

The Revolutionary Disciple draws from years of experience as well as countless hours of implementation to present a comprehensive discipleship strategy for your home, work, and church. You'll benefit greatly from reading this book with your discipleship group or church staff.

Robby Gallaty, pastor and author of *Replicate*

This book is a long overdue call to us as leaders to humble ourselves before the Lord and the people we lead. The Western Church is not exempt from the self-blinding sin of pride nor its disastrous consequences. We will not be able to take ground for the kingdom until we deal with arrogance. That is Jim Putman and Chad Harrington's objective in *The Revolutionary Disciple*.

Ed Litton, pastor and president of the
Southern Baptist Convention

This incisive book offers readers different perspectives on some of the most important areas impacting the lives of Christ-followers. It is provocative and well worth the read.

Carol M. Swain, PhD, editor of *Be the People News*

The Revolutionary Disciple has me in a state of anxious introspection: my role as a talk radio host, my belief that the hardcore Left has fallen under spiritual evil that requires us to perform a counterrevolution, and my cherished identity as a Jesus follower are in a state of collision. I continue to think we need a counterrevolution, and this book lays out the way to the only lasting one. *The Revolutionary Disciple* presents the ultimate revolution, which as it happens is also the solution for our conscience and the only hope for our souls: we must come to act with the outrageous, shocking, and brave humility of Jesus Christ in all the spheres our lives cover.

Todd Herman, regular guest host for
The Rush Limbaugh Show

Undivided hearts. We want to be authentic disciples who change the world by making more disciples, but our pride prevents us from fully submitting to Jesus' lordship. Harrington and Putman expertly blend story and Scripture with practical tips. The result: wisdom for how to develop single-minded loyalty to King Jesus.

Matthew W. Bates, author of *Gospel Allegiance* and associate professor of theology at Quincy University

Jim Putman has done it again, this time in partnership with Chad Harrington. Their five spheres framework provides a breakthrough construct to guide believers into being disciples. In a straightforward, vulnerable style Jim and Chad provide a roadmap to a better place than where many of us were heading. The secret sauce—humility. It is literally breathtaking how far Jesus' brand of humility will take us in all the spheres of our lives. Who doesn't want that? Warning—while you will most definitely enjoy this book, Jim and Chad are not quite satisfied with that outcome. They are going to call us to actually give it a try. It will require something from us, but it will result in a glorious ending.

Randy Frazee, pastor and author of *His Mighty Strength*

The Revolutionary Disciple makes a much-needed case for a discipleship path that fully integrates all of our relationships and every area of our lives. You'll find it a helpful antidote to the self-centered "it's all about me and Jesus" path that so many have taken.

Larry Osborne, author and teaching pastor at North Coast Church

The Revolutionary Disciple calls us to approach all aspects of life with humility and a revolutionary-spirit disciplined by God's love and Christ's relentless sacrifice. This book is a gift the post-pandemic church needs to embrace, a practical guide challenging us to set aside our pride and walk humbly in the footsteps of Jesus

toward the church of tomorrow that longs not to be served but to serve.

Shane J. Wood, professor at Ozark Christian College and best-selling author of *Between Two Trees*

The authors issue both a warning and a guide to avoid spiritual pride and how it destroys our work and our souls. This is worth the read. They have peeled back the layers of human personality and motivation and exposed our immaterial natures. Please read it, pray through it, and then follow their advice.

Bill Hull, cofounder of The Bonhoeffer Project and author of *The Cost of Cheap Grace* and *The Discipleship Gospel*

Most Christians realize that the first step to becoming a genuine child of God is humility. What they tend to forget is that humility is also the ongoing posture required if they ever want to come close to being mature disciples of the same God who saved them. The benefits that come with being a serious disciple of Jesus are consistently blocked by our human pride. Jim Putman and Chad Harrington know all about the underbelly of pride and how it undermines so much of what we are and could become as followers of Christ. In their vital book *The Revolutionary Disciple*, they honestly and transparently take their own pride to the woodshed and in the process show all of us how to humbly put God and keep God in his rightful place in our lives—the driver's seat.

