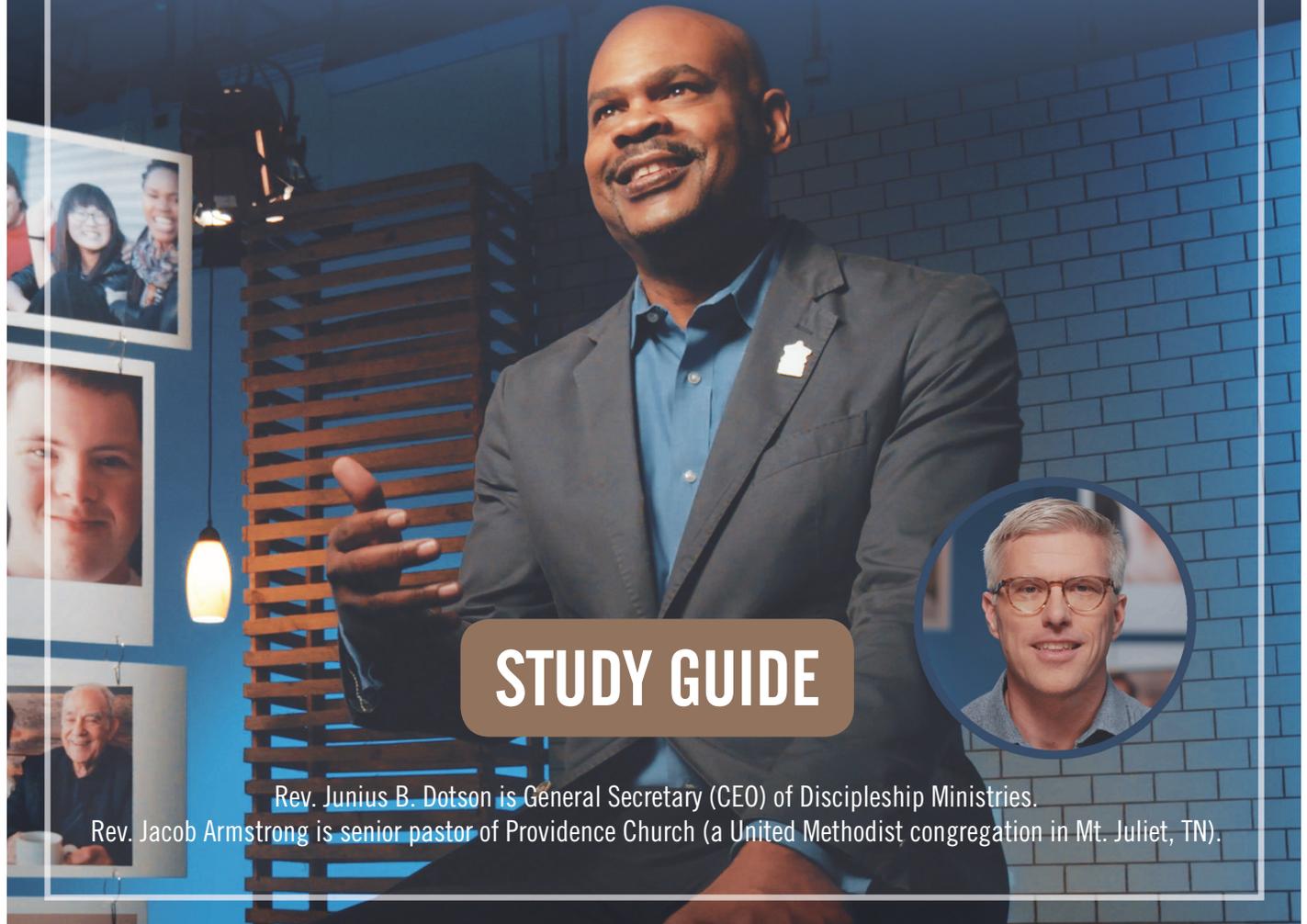


#SEE<sup>ALL</sup>THEPEOPLE

# Discipleship Begins with Relationship

A THREE-SESSION TEACHING & DISCUSSION SERIES  
WITH REV. JUNIUS B. DOTSON AND REV. JACOB ARMSTRONG



## STUDY GUIDE

Rev. Junius B. Dotson is General Secretary (CEO) of Discipleship Ministries.

