Irreconcilable Reconciliation — Delivery Transcript

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, July 4, 2021 · *Every Thought Captive*

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All right, if you have your Bible, you can open them up to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. If you're just now joining us this week, we took a little break from a series we've been in the book of Revelation to examine a cultural issue that I think is showing up more and more often in our culture. I've had a lot of Christians ask questions about this headline or that headline or this issue or that issue. And undergirding a lot of those headlines and issues I think is an ideology that animates all of it.

And so what I wanted us to do in this series is to address that ideology in keeping with what Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, which is to take every thought captive and to make it obedient to Jesus Christ. So let's read his words in 2 Corinthians chapter 10. And then we'll talk a little bit about this issue one more time this week. He says in verse 3 of chapter 10, although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. Since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds.

We demolish arguments, and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. So just by way of review, for those of you who weren't here last week, Paul says, as Christians, we are engaged in a war, that there's no such thing as a neutral moment in the Christian life; there's always a battle going on. The essence of that battle is spiritual. But the specific nuance of that spiritual battle is ideological. Paul says I got to tear down arguments, I demolish strongholds, I take every thought captive to obey Christ.

The theater of war, I think, is the human heart and the human mind. That right now the greatest battle in your life spiritually is probably the battle for your mind. Because how you

think determines how you live, and that our mission as Christians is not only to take every thought captive so that we are being renewed in our minds so that we can be obedient to Christ, but to also be engaged in the warfare of tearing down false ideas in our culture, tearing down false ideas in individuals who we're seeking to win to faith in Jesus Christ.

And to persuade them to not only believe the gospel, but to believe the implications of the gospel on how we see everything else in the world. And so what we did last week was the first part of that process, which was to understand, I would say the predominant way of thinking in our culture. And we use this term called critical theory to describe the majority way of thinking in our culture. But it's actually been around for way longer than that. And in fact, the modern manifestations of this way of thinking could probably not technically be called critical theory, but rather the foundations of critical theory have been applied to various different aspects in our culture today, like things between the genders, male and female.

There are things called critical queer studies, the dynamics between straight people and non-straight people. Critical gender studies, critical— you've heard of critical race theory, which is taking the ideas of critical theory and applying it to the legal system and the disparity between whites and people of color in the legal system. There's all different ways in which this basic way of thinking has filtered down into the nuts and bolts of society at the street level and Christians are encountering it and what we need to do as Christians, it's not enough just to understand what that way of seeing the world is and how they look at reality.

As Christians we want to both understand the worldview and understand what's wrong with the worldview and why Christianity is actually a superior set of tools and a superior way of seeing the world. So what I want us to do this week, since last week we spent most of our time up here understanding this thing called critical theory. This week I want us to see why it is so contradictory to the Christian way of seeing the world. And then how do we persuade people to exchange that way of seeing the world with the lens of the gospel itself?

And I think in doing that, we will be honoring Paul's admonition to tear down arguments and to take every thought captive, to make it obedient to Jesus Christ. Now, a lot of you were here last week, and so this is somewhat of a review, but if you're new this week, I want you to have a basic idea of what I even mean by critical theory because it gets tossed around out there without ever being defined. And so I think if they were going to describe their worldview using their own words, using their own convictions, they would break it down into these four different pillars or four key frameworks.

Number one is the social binary. This just means they break all of society down into two basic groups. You've got the oppressors and the oppressed. And what makes you an oppressed person or an oppressor person is the level of power that your group possesses in society. So if you are part of the male class, you have more power in society than the female

class. If you're part of the white class, you have more power than people of color. If you're part of the straight class, you have more power than non-straight.

If you're cisgendered, you have more power than the transgender. So on and so forth. You're either A or B. You're either oppressor or oppressed. You cannot be both. You cannot jump out of one into the other. You're one or the other. The second thing is what I would call hegemonic power, or they call hegemonic power. That's just a highfalutin word that means the ability to control how the rest of society thinks. And again, you would probably say, well, I can't control how society thinks, or we do things a lot differently around here.

That's probably what you would say. But it's not that you as an individual control how people think. You're part of the group that controls how the rest of society thinks. And that is obviously true that in any culture there is a majority group. And that majority enforces their values, customs, and norms on the rest of that society. That's why we have phrases like, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. What critical theory says though is that is itself a form of oppression. Because the majority is using their power to force their values, customs, and norms on everybody else.