Dr. Tim Kimmel, author of *Grace-Based Parenting* and *Grace-Filled Marriage*

Great, substantive message in short, readable chapters. I would recommend it highly without knowing the authors, but because I do life closely with both and know how they live, I more than highly recommend it.

Bobby Harrington, pastor, author, and CEO of Discipleship.org and Renew.org

Nothing is more radical nor revolutionary than answering the call to follow Jesus as disciples. Here is a book that has timeless answers for being a disciple in today's world. I am happy to recommend to you *The Revolutionary Disciple* by Putman and Harrington.

Rev. Dr. Winfield Bevins, director of church planting at Asbury Seminary and author of *Marks of a Movement*

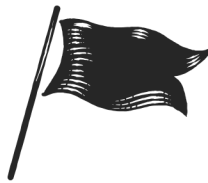
An easy-to-remember five-sphere model for humble discipleship supported by practical ways to develop humility in each sphere. Read this book if you believe Jesus' words that "those who humble themselves will be exalted." And then act like it.

Renée Webb Sproles, director of cultural engagement at Renew.org

Addressing a rarely mentioned subject, Jim and Chad tackle an absolutely critical aspect of successful discipling . . . humility. A challenging subject that demands some honest evaluation and thought by every disciple maker. An excellent resource to read, ponder, discuss, and allow God to use in our own lives. I highly recommend this book to you.

Dr. Dann Spader, author of *4 Chair Discipling* and founder of Sonlife and Concentricglobal.org

The
**REVOLUTIONARY
DISCIPLE**



Nashville, Tennessee



The Revolutionary Disciple

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IS IT TIME FOR ANOTHER REVOLUTION?



At the young age of eight, Josiah took the throne as the new king of Judah. By the time he turned twenty-six, he'd realized there was a major problem in the world, and *he was a part of that problem* (2 Kings 22:1–20). To his credit, he had no father (his dad had been assassinated when he was young), and he had no real relationship with God at that point. He was not set up for success. Yet the people of God needed his leadership. They were in political trouble, and the world stage was abuzz with enemies, posturing, and wars. Josiah didn't know what to do “out there,” but he knew, even as a young man, that the external, political unrest probably had something to do with the home front. So he spiritually cleaned house—quite literally!

He told his servants to clean out the temple, which represented God's presence at the time. The temple was in shambles and had become a monument to the gods of their culture instead of the one true God. During this clean-up, the high priest Hilkiah discovered the Torah scroll, which was the Jews' entire Bible at the time.¹ Very

few of their Bibles existed at the time, so essentially no one even knew what the Bible said. You can imagine what a discovery this was!

You might ask, *How could they have lost the entire Bible of their time?* It's a historical moment that shows it's possible to lose God's directions amid cultural chaos all around. They had the religion and tools they needed, but they did not personally know God's Word.

Hilkiah read the Bible to Josiah, and once Josiah heard it, he tore his clothes. This was a sign of humility and sorrow in their day. He was undone with conviction because he realized what he and God's people had been doing wrong: they had built their lives on the wrong foundation. They needed to change.

As a result, Josiah reordered the Jews' entire way of living. He started by confessing the wrongdoing of God's people on behalf of everyone because they had "not obeyed the words of this book" (2 Kings 22:13). Then he gathered the elders of Judah so they could all hear God's Word. They recommitted themselves afresh to God. Next, Josiah led the people in repentance and removed the idols of worship from the temple, fired the pagan priests, and removed the Asherah pole from the temple. Scripture tells us that Josiah himself broke down the shrines at the city gate that were dedicated to other gods. He pulled down the altars, smashed them, and threw them into the Kidron Valley. He utterly turned the city upside down, destroying its memorials of disobedience. Talk about a revolution!

Incredibly, Josiah's humility moved God. So God said to him, "Because your heart was responsive and *you humbled yourself* before the LORD . . . and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence . . . your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place" (2 Kings 22:19–20). Josiah's humble heart turned into action, which changed the course of an entire generation. Because Josiah and the elders humbled themselves by taking dramatic action, God rewrote the next chapter of their story.