Rev. Jacob Armstrong is senior pastor of Providence Church (a United Methodist congregation in Mt. Juliet, TN).



*The “holiness of conversation [is] the image of God visibly expressed.”*

— JOHN WESLEY —

## How To Use This Study Guide

### See the People In Your Group

This three-session teaching and discussion series is designed to be adapted to your group’s setting/context. Most will want to include:

- Welcome/get to know one another time (because everyone has a backstory),
- An opening question connecting with each person’s experience (because we join a conversation midstream), and
- “Open listening” to each other’s responses (because seeing calls for “listening love” or paying attention without judgment).

Focus on the big idea(s) for each session video with an invitation to listen for something that stands out while viewing the first video with Rev. Junius B. Dotson. After discussion and more questions, play the video conversation between Junius and Jacob, followed by more questions and conversation. Remember, the “holiness of conversation [is] the image of God visible expressed” (John Wesley).

These video-based discussion **sessions will take on a life of their own** (based on the unique persons in your group and the context of your faith community). Make sure each participant knows you **see and appreciate them**. That means first learning how love has crossed their path and brought them into your life (prevenient grace). When they know they matter to you, they will mirror your love and leadership and engage the people grace has placed in their own life zone (these places will become your shared ministry map).

**SEE** in every person gathered to grow and love **clues for remaking your church’s discipleship culture**. You are looking at the leaders of a new movement of grace in your church and community.

**ASK/LISTEN:** When you ask questions, listen for their distinct take, vocabulary, story (not just the bullet point answers in your summary/this discussion guide).

### Things You Might Need

- › Wi-fi network and a computer/tablet or television with access to the SeeAllthePeople.org for video streaming
- › A PDF or printout out of this study guide
- › Pen or pencil, or smart phone and note taking app
- › Course Outline on page 3 of this Discussion Guide
- › A quick look summary/script for each session video with Junius (for discussion session leaders)

### What You Will See

- › **VIDEOS:** Watch *See All the People* videos and hear Junius Dotson (with Jacob Armstrong) share how a movement of intentional discipleship can re-vitalize your church.
- › **SEE ALL THE PEOPLE CHURCHES**  
View and share video stories detailing how intentional discipleship is making an impact in faith-communities across the connection.

**PICK & CHOOSE** what works with your group (don't try to do everything). Create your own questions rooted in your context, experience, and relationships with the people in the room.

**GIVE THEM SPACE** to question and wrestle with the mystery. Remember, each experience/story of how grace passes our way provides a key (the 'why') to recognizing and sharing God's love with others.

**BRING** the big idea(s) home with storied examples from your own life/experience.

## For Further Learning

**PODCASTS:** Learn from pastors and leaders who are using relationship building and engagement to transform their churches and communities.

**WEBINARS:** Sign up for live conversations with Junius (and others) and post questions/thoughts about growing discipleship in your own church.

**RADIO SERIES:** Listen to the *See All the People* radio series at [www.SeeAllThePeople.org](http://www.SeeAllThePeople.org)

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**NOTE:** Links to YouTube videos in this study guide are not owned by Discipleship Ministries. YouTube videos can be deleted by their copyright owners at any time after publish date of this study guide.

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### Optional Preparation

Invite participants to read Junius Dotson's *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations and/or Engaging Your Community: A Guide to Seeing All the People* in preparation for this three-week teaching series.