And we shouldn't have to kowtow to those norms, that's oppression. So social binary, hegemonic power; numbers three and four are lived experience and social justice. Lived experience is just the idea that your position in the group, whether oppressor or oppressed—your position gives you unique access to truth as an oppressed person or uniquely blinds you to the truth as an oppressor. You're blinded by your privilege, or you have unique insight into reality because of your oppression. Why is that the case? Because in critical theory, everything is fundamentally boiled down through the lens of power.

And your possession of power or the lack thereof absolutely shapes your view of reality. So you can't really see the truth unless you're seeing it from the view of the oppressed. This is where the term getting woke comes from. When you get woke, you wake up to the reality of the oppression that's all around you. The last one, social justice, that's just the vehicle that is used to overthrow the oppressors and to liberate the oppressed. Social justice is the tearing down of any and all forms of cultural hegemony. In other words, that hegemonic power that enforces values, customs, and norms.

Social justice is getting rid of that and not allowing anything else to take its place. It is the utter abolishment of all forms of authority and power so that the oppressed peoples can be liberated from their oppression. And again my goal is not to denigrate that view. In fact last week somebody actually thought I was articulating that as saying that was what the Bible teaches, that this is how we should view the world. That's not exactly what the Bible teaches at all. In fact, I think there are deep conflicts between that way of looking at the world and the Christian way of looking at the world, I just want you to understand how people who have adopted critical theory, how they see the world.

And again, that's a broad umbrella. Critical theory is a broad umbrella. It has particular manifestations in the sphere of gender, the sphere of race or ethnicity, the sphere of the legal system. On and on we could go how this framework shapes the way you see all of those different particularities. But fundamentally, at the end of the day, that's the gist. You've got oppressors and oppressed, you've got hegemonic power, the problem with the world is the hegemony, the way to solve the problem is to get rid of it. And the only people who are able to do that are the oppressed peoples because they have the unique access to truth about what's wrong and how to fix it.

All right, so that's a review of what critical theory actually is. The reason that I would even take time out of a weekly preaching calendar to address it is because this particular kind of thinking is not just being adopted by non-Christian people. I think this way of thinking is being adopted by Christian people as well. And the reason that it's being adopted by certain Christians is because it's attractive in how it critiques culture. To put it another way, there are similarities between Christianity and critical theory when it comes to certain critiques of the culture.

For example, when critical theory says that oppression is evil, Christians look at that and go, yeah, I agree. Amen. Oppression is evil. It should not be. When critical theory says that sin can be structural or that sin can be systemic, Christians go, yeah, I think the Bible teaches that. That sin may not just be caused by the individual, but individual sinners can partner together to create sinful structures and systems. And Christians would point to things like abortion culture, or we could point to things like Hitler's Germany or chattel slavery in the USA.

We would say it wasn't just a couple of individuals who were sinning. They had actually created structures and enacted laws and systems that promoted and propagated the sin. And so when critical theory says that's true, Christians go, I agree that's true. And so maybe there's some similarities between us. The last similarity I think is this idea of cultural hegemony. Christians can agree that there is a system of the world. That's why John says, don't love the world or the things of the world. Why? Because that system can brainwash you. That's why as a Christian parent, you're like I don't think I'm going to let my kid just veg out on Netflix unaccompanied, or I'm not just going to let them veg out on YouTube unaccompanied, because of the values, customs, and norms that they're going to absorb that I think might conflict with how I want my child to actually see the world.

Christians know that cultural hegemony exists. The problem is not that there's a cultural power structure. The problem is that it's the wrong power structure. It's not the gospel. It's the world. And so a lot of Christians see critical theory critiquing culture in those ways. And Christians go, yes, amen, I agree, let's adopt critical theory, but I think that's a dangerous thing to do. Why? Number one, because the insights of critical theory, those critiques of

culture, are not unique to critical theory. I can show you ways in which the Bible says the exact same things.

Okay, so the insights are not unique to critical theory. Number two, the differences between Christianity and critical theory matter more than the similarities. It's like people who say all religions teach the same basic morality, ergo, all religions are equal, all religions lead you to God. That assumption assumes that the similarities between all religions are more important than the differences. And what people who actually hold religious beliefs would tell you is, yeah, there may be similarities, but the differences are more important than the similarities. And the same is true when it comes to critical theory.