We are convinced that like Josiah, we have a unique opportunity to make an impact *on generations* if we will take seriously our slice of history. In the New Testament, Jesus asked his disciples a question that remains: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the

earth?” (Luke 18:8). In light of that question, every generation must ask: *Will we humble ourselves and follow Jesus with radical obedience?* If not, we may see an entire generation of people fall even deeper into the idol of self. But if we will humble ourselves under God’s Word *in every area of life*, then we could see a radical shift in discipleship in North America and beyond.

Pride in the World Today

The radical obedience of Josiah is like what we see among many disciples worldwide today. We find it encouraging to see that some Christians in North America, for example, seem to be discovering discipleship in a fresh way, even as church membership falls. But we must rediscover *humility* as a characteristic of maturity if we’re going to see a resurgence in true discipleship.

The ways many Christians responded to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the problem with pride in the North American church. When the pandemic began, suddenly everyone had to pick a side concerning issues like meeting in person versus staying at home and wearing a mask versus not wearing a mask.

I (Chad) never thought I’d see the day when people didn’t shake hands or hug to greet each other. For months at a time, most of us stayed home due to government lockdowns. Then when we finally emerged, no one could hide their opinions anymore. You literally wore your view about mask-wearing on your face. For me, this wasn’t ultimately a religious question or a science question as much as it was a question about authority. Until this point in recent American history, you could basically hide your beliefs about how to respond to authority structures because there was no sustained domestic pressure or crisis. Then, however, disagreements erupted all across the country about how governmental leaders should handle the virus. Experts defended both sides on nearly every issue. We faced a national crisis, and the church got sucked into its “swirling vortex of weirdness,” as a previous mentor of mine calls any intensely complicated situation.

Hear this: disagreements are inevitable and have their place. But what bothered both Jim and me more than anything was how Christians responded to the authorities during this pandemic. The issue we had was not whether Christians agreed with the seriousness of the crisis, the masks, or the vaccine. The issue we saw was one of the heart. The veil on the church in North America and beyond was pulled back, revealing strongholds of pride. Conflicts in our country are obviously not going away, so we as disciples must learn how to handle our disagreements with one another and with worldly authorities in humility.

Where I (Jim) live in North Idaho, I have heard more than my fair share of talk about the Constitution and our First Amendment and Second Amendment rights. I've even heard talk about seceding from the nation or a potential militia uprising—*another revolution*. Now, I understand we are far from what our founders intended and that our country is cutting away its moorings from the past that inspired and fueled our success. We are making big mistakes as a country, and if we continue this downward spiral, we face a dire future.

But here's the deeper issue: Why do Christians more readily quote the Constitution of the United States than the Scriptures of God? This question emerged for me as I sat with a group of Christian men who were discussing what sounded like another revolution if politicians succeeded in suspending Second Amendment rights. After ten minutes, not one person referenced Scripture. *How could this be? Have we become like those in Josiah's generation, forgetting the Word of God?*

Our highest priority as disciples is the kingdom of heaven, which encompasses people from every race, tribe, and nation of those who believe. And our highest set of documents is not the Bill of Rights but the Holy Word of God. I don't think we should ignore the Constitution, but as disciples of Jesus, Scripture takes first place because it holds our King's commands. We need a revolution, there is no question, but what does a revolution look like for disciples of Jesus?

In Chapters 15 and 16 we'll deal with politics more directly, but for now, let's look at our root problem, which goes much deeper and broader than just how we respond to a global pandemic.

Pride in the Church Today

In Josiah's day, like ours, the people of God had drifted toward their own understandings, preferences, and selfish desires: in a word, *pride*. Pride rejects God's authority and God's commands and chooses a different path. We see this in the church today, and it affects discipleship on every level.

So we asked ourselves, *What does pride look like for Christians today?* When we started answering this question, we realized the list was long. Pride shows itself when we:

- Blast someone on social media with whom we disagree.
- Scream and yell in anger at a sports game.
- Reject the promptings of the Holy Spirit to give up a particular sin.
- Float from church to church because we're too busy chasing our dreams.
- Rebuff people who hold us accountable for our actions.
- Play the victim rather than trying to understand or resolve the conflict.
- Defend ourselves when someone gives us constructive criticism.
- Leave a church and divide God's people, wreaking havoc along the way.
- Refuse to forgive others when we clearly need forgiveness from God and others too.
- Judge others for their sins but look past our own.

