the Civil Rights Era, the early Civil Rights Era, because this was in the 30s. The early Civil Rights Era, Black church in America was not just saying what the gospel was, they were doing what the gospel was, and he wanted to take that back to Germany with him.

Dr. Don Payne: That's great. Yeah. Okay. It's time now for my SSPQ, my stereotypically stupid podcast question. And stereotypically stupid refers to the question, not the podcast. Okay. I hope.

Brandon Washington: I hope so.

Dr. Don Payne: What are the best and worst cars you have ever owned?

Brandon Washington: Oh, okay. The best car. See, I'm not, I'm not the best person to answer this question because I don't do, I'm not, I'm, I'm much more of a car on paper person versus a car owner person.

Dr. Don Payne: You've not concretized this.

Brandon Washington: I have not concretized it. Yeah. The best car I've ever owned was a 1993 Jeep Grand Cherokee and it's because it's the first car I bought myself. And so yeah, I mean it had low miles on it and still had a new car smell and.

Dr. Don Payne: There's nothing like it.

Brandon Washington: Yes. There's nothing like it. Would I put that in a car calendar to hang on my wall. No, but it was my introduction to buying my own car. The worst car I ever owned was a 1987 Plymouth Voyager. And I bought that as well, but I bought it for \$1 from my dad.

Dr. Don Payne: And you got what you paid for?

Brandon Washington: I paid \$1 for it and it's, I couldn't drive. I couldn't go through a drive through at a restaurant because it smoked so badly that smoke would just bellow into the restaurant. But, but it was a minivan. I was an 18-year-old with a mini-van. So whenever it was time to go to the movies, everyone would pile into my car. They would give me a hard time every other day.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah, that's about as uncool as you can get at age 18.

Brandon Washington: But you can make it at cool. It's all, the car doesn't make the man, the man makes the car.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. Literally, point taken. We have been interacting with our good friend Brandon Washington, Pastor of Vision and Preaching. Did I get that right?

Brandon Washington: It's backwards, but it works from me.

Dr. Don Payne: Pastor of Preaching and Vision at the Embassy Church in Denver, and we are so glad for his insights and his time with us. Brandon, good to have you here.

Brandon Washington: Thanks for having me.

Dr. Don Payne: We hope you'll interact with us. You can email us at [podcast@denverseminary.edu](mailto:podcast@denverseminary.edu). Want to give another word of thanks to our production team who are always there for us and keeping this thing moving. Very grateful for them. Grateful for each of you who listen. On behalf of all these fine folks, I'm Don Payne your host, and this has been Engage360. We hope to talk to you again next week.