The assumptions behind critical theory, the tools with which critical theory tries to address these social ills. Not only do they contradict Christianity, when you try to carry them alongside your Christian convictions, I believe they'll actually erode and subvert your core Christian beliefs. And if you think I'm crazy, let me just show you an example of this very thing taking place with a seminary, a United States of America seminary that is training pastors and sending missionaries. They put out this statement in response to a group of Christians who are basically saying what I just said, who are saying that critical theory is dangerous.

Christians should not just adopt it unquestioningly. But that there are core conflicts between them. This is what they said. It's Union Seminary. I should have the graphic up there. They put out a multilayered response to their statement and they organized it in terms of what they believe about scripture, what they believe about salvation, what they believe about morality, so on and so forth. Look at what they said about Scripture. The core Christian position on Scripture is that it is inspired by God and that it is true in everything that it speaks about, that it is without error or inerrant.

They, on the other hand, say, while divinely inspired, we deny that the Bible is inerrant or infallible. Why? Because it was written by men, keyword men, over centuries and thus reflects both God's truth and human sin and prejudice. We affirm that biblical scholarship and critical theory help us discern which messages are God's. In other words, you got critical theory and Christianity living harmoniously side by side. And when there's a contradiction between the historic biblical teaching on an issue and critical theory teaching on an issue, this seminary says we need to use critical theory to better understand where the Bible got it wrong.

Because after all the Bible was written by men over various years, and those men had their prejudices and they were using their oppression or they were using their power to propagate oppression and we don't want to be guilty of that. And so we'll use critical theory as a tool to teach us where the Bible is incorrect. Where is the Bible incorrect? Well according to them one of the areas they're incorrect is on the issue of sexuality. In marriage: We affirm science

and theory's confirmation that God created humans to live in various sexual orientations and genders.

The spectrum of human sexual experience attests to God's expansive love. In other words, the Bible got it wrong on issues of gender, the Bible got it wrong on its definition of marriage, that actually it's a good thing; we should celebrate deviations from God's original design on those issues. When it comes to salvation, they say, yes, Jesus is one way to get to God, but we deny that salvation is exclusively through Jesus Christ, that it's exclusively through any one religion. Why? Because according to critical theory, that's an oppressive idea. That your way is the only way.

You're only saying that to preserve your position of power, your position of Christian hegemony. And so here you have a seminary that historically would have been committed to the orthodox Christian faith, training preachers, sending missionaries, and they have now compromised at core fundamental levels of basic Christian doctrine. Why? Because they adopted critical theory as a tool to help them understand Christianity. Its assumptions will subvert and erode your core Christian convictions because there are fundamental, irreconcilable differences between the two. It's not tangential, it's not let's agree to disagree. There are fundamental, irreconcilable conflicts between that way of seeing the world and a Christian way of seeing the world.

So what I want to show you are those conflicts. And I need to say, I forgot to say this in the other two messages, but these insights are not unique to me. Okay, these four things come from Neil Shenvi's work on this issue. I think Neil Shenvi does a great job of explaining these. I put his ebook out there in the hallway, I don't think there's any copies left. But I can print out more copies if you want them. But I think these are core irreconcilable conflicts. The first is that there's an irreconcilable conflict between how Christianity views truth and how critical theory views truth.

Philosophers call this your epistemology, which is a highfalutin word that means how do you know what you know. How do you know what's true? How do you know what's false? And how do you determine one from the other? Historically, Christianity would say truth is objective. It exists outside of you. Truth is fundamentally in God Himself, that Jesus Christ is truth personified, and that He has given us logic and reason and evidence to reason our way to the truth as it is revealed in God and in God's world. Another way to say it, you've got God's word and God's world.

Those are two books that God wrote to reveal to us the truth. And to get to the truth of God, you use reason, logic, and evidence to discern what God has revealed through the word or what he has revealed through his world. Okay, that's a Christian way of approaching truth. In critical theory, truth is not determined by reason, logic, and evidence. In critical theory, all truth claims are veiled bids for power. Which means if you have adopted critical theory,

the question is not, is that true or is that false? The question is not, does that line up with the evidence or not?

The question is what does that person have to gain by the truthfulness of that claim? What's his agenda? What's their hidden motivation for saying what they're saying? And so you can dismiss someone not by winning an argument or not by presenting your view as superior based on the logic and evidence. You can just dismiss a whole person's view because that person belongs to the oppressor class. Truth is, I wouldn't say that their truth is subjective, I'd just say their truth is viewed through the lens of power, not truth. And this totally undermines the Christian approach, not just to truth generally, but to the scriptures specifically.