These books are available for free PDF download and for purchase online:

[www.SeeAllThePeople.org](http://www.SeeAllThePeople.org)

## 01 Introduction

- The Goal: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
  - The Question: What happens when we stop fixing and start seeing?
  - Going DNA: real relationships, intentional discipleship systems
  - Three Sessions:
    - Whose job is it to make disciples?
    - Stop Fixing Your Church.
    - Discipleship Begins with Relationship.
  - Called to Create a new DNA
- 

## 02 Whose Job is It To Make Disciples?

- First Follow: Be it to make it or (follower DNA and church culture)
  - First Base: Intentional Discipleship
  - Model to Make: *know, practice, go to teach, model, lead*
  - Discipleship *is* Leadership: lead yourself, connect to your 'why' (God's love shared).
  - Leaders change committees, teams, and cultures (and vice versa).
  - Grow to Help, Help to Grow.
  - Healthy people make healthy churches (and vice versa).
  - Leader commitment is key to vitality and effective discipleship systems: what is your personal plan for spiritual growth?
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## 03 Discussion: Whose Job Is It To Make Disciples?

- Discipleship begins with me.
- Connect the dots, stay focused on growth.
- Habits of Disciples
- Worship, welcome, small groups, service
- Create a climate of expectation
- Hearts aligned with vision
- Worship: the front door of your church's culture
- Shining eyes with God's heart

## 04 Stop Fixing Your Church

- Intentional Discipleship is focused and designed.
  - Stop fixing (churches), start planning (growth opportunities).
  - Stay relentlessly focused on discipleship, love by design (plan, process, people).
  - Bring clarity to what you do (disciple-making) and how you do it (opportunity paths).
  - Remember the 'forgotten why' (Jesus' saving love shared with all).
  - Lead others to Christ, help them grow, equip them for ministry, and empower them to tell others.
  - Who you are shapes what you do.
  - Deep discipleship is equipping and empowering others in the journey.
  - Embrace a new ethos and discipleship roadmap beyond surface programming (leader created, context adapted, authentically communicated).
  - Stop fixing: Plan to See the people and your own hearts changed.
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## 05 Discussion: Stop Fixing Your Church

- We stop fixing when we focus on God's call to love people.
- Authentic love doesn't anxiously try to program its way out of decline.
- Leaders keep focused by seeing the people they are called to reach.
- One way leaders see is to come alongside those already serving people.
- Going is 'coming alongside' in strategic partnerships that shift our focus from plans to people, changing the DNA of the church.
- Leaders ask 'show us how you serve?' and learn from those already serving.
- Do one thing to get focused outward: GO - LISTEN - COME ALONGSIDE.
- A church planter ethos (with no lawn for hosting) helps churches create ministries that 'sprout' from the lives of people.
- Leaders find those whose eyes are 'shining' to reach the community.'
- Strategic partners are like 'griots' who know the stories of their community.

## 06 Discipleship Begins With Relationship

- Intentional Discipleship is Relational and Engaging.
- Building Relationships and Engaging your community is part of the plan.
- See to plan, plan to see.
- 'Roots deep,' faith stirs a desire to see others experience life in Jesus.
- The closer to Christ, the more our hearts yearn for "the vast and endless sea."
- Leaders equip and empower disciples to engage and connect with people.
- Sharing God's love is our "why," relationships our "how."
- Seeing is recognizing, respecting, and responding to another's life.
- Recognition grounds engagement (*sawabona – I see you*).
- A plan to love by seeing is effective when relationships are authentic, organic, and consistent.
- Love's learning curve invites seeing and teaches empathy.
- Grace is already at work in the people we are called to see.
- God draws near/changes us through others.
- Effective ministry marries outreach and intentional discipleship.

- Leaders connect with people through a missionary mindset: What does it look like to follow Jesus in this community?
  - This heart and mindset invites God's help to learn how to love.
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## 08 Closing Thoughts

- See all the People is a movement, not a program (no short cuts or checklists).
- Adapt it to your context/locality.
- If it feels challenging or even impossible, you are on the right track (pray and get to work!).

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## 07 Discussion: Discipleship Begins With Relationship

- Discipleship begins with relationship.
- Community impacting ministry marries outreach to intentional discipleship (small groups loving people).
- Small groups = building blocks for missional engagement.
- Relational/missional discipleship is authentic organic, and consistent.
- Authentic connections and relationships begin with listening and sharing stories.
- Community engagement happens through consistent personal connections.
- Corporate engagement means retooling ministries to deepen relationships and create partnerships.
- We always connect engagement with the vision.
- Leaders help the church care by inspiring a desire to see the people on the margins.



