

Commentary: Critical race theory and the call to love our neighbor

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Daily Article has been edited from the [original](#) to focus on Jim Denison's discussion of critical race theory.

Postmodernism has taught our secular society truth claims are personal and subjective. Since, in this view, no one can claim objective or absolute authority for their beliefs, tolerance is now our highest cultural value. To suggest lost people need Jesus or the Bible is God's authoritative word is seen as intolerant and oppressive.

How critical race theory views the world

In this context, a worldview called critical race theory has gained enormous ascendancy in our culture. John Stonestreet and Timothy D. Padgett of the Colson Center's Breakpoint describe critical race theory being [influenced](#) by a Marxist ideology that views the world in terms of power dynamics. According to this ideology, social evils such as crime, poverty and oppression result not from human failures and sin but from Euro-Americans seeking to secure and increase their economic and social power.

Critical race theory is complex and multifaceted, but many of its adherents claim people experience society either as an oppressed minority or as an oppressing majority. Social structures perpetuate and exacerbate these realities.

In addition, seeing oppressed people as equals or offering equality of opportunity is not enough, since social structures enacted by oppressors continue to oppress them. As a result, some critical race theory advocates believe those who benefit from systems enacted by oppressors should make reparations to victims of these systems, offering not just equality but equity to them. And we should all work proactively to remove systemic injustices that continue to oppress minorities.

The future for evangelicals

It is beyond the scope of this *Daily Article* to respond to critical race theory in depth, but I will offer three biblical observations.

One: [Systemic racism](#) exists.

It is not enough to seek a colorblind society that does not recognize ongoing inequalities or work for a just society for all. God's word is still his will: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). We should work to end systemic racism wherever we find it and care for those oppressed by society (cf. Acts 6:1-6; James 1:27).

Two: The gospel is the ultimate solution to our social challenges.

Many evangelicals are using critical race theory to expose systemic racism in our culture. However, because critical race theory [views](#) humans through the prism of race and gender rather than as individuals, some of its other adherents can minimize the biblical responsibility of persons and their sacred value as God's creation. The fact is, we all are sinners (Romans 3:23) in need of salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). The ultimate solution to all our social problems lies in transformation by God's Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Three: We must prepare for a growing threat to religious freedom.

God cares deeply for the poor and the marginalized (cf. Proverbs 17:5). At the same time, a worldview that views minorities as oppressed and majorities as oppressors can be used to claim that evangelicals who defend biblical morality are oppressing those with whom they disagree. This is not an assertion of critical race theory per se, but it can be an application of its worldview to “moral minorities.”

As we have noted in recent articles, many claim today that evangelical appeals to religious freedom should be disallowed if they are viewed as harmful to others. The so-called [Equality Act](#) is an example with regard to LGBTQ persons. This denial of religious freedom can be extended to abortion, “death with dignity,” and a host of other civil “rights.” In this future world, Christians would not be able to appeal to their faith in refusing to perform an abortion, sex-change surgery, same-sex wedding or a variety of other services.

Three reminders and a fascinating interview

We should continue to monitor and engage with biblical clarity the cultural trajectory we have discussed today. To that end, I’ll close with three biblical reminders.

First, we should live with such integrity, consistency and compassion that others see the difference Jesus makes in our personal lives (Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 3:16). Our opponents are not our enemies but people who need the same grace we have experienced and are called to share.

Second, we should show our culture the compelling logic and positive outcomes of the biblical worldview apart from personal religious beliefs (1

Peter 3:15). We seek not the “right to be wrong” but the “right to be right.”

Third, we should pray and work for the spiritual awakening that will change hearts and minds before it is too late (2 Corinthians 3:18). In this context, a recent [interview](#) in *Christianity Today* greatly impressed me.

Michel Abs was selected last fall as the new leader of the Middle East Council of Churches. He discussed the persecution of believers in his part of the world and his vision for the future. He stated: “We are the salt of the earth; we should be everywhere and spread good things. When salt is kept in its jar, it hardens and becomes like a stone, unusable.”

He also noted: “The Muslim is not our enemy. Maybe at times he could be our rival. But he is my neighbor, and Christ told us to love our neighbor.”

How usable is your salt?

Asked differently: How well will you love your neighbors today?

Jim Denison is the co-founder and chief vision officer of Denison Forum. He pastored churches in Texas and Georgia and now speaks and writes to empower believers to navigate cultural issues from a biblical perspective.

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