This is why Union Seminary says things like, well, the Bible's not all the way true and all that it speaks about, we need critical theory to teach us where the difference is because critical theory can expose those hidden agendas by those biblical authors to propagate their oppressions. That is a fundamental difference. You can dismiss whole arguments just by saying, well, of course they would say that they're trying to propagate their oppression. This is why in debate and cultural debate a lot of Christians get frustrated because they would say, I think the science, I think the science proves that unborn human life is just as human as a born human life, the same DNA, same essential human attributes.

The only difference is the stage of development. And they would try to ground their argument in logic, reason, and evidence. And there would be another person who would say, no uterus, no opinion. In other words, you're a man, you don't get to speak to this issue because of your gender. That is that issue at work in our culture. Because you're just saying that because you're trying to use your power to continue oppressing women. So we could do the same kind of logic on questions of morality or questions of the truthfulness of Christianity.

You dismiss the person, you don't dismiss the argument. The second irreconcilable difference is a different view of humanity. And this I think is the biggest difference. Humanity is how— what makes a person valuable? What gives a person their essential worth? Are there points of solidarity between all human beings? Critical theory would say no. There are no shared points of solidarity between all human beings. There is an essential adversarial relationship between all human beings. Why? Because you're either oppressor or you're oppressed. And there's no solidarity between the oppressed classes and the oppressor classes.

You're one or the other, and you're against each other based on your group identity. Christianity disagrees with that significantly. In Christianity, there's not one point of solidarity. There are three points of solidarity that exist between all human beings. And in my opinion, they absolutely abolish the core foundation of critical theory. And what are

those three points of solidarity? According to Scripture, every human person is created in God's image. Every human person is guilty of sin. And every human person is in need of salvation. The thing that makes us valuable in God's eyes is shared by every human being.

Red, brown, yellow, black, and white, they are precious in his sight. Why? Because we are created in the image of God. That's what distinguishes us from the rest of the creation. We are created to reflect God, male and female he created them. So men don't possess the image of God in ways that females do not. White people don't possess the image of God in ways that people of color do not. Regardless of your gender, regardless of your ethnicity, regardless of your level of power, regardless of your wealth, all people are inherently valuable because all people possess the image of God.

But also all people are guilty because of sin. If you're an oppressor person, you have sin in your life. If you're an oppressed person, you have sin in your life. If you're a wealthy person, you have sin in your life. If you're a poor person, you have sin in your life. All people have sinned. What does it say in Romans 3:23? Not some, not the really bad people, not just the Gentiles— all people have sinned. All people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The Christian view of human solidarity absolutely abolishes any ground for partiality.

Any ground. Just because you're a man doesn't make you better than a woman. Just because you're white doesn't make you better than a person of color. What is it, I think Galatians chapter 3 verse 28? Paul says the gospel tears down all of those cultural divisions between us. It doesn't matter whether you're Jew or Gentile. Ethnicity is irrelevant. It doesn't matter whether you're male or female, slave or free, gender is irrelevant, your social status is irrelevant. When compared to the shared identity you have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I don't think this is the Bible saying color doesn't matter.

I don't think this is the Bible's way of saying we should be colorblind and don't see color. Otherwise you wouldn't have in the book of Revelation people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. There are different ethnicities. Those differences should be celebrated. The Bible does not say we should have uniformity at all costs. You have different people, different gifts, different perspectives. Those differences are celebrated. So the Bible doesn't dismiss or destroy our differences. What it does is it demotes them in terms of relative importance to the fact that we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we're all guilty of sin, but we're all equally invited to salvation. And then in Christ, those things that used to separate us, those things that used to tear us down and put us at enmity with one another— those things are healed in the Lord Jesus Christ because we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. So a different view of humanity, a different view of truth. A different view of power, number three, a different view of power and authority, Critical theory's rooted in the idea that all cultural hegemony or all cultural power should be abolished.

