

March/April 2022

# FRONTLINE

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

## The Bible and Critical Race Theory

# FRONTLINE

Volume 32 • Number 2



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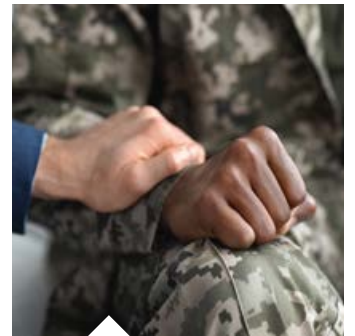
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Our sincere thanks to Dr. Gordon Dickson for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.



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The word "woke" has acquired an entirely new definition in recent years. Formerly the word was recognizable as the past tense of "wake." But in recent years the connotation of the word has been amplified to refer to an awareness of important issues, especially racism and the concept of "social justice."

As believers, we understand the spiritual significance of "awakening." Paul encouraged the congregation at Rome to awaken from sleep, "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). He exhorted the congregation at Thessalonica. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6). So we understand the need to be awake and aware of important issues.

But there is a significant difference between the Scriptures and the social justice theories of our day. There is a disagreement about what is being ignored. What is the root problem in humanity? Is it the sinful rebellion of mankind, or the need to relieve those who are miserable and oppressed? Is the real problem systemic racism or systemic, sinful self-deception? To answer these questions, we must all resort to some final authority. Some choose leading sociologists as their ultimate source. We choose the lessons of the Scriptures, believing that they rightly frame the most significant issues for all of humanity. This is the reason we have entitled this edition of *FrontLine* magazine, "The Bible and Critical Race Theory."

In the first article, also entitled "The Bible and Critical Race Theory," Ben Hicks explains Critical Race Theory (CRT) as part of a larger group of critical theories. According to these, racism is not merely one person showing prejudice; instead it is about entire racial groups exerting power over other groups. They aren't merely appealing for some small changes; they are appealing for a radical overturning of society in order to bring oppression to an end. But as recent news articles have demonstrated, those who insisted they had been oppressed have become entitled oppressors.

Kristopher Schaal's article, "Christian Responses to CRT," demonstrates how various evangelical leaders have responded to CRT. As you will see, some leaders have rejected the use of Scripture as the final authority. That position is wreaking havoc in churches and institutions which once preached the gospel according to the Bible alone.

In his review of *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity*, Carl Wood analyzes the perspective of various Christian authors on this issue. He writes, "This book is a good old-fashioned look at personal sanctification" and that a right response to every racial group is based on personal, spiritual growth. Recent generations are not the first to deal with racial problems. The Scriptures are replete with illustrations that show us how to apply the ministry of reconciliation to heal racial divides.

David Saxon's article, "Getting the Kingdom Wrong," explores the theology of the social gospel as explained by Walter Rauschenbusch in 1917. As Dr. Saxon notes, from that perspective "what good is a religion, Rauschenbusch is asking, that does not address the great social evils of the day?" Much of the philosophy of the social gospel is being fleshed out today in the social justice movement. This article highlights the connection between the perspective of Rauschenbusch in his Yale lectures and another mid-twentieth century work. "In an interesting foreshadowing of Carl Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, an evangelical book that castigated mid-twentieth century conservatives for failing to take broader cultural concerns seriously, Rauschenbusch speaks of the social gospel as 'the accusing conscience' of modern theology, peeling back its veneer of spirituality by showing its complicity in capitalism, racism, and other social evils."

In the article "Systemic Self-Deception," this author raises the question posed by the term "systemic racism." The term implies self-deception, a concept that would be familiar to anyone who has read the Bible. Proponents of CRT insist that Caucasians

are deceived by their whiteness. The Scriptures demonstrate that every sinner is deceived by his wickedness. So, if we are to get at the root problems in humanity, we must address man's rebellion with the understanding that racism is only an outgrowth of that. Only by God's grace laboring in us will we be able to awaken to a whole series of issues including prejudice against others.

Along the way, it will be essential to understand the impact of Walter Rauschenbusch on men such as Martin Luther King Jr. It will also be helpful to study the remarkable contributions of Black leaders such as Robert Smalls, Peter Salem, and Phillis Wheatley. For instance, why do the folks in Indiana call themselves "Hoosiers"? To answer that question, one must study the remarkable ministry of a notable Black evangelist, known throughout the American colonies.