*“To make disciples we must first be disciples.”*

— JUNIUS B. DOTSON —

## Open With Prayer

God help us *hear*, help us *see*, help us *help*. Amen.

## Set The Stage

Some leaders will want to prep for the first discussion by sending the group a link to view the **Introduction video** before they gather or play it after discussing some of the questions below.

 **WATCH** a video of songwriter Mac McAnally discussing the hit song “It’s My Job” popularized by Jimmy Buffett, available on the See All The People YouTube playlist:

<https://seeallthepeople.org/class-videos>

 **THINK** about one of your first jobs (mowing lawns, waiting tables, paper route, baby-sitting/caring for siblings, etc.).

### ASK/LISTEN

- How did you know what to do?
- Did someone train you or were you on your own?
- When did your work life first become ‘the buck stops with me’?
  - What happened?
  - How did you handle situations where your expertise (or lack thereof) met the needs of people, customers, or coworkers?
  - How did you get ready for work? College courses? Other preparation/learning? Mentoring or apprenticeship?
  - Who modeled best practices or showed you how (or did you learn on the job/by doing the work)?

 **THINK** about a company, culture, or marketing campaign that puts its customer or constituency front and center.

*(continued)*

### VIDEO RECAP: *Whose Job Is It?*

- › First Follow: Be it to make it (follower DNA and church culture)
- › First Base: Intentional Discipleship
- › Model to Make – *know, practice, go to teach, model, lead*
- › Discipleship *is* Leadership: lead yourself, (re)connect to your ‘why’ (God’s love shared)
- › Leaders change teams, committees, and cultures (and vice versa).
- › Grow to Help, Help to Grow.
- › Healthy people make healthy churches (and vice versa).
- › Leader commitment is key to vitality and effective discipleship systems: what is your plan for spiritual growth?

## NOTES

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*“[A] relentless focus on making, growing, and maturing disciples... starts by creating an intentional discipleship system or pathway for disciples in your church.”*

— JUNIUS B. DOTSON —

## Open With Prayer

God help us plan to see (and see to help) the people on your path. Amen.

## Set The Stage

Prepare for the group discussion for this session on *Stop Fixing Your Church* by asking participants to consider the following:



**THINK** of something you're proud of (a milestone or accomplishment) in your own life or in the life of someone you love.

- What kind of preparation and planning made this possible?
- Was there a blueprint, map, or steps you/they followed?
- Did the 'construction' process ever call for changes to the plan (so plan B, C, D, etc.)?
- How did the map or directions match (and get modified by) the reality on the ground?

Recall the plans expectant parents (your own, you, friends) make when a baby is on the way [read books like *What to Expect When You're Expecting*; paint/prepare a nursery; diet/take prenatal vitamins; buy/build a crib; Lamaze classes, throw baby showers/register for gifts, ultrasound/sonogram; social media announcements, schedule a baptism, etc.].

- What did you/your parents/friends do to plan for the arrival of a new family member?
- Did you do it differently the second time?
- Why does love make a plan?
- How can we prepare for the people God is sending our way?

*(continued)*

### VIDEO RECAP: *Stop Fixing Your Church*

- Intentional Discipleship is Focused and Designed (Corporate).
- Stop fixing (churches), start planning (growth opportunities).
- Stay relentlessly focused on discipleship, love by design (plan, process, people).
- Bring clarity to what you do (disciple-making) and how you do it (opportunity paths).
- Remember the 'forgotten why' (Jesus' saving love shared with all).
- Lead others to Christ, Help them grow, Equip them for ministry, Empower them to tell others.
- Who you are shapes what you do.
- Deep discipleship is equipping and empowering others in the journey.
- Embrace a new ethos and discipleship roadmap beyond surface programming (leader created, context adapted, authentically communicated).
- Stop fixing: Plan to See the people and your own hearts changed.