Christianity disagrees. Christianity would say, even if you get rid of all the power structures, you still got a problem because of the sin in the human heart. The problem is not that power structures exist. The problem is that people are submitting to the wrong power structures. And if people would submit to the authority that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you would truly be free. That's why Jesus says in John 8:31, abide in my word, and you'll truly be my disciples, and then you'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

In other words, freedom is not the abolition of all power and authority. Freedom is the submission to true authority. And that true authority is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the last irreconcilable difference is a different view of morality. Different view of morality. Critical theory is unabashedly moralistic. Okay, they are not moral relativists. They have a true objective outcry against oppression. The difference between Christianity and critical theory is in the universality of those moral obligations and the location of moral culpability. So what I mean by that is in critical theory, one person can be guilty of prejudice and oppression or sinful speech because they're an oppressor, but an oppressed person can say the same exact thing the same exact way, essentially the same sinful way, but they're not morally guilty of the sin because they belong to the oppressed group.

And moral culpability is not found in the individual, it's found in the group. And so that creates what I call a moral asymmetry where it's okay for one person to do it, but it's not okay for another person to do it. And you may say, well, that sounds crazy. I don't agree with that. But it's all over the place in our culture where one person can say incredibly racist things or incredibly prejudicial things, and another camp will say, how dare they say that? That's racism or that's reverse racism. And you'll have people come to bat to defend those racist statements because the power imbalance in our society makes it impossible for them to be morally culpable of that sin.

The best example of this was when Sarah Jeong, New York Times journalist, got exposed for her extremely racist tweets where she said— I can't, it's like— it's crazy how much joy I get from making old white men miserable,[1] which is not a nice thing to say to old white men. And it kind of went crazy, and conservatives were trying to get her canceled because of it, lose her job, because of the moral double standard. And it obviously was a moral double standard, but then one of her journalistic peers came and published an article on Vox that said yes, what she said was unwise or unhelpful, but it was not racist.

Why? Because the power imbalance in our society makes it impossible for her to be guilty of those things. It's only possible to be guilty of racism if you belong to the oppressor tribe. And by the way, if you're an oppressor tribe, even if you don't say racist things in racist ways, you're still guilty of racism because of your cultural hegemonic power which is enforcing your customs, values, and norms on everybody else. In other words, there's a moral double

standard that Christianity cannot agree with. In Christianity, moral claims are universal. They're true whether you're a man or a woman, slave or free.

When Paul says, don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth. It's true regardless of your social station in life. There are moral differences. Paul tells husbands to do certain things that he doesn't tell wives to do; he tells wives to do certain things he doesn't tell husbands to do. But those moral particularities in no way violate or undermine the moral universals that are applicable on everybody else. So there is an irreconcilable difference on how they see truth, irreconcilable difference on how they understand humanity. How they understand power and authority and how they understand morality.

Those are not tangential issues. Those are not let's agree to disagree issues. Those are not, I can use it as a useful tool to critique culture, even though we may not line up on all the nuances. Those are not nuanced questions. Those are fundamental core questions of how you see the rest of the world. And when you attach critical theory to your Christian convictions, they cannot live peaceably together. One will eat up the other. And it's always critical theory eating up your core Christian convictions. Happens over and over and over again, which is why I would warn you as a Christian from embracing that theory wholesale into your life.

So what do you do? What do you do as a Christian where you see societal problems, you agree with the critiques of critical theory, but you don't want to attach your trailer to that vehicle? how do you persuade people to reject critical theory and embrace Christianity? Because the goal is not to just disagree with people as a Christian. Can we agree on that? It's not enough just to disagree. Oh, people are crazy out there. You can complain all day long about how crazy everybody is, but all you're doing is disagreeing.

The goal is to win people. The goal is to persuade. So it's not enough just to know what they believe. It's not even enough just to see the irreconcilable conflicts. You want to win people over. So to answer that question, I want us to read a passage in Colossians chapter 4 that has always been a true north in my own life as I think about these issues. We don't have time to go long on this, but I just want to offer a couple of lines of what I think are biblical wisdom for how to address these issues.

Paul says in Colossians chapter 4, number one, devote yourselves to prayer. Stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the Word to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should. Number two, act wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer every person. So there's two commands according to the Apostle Paul.

If we want to win people to Christ, you need prayer and you need wisdom. When it comes to prayer, Paul says you've got to stay alert in prayer with thanksgiving and then pray for strategic opportunities to share the gospel. We've talked about prayer a lot in our church since January, so I don't want to belabor the point other than to say the lack of prayer in your life about this issue or any other issue is a key indicator of what you really believe about the Lord. And I'm not talking about prayer at dinner time or prayer at nighttime when everybody prays.