Chaplain Wayne Keast analyzes Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) in this edition. It is essential to understand this phenomenon from a biblical perspective. Over the last one hundred and fifty years, this syndrome was referred to as "soldier's heart," "shell shock," and "combat fatigue," among other names. But seventy percent of PTSD cases occur in the civilian population among those who have never served in the military. Chaplain Keast uses material from his book *Biblical Cures for the Wounded Spirit* to explain scriptural answers for this syndrome. With our fractured society in upheaval, it will help all of us to know how to recognize and address PTSD.

In this edition of *FrontLine* magazine our authors have attempted to cover some the basic differences between the Bible and Critical Race Theory. We believe that this edition will help you address the social justice movement from a biblical perspective.

Gordon Dickson

## FBFI POSITION STATEMENT 21:02 REGARDING CHRISTIANS, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

**T**he FBFI believes that all people, whatever their skin color or physical characteristics, are equally the offspring of God's first created humans, Adam and Eve, and are thus made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). We recognize that providentially God has allowed for great human diversity relating to individuals and ethnicities, establishing language groups (Genesis 11:1–9) and the "bounds" of men's "habitation," that they might seek Him (Acts 17:26–27). He has also provided for social relationships between persons, setting "the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6) and allowing the development of many "kindreds," "tongues," "tribes," and "nations" (Revelation 7:9).

The FBFI rejects ethnic discrimination both past and present, affirming that while there is but one human family, race has historically been used inappropriately to create division and to abuse individuals from various ethnicities. The FBFI condemns any use of the Scriptures to justify discrimination and rejects any racial theory that elevates one ethnicity above all others or denigrates any ethnicity below another, recognizing that the sin of partiality (Leviticus 19:15; James 2:1–13) is rooted in man's sinful pride.

As descendants of Adam, all humans are born in sin and alienated from God (Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Therefore, the FBFI rejects as unbiblical any social theory that denies universal, inherent human sinfulness, that views racism or ethnocentrism as the root of all social and personal evil or that denies that every person needs redemption from sin regardless of their perceived race or ethnic background.

Believing that man's standing before God is solely on the basis of his relationship with Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the FBFI affirms that the only biblical divide between humans relates directly to their standing before God (Galatians 3:28).



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# The Bible and Critical Race Theory

**T**he sight of people lined up, chained together, and marched through the city square after their nation was conquered by a more powerful neighbor is something for which modern Americans have no frame of reference, but it was an all-too-common occurrence for ancient peoples. Paul draws on this experience when he warns the Christians in Colossae to avoid being carried away captive by empty, deceptive philosophy (Col. 2:8). For the Colossians, this meant avoiding false teachers who argued that Jesus alone was not enough and that more was needed to be saved and live a successful Christian life. While the lies may look different today, the danger of Christians' being carried away captive by shallow, deceptive philosophy has not gone away. If false teachers were aggressively on the move while the apostles of Jesus Christ Himself were living and active, you can be sure they will be on the attack today.

One new philosophy that Christians find themselves wrestling with is Critical Race Theory (hereafter CRT). Although CRT began back in the 1970s, it has recently been catapulted into national attention. As one TV personality remarked in an August 2021 show, "CRT . . . I hadn't heard the term a year ago, now I hear it every day." Some believers hail CRT as a wonderful advance from which the church can profit; others treat it as a heretical poison. What exactly is CRT, and how should Christians respond?

## THE WORLDVIEW OF CRT

CRT is part of a larger group of critical theories, including postcolonial theory, queer theory, feminism and gender studies, and fat and disability studies. These theories hold that all society is a complex interaction of overlapping groups all vying for power. Those with power are the oppressors, and those without power are the oppressed. Within CRT, the oppressor group would be white people, whereas the

oppressed group would be racial minorities, especially black people. Defining CRT is hard because there seems to be no consensus on what exactly CRT means. Recently, some have claimed that CRT is nothing more than teaching the history of racism or the simple acknowledgment that racism continues today. Others argue that CRT is a grad-level legal theory, so people don't really know what it means unless they are grad students studying law. But what do those who teach CRT have to say?

In their standard work on the topic, CRT scholars Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic state that CRT "is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power." In other words, CRT sees the race problem as a problem of competing groups where one has power over the other. This power is exerted in systems that privilege one group while holding the other group down. They contend that all society is shaped to advantage white people, in hundreds of small ways that

even white people don't realize. This means that even those who are not actively racist (in the sense of being prejudiced against people with a different skin color) are still racists because they are passively benefitting from an unjust system that privileges them. Racism is therefore not a person showing prejudice against someone else based on his skin color; it is the power one racial group exerts over another.