- What do you think about a new church start ethos (when you don't have 'a lawn' to host, you have to go where people are)? How would that fly at your church? How do we get ourselves out there so we can see people?
- What would it mean to see our *going* in Jesus' name as *a coming alongside* of those who already see and serve the people in our life and ministry zone?
- List those in your community (not church affiliated) who have 'boots on the ground,' face to face relationships with the people God already knows and loves there. Do they know you support them? Do you ask for their practical wisdom in this helping work?
- Who are the connectors or community "*griots*" in your 'geo-tagged' experience (geo-tagged just means love's work has an address on the map)? Who knows the people and the stories of struggle, love, joy and loss in your longitude/latitude? (*griot* – a French word for West African storytellers – those praise singers and poets who know their hometown and its people well)
- In what ways might this mean *shifting* our *focus* from the old ways of *planning* (vehicles of love/manageable old wineskins) to *engaging* people (new fruit of the vine/Spirit)?

## Script & Improv

-  **ASK:** Think of a time when your plans prepared you for a situation that required flexibility and on-the-fly ad-libbing.
- What happened?
  - What happened next?
  - What changed 'on the ground' between your plans and reality?
  - How does the concrete reality of life look different from the Google Earth view?
  - How do we go from maps and best-laid plans to 'in the zone' encounters/experiences that change lives in real time (maybe a street view faith verses the 2D birds-eye view directions of our best GPS maps)?

-  **LISTEN** to their stories for unique experiences, joys, fears, and hopes. Remember the details (they matter).

### Future Discussion

Junius and Jacob's conversation turns (or 'pulls focus') from keeping leaders intentional about making disciples to a *tighter focus* on the people God is calling us to love. *Seeing* counters navel-gazing and our anxious 'fixation on fixing' – and it focuses leader efforts on practices that help people grow 'roots deep' in Christ. It places strategic partnerships and relationships with people front and center.

This conversation bridges the current session on making a plan (love by design) to the final session about engaging people through authentic and consistent relationships (love by seeing).

### Plan to See

**A new church ethos or culture of intentional discipleship** turns the DNA of personal Christ following into a broader shared strategy to love God and neighbor. While there is no one size fits all plan for growth in grace, the key elements or essentials are always there: worship, welcoming hospitality, small group accountability, and service-oriented engagement with people outside and beyond our buildings and facilities.

## NOTES

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*“[To] engage the community with integrity we must see the people that God calls us to reach not as a means to an end [or] a way to increase our capacity to pay our bills or even fill our pews...”*

— JUNIUS B. DOTSON —

## Open With Prayer

God help us ‘look again’ to see and love those you so love. Amen.

## Set The Stage

 **WATCH** a video of comedian Brian Regan discussing his experience with lost baggage at the airport, available on the See All The People YouTube playlist:

<https://seeallthepeople.org/class-videos>

## ASK/LISTEN

- What are the “essentials”?
  - In life (food, shelter, love...relationships)?
  - In our strongest relationships?  
*(HINT: honesty, authenticity, commitment, compassion, consistency, mercy, forgiveness, time spent together)*
  - In discipleship and ministry?
- What are some of the essentials for seeing the people God has placed in our path?  
*(HINT: paying attention, ‘listening love,’ learning their origin story [all heroes have an origin story], understanding their situation: context, culture, history, losses, joys)*
- Name some obstacles to seeing and recognizing people where they live (for example, our busyness and preoccupation with our own problems, presumptions about who they are, where they come from, what happened to them, etc.).
  - What would it take to remove some of these obstacles to seeing in your church?

## VIDEO RECAP: *Discipleship Begins with Relationship*

- › Intentional Discipleship is Relational and Engaging.
- › Building Relationships and Engaging your community is part of the plan.
- › See to plan, plan to see.
- › ‘Roots deep,’ Christ-following faith stirs a desire to see others experience life in Jesus, too.
- › The closer we grow to Christ, the more our hearts yearn for “the vast and endless sea” (Life for others).
- › Leaders equip and empower disciples to engage and connect with people.
- › Sharing God’s love is our “why,” relationships our “how.”
- › Seeing is recognizing, respecting, and responding to another’s life.
- › Recognition grounds engagement (*sawabona – I see you*).
- › A plan to love by seeing is most effective when relationships are authentic, organic, and consistent.
- › God draws near/changes us through the others we see.
- › Effective ministry marries outreach and intentional discipleship.