I'm talking about unhurried, undistracted time alone with you and your heavenly Father, where nobody else can see it except him. If that is completely void from your life, you will lose this battle. You will not be prepared. You will not be winsome. You will not be attractive. You will not be effective at winning people to faith in Jesus Christ because, number one, you're going to be a grumpy, dumpy kind of person. Because it's all doom and gloom and all the world's going to end. And Jesus, please come back before America implodes.

You're just always negative. You're never going to persuade someone if you're always negative. Nobody likes Eeyore. Number two, you're not going to have the power of God operating in your life to take your speech and quicken it with the Holy Spirit to convict people's hearts. Because prayer is the means by which God has called us to engage in spiritual warfare. Prayer in the word of God. So stay prayed up. That's all I'm going to say on that. Second thing is live wisely. And this is where we'll conclude. And it's not wisdom in general.

Paul says live wisely, and then he applies it directly to our speech, which I find fascinating. He says, let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt. So that you may know how you ought to answer every person. So if we take that idea, how do we take our speech and shape it with wisdom so that we can be effective at winning people to faith in Jesus Christ. On this issue or any other ideology that deviates from Christianity. Here's my thinking. Broadly informed from what I read in Scripture, I want to put it through the acrostic salt because Paul says season it with salt and it's just easy to remember for me.

And by the way, this is true whether it's critical theory or Darwinian evolution or any other ideology. Okay, it's not unique to critical theory. First thing, S: speak biblically about these issues. Use biblical language and avoid sloganeering. Sloganeering has gone crazy in our culture. There is a slogan for everything, and you are pressured to adopt the slogan and parrot the slogan and say the slogan so that you can be attached with a certain tribe that's using a certain slogan to communicate a certain point of view, and if you don't say the slogan then you don't support the cause.

But slogans are dangerous because slogans use emotional language to persuade people instead of actually explaining their ideas. And a lot of people use slogans to smuggle in unquestioned assumptions and smuggle in convictions and language that you may or may

not agree with as a Christian. And so before you wave the banner or wave the flag or parrot the talking points or whatever the slogans may be, before you do that as a Christian, you better be absolutely careful. That you 100% agree with everything that slogan is trying to convey. And even then I would say, don't do it, because your banner is not that cultural issue or that political party.

Your banner is the Bible. So use biblical language to talk about these issues. I think so much of the division between Christians on this issue in particular, critical theory. So much of it is definitional, not convictional. In other words, it's not that a whole bunch of Christians have adopted the assumptions and tools of critical theory. They've just adopted the language of critical theory. They're using language like privileged this or woke that or using all the vocabulary words that have been popularized by critical theorists. And so they get pigeonholed into a view that they may or may not hold.

And so what you want to do as a Christian to be wise is to disassociate yourself from camps and ideologies that you may not necessarily agree with and just use biblical language to address these cultural problems. Biblical language: injustice is a biblical term. Partiality is a biblical term. There are biblical categories for the social sins that we see in our culture. Use those biblical categories. That's to one camp. That's to the camp that is a little super, super anti-critical theory— no, I'm sorry, that's to the camp that is super, super accepting of critical theory.

I would say be careful; don't use slogans. To the other camp that is so concerned about it being associated with critical theory that they absolutely distance themselves from any similarities or points of agreement with what critical theory may say. I would say to that camp you need to acknowledge and address injustice. Some of the reasons why so many Christians are attracted to critical theory is because they sit in churches week in and week out and they never hear injustice addressed by the pulpit. They never hear racism decried by the person on the stage.

When cultural things take place in society that are clear acts of injustice, there is a deafening silence from the stage about those issues. And that silence for people of color or people of minority or people who are associated with oppressed classes, they hear that silence or they see that indifference towards things like racism or homophobia or prejudicial activities and attitudes and actions towards people and they say well if the church isn't going to do it then I'm going to join their tribe whereas the church should be leading the way on these issues.

Historically, it was the church of Jesus Christ who spurred on the abolition movement in Great Britain and in the States. It was people like Martin Luther King who were at the forefront of saying, no, we're not going to do it like Malcolm X says we're going to do it. We're going to do it in a Christian, gospel-centered kind of way where the reason for the wrongness of the partiality isn't an imbalance of power, it's a lack of love where a person is

not judged by the content of their character, they're judged by the color of their skin— that is a biblical category error.