Pride can surface for a disciple at work, in marriage, among family members, and even within discipleship groups at church. Pride is everywhere and all around us. But nobody likes to deal with the pride within. And try as we may to cover it up, we drag this problem of pride wherever we go.

This problem started in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve to reject God's command and follow her own desires. Adam and Eve's prideful response accomplished Satan's goal: death for us all. He came "only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). Satan leverages people's pride to distance them from God and divide his people. He can divide a whole church by starting with one divided heart: a pastor who won't submit to their elders, an arrogant leader who believes their way is better, a group of church members who don't agree with the worship style.

Pride is an insidious and subtle killer that destroys our hearts, which bleeds into our relationships with friends, family, church, and community. Pride is simply self-absorption. It sneaks in when we struggle to forgive someone in our church; it slips into our hearts whenever we gossip to make ourselves look better; and it seeps into our lives when we choose our own comfort over helping others.

As disciples of Jesus, we're supposed to be characterized by humility. Yet Christians are still often known for their pride. We have trouble submitting to our supervisor at work and getting along with our coworkers. We move from job to job thinking only about ourselves, just like when we move from church to church for one that "feeds me." When we reject God's commands and act like this, we're often indistinguishable from people in the world, rendering our verbal testimony useless.

*Pride destroys
discipleship at
every level.*

When we give in to it, pride destroys discipleship at every level: If we accept Jesus as Savior but refuse to follow him as Lord, discipleship ceases to exist. If we won't be taught by a disciple maker to obey all Jesus commanded, discipleship crumbles. If we won't go where he calls us, discipleship falls apart. If we have the wrong definition of maturity, discipleship efforts don't accomplish their goal. Bottom line: pride kills discipleship.

When the world looks at Christians, they see our billboards, bumper stickers, and marquees. They see our social media posts, the way we raise our kids, how we act at work, how we function as a

church, and how we support our kids on the sports field, but does the world see humility in us? Unfortunately, most of the time “humility” is not the first word that comes to mind for them. This is a problem for the church, and if we don’t reckon with it, pride could lead to an even bigger problem for our country. And we Protestants in the United States have a particular propensity toward pride.

Americans, Protestants, and Pride

Simply because we live in the US, we breathe the air of pride. If that seems like too great of a generalization, consider our history, which carries with it stories of rebellion during the Revolutionary War. In a country that celebrates independence, giving praise to disciple-making actions like “surrender” or “submission” can be difficult. In fact, words like these seem counter to the freedom on which the US was founded.

American culture today often glorifies pride. Through media, Hollywood, and even sports, pride is pumped into our homes—sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly. We’re told by the self-help industry, and many in the counseling industry, to follow our own hearts, to discover our dreams, and to make our mark in the world. We’re advised to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, to stand out, and never to give up. We’re not saying these are all bad mottos. But if we don’t temper them, we can become rebellious individualists instead of humble disciples. It goes even deeper for us, though. Consider our Protestant heritage.

Christians sparked the Protestant Reformation to reject unhealthy teachings and leadership in the Roman Catholic Church (and rightly so, in some cases). But today we’ve gone to the opposite extreme of rejecting *all authority in the church*—to our own detriment. While Protestants separated from Roman Catholics with good intentions, they often did this through unnecessary, even violent, rebellion.² They rejected the infallible authority of the pope (and rightly so), but they let the pendulum swing too far by rejecting scriptural forms of authority in the church. As a result, many

Christians today refuse to submit even to simple teachings from their pastor, even though the pastor supports their teachings with Scripture and has been given a clear position of authority by God's Word. Protestants often don't submit *to anyone* because they think, *Only God can tell me how to live!* Instead of submitting to God's leaders, as God expects of us, individual believers have become their own authorities. This ideology is faulty and spiritually dangerous.

So our Protestant and US history books are filled with rebellion and pride. Protestant pride in the US seems to have a unique flare, and it deeply affects the people of God.³ We need more than a shift in the church. We need a revolution of the heart.