 **ASK/LISTEN** (choose one or two)

- Think back to a vulnerable time in your pre-adult life (childhood, high school). Did anyone say or embody “I see you” (sawabona)?
  - How?
  - Did it affect the course of your life?
  - How were they God’s grace to you?
- Who sees you now (really recognizes/appreciates/respects you, like Aretha so soulfully commands)?
- Who needs to be seen by you?
- What does it mean to ‘have a burden’ for others?
- Think of someone right now whose hurt breaks God’s heart or your heart. What can you do about it (listen, help)?
- Have you ever served others only to discover they were actually helping you?
- What would it mean to ‘marry intentional discipleship with outreach’ in your church?

## Plan To Grow/Plan To Help

Invite some of the people in your group with “shining eyes” for reaching the community to **go on a ‘prayer walk’** with you in the area surrounding your church. Pray for people and places by address. Pick a restaurant, school, business, neighborhood market/grocery store and take a picture of it with your phone from the street. Pray for the people who work, learn, or shop there. Maybe go to a restaurant for lunch or coffee. Talk to your server. Listen (naturally, without being interrogating or creepy!) and ask them questions that give them an opportunity to be seen. This is not a transaction-don’t expect to ‘get’ something out of your conversation. Later send a note or text yourself the street view picture outside with a reminder to pray for the person you listened to inside (see Junius B. Dotson, *Engaging Your Community: A Guide to Seeing All the People*, p.41ff, available at [www.SeeAllThePeople.org](http://www.SeeAllThePeople.org)).

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## See to Love

**Rita:** *It’s a perfect day. You couldn’t plan a day like this.*

**Phil:** *Well, you can, it just takes an awful lot of work.*

Watch the preview trailer (or send a link in advance) for the film, *Groundhog Day*.  
[hyperlink]

Note the quote above. If some in your group have seen the film, ask:

- How (and why) does the self-serving weatherman Phil Connors make it a priority to learn all about his producer, Rita?
- Even when he knows all about her, does he really see her?
- What breaks the cycle of unending repetition – living the same day again and again?

*[HINT- He begins to recognize, respect, and respond to the dignity of every person, helping them where they are and without need for reward (vs. managing outcomes for his own designs)]*

How can you break the church cycle of doing the same thing over and over (expecting different results)? One way: *paying* attention to the people in your community.

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 **ASK/LISTEN** (choose one or two)

- How does outreach work in your church (a specific committee, program, or staff member’s direction, etc.)?
  - Do ministries spring up from discipleship groups or spiritual entrepreneurs in your church?
- What do Junius and Jacob mean by “authentic, organic, and consistent” when describing relationships with people in the community?
  - What are some examples of inauthentic, unnatural, or sporadic engagement (some forms of ‘witnessing,’ tract distributing, hit and run evangelism, even annual holiday meal serving with homeless folks, etc.)?
- What stories did you hear Junius and Jacob share?
  - Recall an example of a relationship that yielded a sacred opportunity to see and help. What role did conversation play?
- How might this resonate with what John Wesley called the ‘holiness of conversation’?
- How could we shift our outreach efforts from a programmatic to a partnership model?

### Called to See

*“Listening love is the first step to justice in person-to-person relationships.”*

– Paul Tillich

### NOTES

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## Plan To Grow/Plan To Help

### Typecasting a City: New York Alleys

Invite someone to listen in advance to a 12-minute opening segment of a podcast about the cinematic stereotype of a New York alley and share this story in their own words with the group:

*Cortlandt Alley*, 99% Invisible, Mini Stories: Volume 6:  
<https://bit.ly/2Syf1IH>

**Quotes:**

*“People think they know it but they don’t...At some point the idea of New York has taken over the reality of New York...like an actor that’s typecast.”*

*“Movies are just so much more interesting when you portray the locations featured for what they are and let them be a real character instead of just a backdrop.”*

(continued)