And so we're going to be on the forefront of addressing these issues. Now, I'm not saying we've always done it perfectly or that every single Christian person is the epitome of what that's supposed to look like, but all I would say is if you are a Christian who is concerned about critical theory, and so you absolutely refuse to acknowledge the presence of systemic sin. All right. You absolutely refuse to acknowledge the reality of racism and injustice in our culture, of which there are plenty of examples. I grew up in Roby, Texas.

I saw it all over the place. There is racism there, and if you don't see it, all you got to do is talk to somebody who is a person of color or someone who's experienced those kinds of things in their life and they will share it with you. So the idea that it no longer exists because we passed some law or that we're so far advanced, that is silly. And Christians should call racism what it is. It is a sin against God. We should call injustice for what it is, when it happens, and how it happens, and not avoid it because I don't want to be called woke or I don't want to be called a Marxist or I don't want to be called some cultural leftist.

You may be called what you're going to be called, but if you're using biblical language to address real issues, then you're accountable to God at the end of the day and nobody else. So acknowledge it and address it. Number three, lead with love. Now I know that sounds like a hippie thing, so let me explain myself. I think this is the core difference between Christianity and critical theory. Critical theory says the problem with society is an imbalance of power. And so let's overthrow the powerful and replace them with the powerless, and everything will be fine.

And the Bible or Christianity says the problem is not an imbalance of power, the problem is a lack of love. What's wrong with the world is we have a displaced love for God. We don't love God the way we ought to love God, and because of that we've sinned against Him. And that sin has brought a catastrophe on our world. It has brought a catastrophe in our relationships with one another. We sin against God. We sin against one another because of a displaced love for God. And the way to fix your displaced love for God is to receive the unconditional sacrificial love of God displayed through Jesus Christ on the cross.

That God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever would believe in Him not perish but have everlasting life. No greater love has been displayed by anyone than what you see displayed by the substitutionary sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. And it is when we respond to that love displayed on the cross when we— that we begin to recover in our own lives a proper love for God that helps us not sin against God, and a proper love for other people, which helps us not sin against other people and gives us the tools and framework necessary to address the social problems that exist in our culture, not by

overthrowing power structures, but by helping people respond to the love of God displayed on the cross.

And helping us love one another in even structural and systemic ways so that the problems of sin that have affected our relationships at an individual level and at a structural level can be healed and restored through a recovery of the love of God. The love of God really is the foundational reality of the universe. And one of the reasons critical theory is so attractive to Christians is because of that love for people. But the problem is not to overthrow the power structures, and that's not the solution. The solution is to recover true love for God displayed on the cross of Christ.

Then the last thing similar to that is turn people to Jesus. The solution isn't a movement. The solution is not even a particular person or camp. The solution is Jesus Christ. We preach Christ and Him crucified. When Jesus Christ came to earth, he didn't come to overthrow political systems. He didn't come to liberate the poor. He preached good news to the poor, but he didn't come to end poverty. He didn't come to do any of the things that critical theory says we need to do to fix the world. He came to liberate the captives from slavery to sin.

He came to forgive you and me. And even though there may be systems that fail us and institutions that let us down, Jesus Christ will never let us down. Sure, the church has been used in history to create acts of injustice, and the church has used physical force to compel people to faith and there is an ugly stain of injustice on the church. There's an ugly stain of racism on the Southern Baptist Convention. There's all kinds of ugly stains that we can point to that have disappointed people and let people down, but Jesus Christ has never disappointed or let anybody down.

He is our hope. He is our message. It is Jesus Christ crucified. And when you can turn people to Jesus, the always faithful one, then you can avoid so many of the pitfalls and the ditches that derail this conversation from getting anywhere good. Turn people to Jesus Christ, lead with love, address sin where it's present. And use biblical language to talk about these issues. If you'll let your speech be shaped by those things, I think you'll be more effective at winning people to faith in Jesus Christ.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "it's crazy how much joy I get from making old white men miserable" (a paraphrase); Sarah Jeong's 2014 tweet, which resurfaced when The New York Times hired her for its editorial board in 2018, actually read, "Oh man it's kind of sick how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men." Source: BBC News, "Sarah Jeong: NY Times stands by 'racist tweets' reporter" (Aug. 2, 2018). ↩