Separating Identities

Believers in the US today are discussing a political revolution. We never would have believed it before, but those conversations are actually happening. Let us discuss this briefly before we go into detail in Chapter 15.

While Christians fall on both sides of this debate about a military revolution, what surprises us is that many of those who seem most eager to fight with harsh words or weapons are found in churches on Sundays. It's one thing for a believer to be forced to protect themselves, but it's another thing to go looking for a fight—one that destroys our enemies, when Jesus came to save all people. It makes sense when *non-believers* quickly use violence to make their point, *but Christians?* The lengths to which Christians will go to preserve their personal rights is disconcerting to us. They act like *this world* is all we have. Yes, what's happening in our country is very unsettling, and we fear for our children. But we've got to embrace the differences between the kingdom of God and the United States of America.

I (Jim) liken what's happening in our culture to my experience hunting in the woods here in North Idaho. I often do a lot of scouting in the woods before hunting season to find a possible location for a tree stand where I can wait for animals. Some trees are too small to carry the weight of a guy like me, so I look for multiple smaller

trees that stand close together. Many times, I've seen what looks like a gigantic tree from a distance, but as I get closer, it's really two mid-size trees that have grown up close together. As they grow over time, however, two trees like this will often spread further apart; one may die or be struck by lightning, while the other remains. For one reason or another, the tree stand no longer has a place to rest because the gap is too big. I have to adjust and move my tree stand to the one that can hold me because the other doesn't hold weight anymore.

Like this tree analogy, there was a time when our Christian and US values grew so closely together that they seemed like the same thing. As you get closer to the tree, however, you see it is really two trees. Over time, they have grown apart and one has become unstable. This analogy only goes so far, though. It doesn't mean we should abandon our country, but it forces us to ask:

Where does our help come from? In whom do we ultimately trust? Who holds our ultimate loyalty?
When I was younger, most citizens *shared* our values. Then the culture shifted so Christian values were *tolerated*. Now many in authority in the US are *hostile* to Christian values.

In whom do we ultimately trust?

I (Chad) remember in my high school days during the early 2000s how I struggled to work out the difference between kingdom and country. As an example, every day the intercom speaker would say, "Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance." I would dutifully stand to say the pledge, even though I often stood alone. I stood because, in my mind, I was standing for God and his special country—the United States of America. Now I understand that standing still serves its place, but I had gone too far and made God and country one. It was, I believed, my Christian duty to say the Pledge of Allegiance. There's nothing wrong with standing up for the pledge or the national anthem, but what's happening in our hearts when we do this?

I stand to honor my country now, but I do it for a different reason than I used to. I stand because we're called to honor those in authority (1 Pet. 2:17), and it is proper etiquette in our culture. But

the United States of America doesn't hold my ultimate allegiance, and my God and my country are definitely not one and the same. My highest allegiance is to Christ the King. Later, when I learned more about God's kingdom, I realized something had been awry in my heart in high school. I had conflated my political identity with my Christian identity. These have always been separate identities to some degree, but we're seeing their separation more clearly now.

I (Jim) agree. For me, when the pledge is recited, I don't offer my ultimate allegiance to a country that is far from what God would have it be, but rather a prayer for the leaders of this country. I pray that they will move back toward the Lord and for our people to come into a saving relationship with King Jesus.

Jesus, the Revolutionary

If you're tempted to think Jesus *can't relate*, then you ought to look again at both his life and his death. Jesus faced great opposition on earth and made his position clear to the authorities: "Am I leading a rebellion . . . that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?" (Mark 14:48). The authorities never knew what to do with Jesus. He had disrupted the religious norms of the day but did so without violence. They didn't have a category for Jesus, so he ended up with the other revolutionaries, such as Barabbas.

Barabbas was a true rebel, put in prison with the other insurrectionists because they committed murder during an uprising. Revolutionaries like Barabbas sought justice and religious freedom from the heavy-handed Roman authorities. While the Jews had rebelled against the Romans in the Maccabean Revolt nearly two centuries earlier, tensions remained high between Jews and Romans in Jesus' day. The people wanted freedom from their political oppressors. Jewish rebels tried to overthrow Rome's delegates, especially in and around God's holy city, Jerusalem. People sometimes confused Jesus and his disciples—even the apostle Paul—with one of these revolutionaries (Acts 5:36; 21:38). And the fate of these revolutionaries was often the same: death by crucifixion.

