God Complex Radio: Color of Christ
http://godcomplexradio.com/2013/03/edward-j-blum-color-of-christ/

Guest:
- Dr. Edward J. Blum’s *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* serves as a history of America through the lens of Jesus Christ’s portrayal; America’s image of Christ changes as the country itself evolves. Blum is a professor of history at San Diego State University and has been recognized nationally for his contributions in the field.

Suggested learners:
- Adults and mature teens, especially those interested in faith, race, culture, and American history

Outline of interview:
- Difficulty recollecting the first time seeing Jesus; happens during pre-recognition consciousness
  - Most have memory of a white, long-haired Jesus
  - Expression of “that’s not real, that’s not true”; cognitive dissonance—that first image can’t be true—Jesus can’t possible have looked like that
    - Disconnect between cognitive perception and intellectual knowledge
- The image of someone being physically devastated vs. a serene Jesus; different denominations appreciate different views
  - Reasons for that? Popular image? Own ethnicity?
- Visions & dreams of Jesus influenced by personal prerogatives
  - Pre-1830, imagery, regardless of race, focuses on prevalence of *light* over color
  - Post-1830, *white* begins replacing *light*
    - Image is connected to a dominant, popular image; visions and dreams of Christ are influenced heavily by popular understanding of his form
    - Myth of “Jesus in our own image” is of the 20th century
- Icon is not created by pop culture necessarily (e.g. stained glass vs. movies)
- Example of the towel as a security blanket: like the dominant images of Jesus, it’s there all the time, and has had meaning built into it
- It doesn’t matter what Jesus looks like; he is light and bread, and by virtue of those two things, he is good, regardless of his image

Additional reflection questions:
1. What’s your primary image of Jesus? How do you think it came about? How do you think these early associations affect your personal relationship with Jesus?

2. What images help you see Jesus as Emmanuel (God-with-us)? As King of kings? As suffering servant? As Son of God? How important is it in each case that Jesus does or does not look like you?

3. Do you feel called to change your image of Jesus? If so, what will shape that new image?

4. What have you observed about how the portrayal of Christ communicates racial and cultural messages? Can you think of a particular story that intrigued or disturbed you?

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