

Conversation Starter



Episode 35: “Learning in Public”—A Conversation with Courtney Martin

For each Growing Edge Podcast episode we offer a conversation starter that you can download at our website. You can use this with a small group or for your own meditation or journaling.

In this episode with Courtney Martin—author of *Learning in Public: Lessons for a Racially Divided America from My Daughter’s Public School*—we explore powerful questions about what it means for privileged white Americans to live a moral life in racially divided times.

1. Courtney spoke eloquently about her journey of “a million moral miles” as she tried to decide whether to send her 6-year-old daughter to the nearest public school in their Oakland, California neighborhood. Could she lay aside her white privilege and “walk her talk” about racial justice? She began by using her experience as a journalist to gather background information and interview parents, teachers, administrators and others. Have you ever approached a morally challenging decision in this way? Are you facing moral dilemmas today that might open to clarity if you began with deep inquiry rather than moral judgment?
2. With *Learning In Public*, Courtney Martin invites us into a conversation about race, white privilege, and systemic inequity in American society. Was there anything in this

conversation that surprised, shocked, angered or aroused other strong emotions in you? Did you find yourself being defensive, or wondering about ways you might ally yourself with those whom Howard Thurman called “the disinherited?”

3. Can you tell a story about a time when you’ve had to go against “conventional wisdom” and follow a deeper wisdom from your own heart? This might be anytime you followed an ethical calling even when you knew there would be pushback. How did it feel at the time? How do you feel now about making that choice?

4. In our podcast with Courtney, we speak about the importance of white people talking with white people about race in America, including such critical topics as white privilege and unconscious forms of white supremacy. If you are white, do you think such conversations are doable and valuable? What approaches might help you initiate one with family and/or friends?

Some Approaches to This Month’s Questions

You may want to explore the podcast and Questions of the Month privately, via journaling and silent reflection. But please consider gathering online for an exploration with one or more family members or friends. If that idea appeals to you, look into using Zoom, Facetime, Skype or some other video platform or talk with each other while practicing safe social distancing. We are also grateful that with the availability of Covid-19 vaccines it is sometimes possible to gather safely to have these conversations in person.