So Pilate naturally placed Jesus next to one of these rebels on the chopping block for execution. Every year, Pilate selected one prisoner to go free, though. This year, Jesus was up for election. Pilate asked the people to choose whom they wanted released: Jesus or Barabbas (Matt. 27:17–26). But the religious leaders convinced the people to free Barabbas over Jesus. The people wanted the insurrectionist rather than their true King.

If Jesus suffered under false accusations as “a rebel,” why would he support his disciples starting a political rebellion today? Jesus’ early disciples lived under pagan rule throughout the Roman Empire as he did. So how did the earliest Christians interpret and handle this dynamic? Well, as tensions between religion and politics among Jews and Gentiles grew, Rome ultimately won the battle. The Jews were either killed in battle, starved out of Jerusalem, or conquered during the siege in AD 70. But the very last stand of the Jews happened in a place called Masada, where a few hopefuls died by suicide after a long battle with Rome.

After Jerusalem fell, the gospel of Jesus continued to spread around the world, and Christians sought to deal humbly with their Roman counterparts as they made disciples. At times it was very hard, and many Christians gave up their lives when forced to make the decision to obey God or people. However, their willingness to stand up for Christ unafraid—and *with great humility*—led to many converts. Observers were boggled why these Christians were not so concerned about leaving this planet. The result? “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,” as Tertullian purportedly said. In the end, even Rome gave way to Christianity.

Jesus introduced a completely different kingdom and invited his disciples to fight a totally different battle. They became revolutionaries but of a different sort than the world had ever seen. They didn’t instigate violent insurrections but wielded their power with the Word and fought with their counter-cultural lives. Their whole-life testimonies took ground because they followed the King of all kings—Jesus, the revolutionary. He led the greatest revolution in history,

which not only spread throughout the whole Roman world within a few centuries but also lives now throughout the globe.

The fact that I (Jim) am taking this stance might surprise those who know me because in a different life I was a violent person. I wrestled competitively on the wrestling mat for much of my life, which was violent but legal. I also used my skills on the streets *illegally* more times than I can count. In my natural man, I am a fighter, so it may surprise you when I say disciples really need to slow down and consider what Jesus would say about another possible revolution in the US. Jesus wants Christians to fight, but the fight he calls us to is first a spiritual battle, rather than a physical one. We fight by dying to our sinful nature daily as we take up our cross and follow Jesus. So Chad and I believe Jesus wants a new revolution in the US, but it's a revolution of a totally different kind.

Our hope is that a new discipleship revolution will emerge among disciples of Jesus that is characterized *by humility* and results in healthy relationships that fuel Jesus' mission to save the lost world, rather than destroy it. Pride leads to division and death, but humility leads to life and peace. By God's grace, we choose the latter kind of revolution. We want to present to you a path toward this revolution. It's called humble discipleship.

*Pride leads to
division and death,
but humility leads
to life and peace.*

HUMBLE DISCIPLESHIP



As I (Jim) mentioned, I'm a former wrestler. During my early college days, I wrestled for North Idaho College, and I acted as an assistant coach for the summer wrestling camps hosted by the college. Kids and coaches would come from all over the United States to attend these camps. Our head coach, John Owen, was a national championship coach and had earned the title Coach of the Year many times over as well. I went to North Idaho College specifically because I wanted to be on John Owen's team. Whatever I could do to be near him and learn from him was worth it to me, and all the guys on our team felt the same way.

At the camps, we'd have several hundred kids in one gym with coaches spread out all over. John Owen, or J.O. as we called him, would show a certain move to the whole room of kids using a partner, and the kids would break into twos and practice it.

One day, as I walked around helping different kids, J.O. walked up to a junior high kid near me who was huge for his age. The camp was mostly for high school students, but this younger-than-average kid was allowed in because he was obviously extremely athletic and built for the sport. Yet he wasn't correctly practicing the move J.O. had shown everyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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