Ultimately, CRT has its roots in post-modernism, the belief that objective truth can never be discovered because everyone is so tied to his own perspective. This means that different outcomes between different groups happen not because one group is more diligent or their way of thinking is more correct, but because one group has exercised its power to set up a system that always favors them. The solution, then, is to tear down the unjust systems through something called "problematization" and "deconstruction." All of society is seen through the lens of race with the goal of leveling the playing field. Delgado and Stefancic, for example, argue that "although CRT began as a movement in the law, it has rapidly spread beyond that discipline." They then assert that CRT has made inroads into education, politics, sociology, theology, and philosophy. Furthermore, they argue that "unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it." As one popular CRT writer put it, it is not enough to simply not be racist: you must become anti-racist.

## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO CRT

So how has the church responded to CRT? Churches have essentially taken one of three routes. Some excitedly accept the teaching of CRT with a few caveats here or there. Others take a more cautious view of CRT but seek to make room for the theory as much as they feel they are able. Others strongly warn against it, viewing it as antithetical to the gospel. Given Paul's strong warning to the Colossians with which we began, as well as the continual warning to the young churches of the New Testament era to beware false teachers and false knowledge (Acts 20:29; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 3:5-7), Christians are right to be critical of CRT.

It is important to realize that CRT is not another set of ideas that can be added on to an already existing way of looking at the

world; it is designed to be a totally different paradigm, a whole new way of looking at life. In other words, if your understanding of the world was a Lego creation, CRT isn't asking you to snap on a few new pieces, but to bash the whole thing and start over completely. Delgado and Stefancic unashamedly admit as much when they state, "Unlike traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law." Christians should reject all attempts to reform the way we look at life unless they are firmly rooted in God's Word.

Does CRT ever get anything right? Of course it does. If the theory never lined up with reality, no one would listen to it. It is important to listen to the perspectives of others, especially the marginalized. But listening doesn't always mean affirming, and we must always measure what anyone says by God's Word. It is certainly possible to have unjust systems that favor the powerful and take advantage of the weak. Knowing our history is important, and that means honestly reckoning with not only the good but also the bad in our country's past. CRT will often point out legitimate grievances, and as believers we must be careful not to assume everything they say is automatically wrong. But we must beware, because their solutions come from a postmodern framework that is based on ways of thinking that are contradictory to Scripture.

## THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT RACE AND JUSTICE

So if CRT is an entirely different worldview, and if we must hold everything up to the lens of God's Word, how should believers think about race and justice? Specifically, what do we do as twenty-first-century Americans living in a racially divided country? Several key biblical principles are important for confused Christians navigating these challenging times.

First, Scripture has much to say about caring for and helping the weak and vulnerable. God hates prejudice and partiality (James 2:1ff), and the Old Testament prophets are full of warnings to the rich and the privileged who have actively taken

advantage of the poor and weak. Books such as Amos, Hosea, Micah, and others call upon the wealthy to repent of their indulgence, corruption, and oppression. God is still the advocate for the weak and the outcast (Deut. 10:18; Pss. 68:5; 140:12), and as His children we must seek to protect the most vulnerable of society (Isa. 1:17; Jer. 22:3) without perverting justice either way (Lev. 19:15).

Second, it is true that sin can warp not just individuals but entire systems. The history of America has many examples of unjust laws, from Jim Crow to predatory red-lining practices. Systems are created by sinful people, so we should not be surprised when such systems are broken. The rich and powerful rigging the system so they can take advantage of the poor took place during biblical times (cf. Neh. 5:1ff; James 5:1ff), and it no doubt is taking place today. This does not, however, mean that different outcomes are always the result of prejudice or injustice. Scripture recognizes that God is the one ultimately responsible for who is wealthy and who is poor (Ps. 75:6-7; Prov. 30:7-9). God warns sternly about the dangers and abuse of wealth, but views wealth itself as a gift (1 Chron. 29:12; Eccles. 5:9) and something to be used for the good of God and others (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

Finally, true racial reconciliation can only be achieved through the gospel. The greatest racial divide in history was the wall between Jew and Gentile, a wall that was torn down by the finished work of Christ (Eph. 2:13-22). Only through the gospel can enemies become brothers, can true forgiveness and restoration be found, and can all nations and peoples be united by Christ (Col. 3:11; Rev. 5:9). Worldly philosophies may offer solutions, but when those philosophies are ultimately rooted in a worldview at odds with the Bible, those solutions can never bring true peace and hope. The only hope for the racial divide in our country, and for every other problem, is and can only be Jesus Christ.

**Ben Hicks** is the pastor of discipleship ministries at Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. In his time at Colonial he has been very involved in young-adult ministries and hopes to see his generation make a big impact for the kingdom.



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# Christian Responses to CRT

In his article in this issue entitled “The Bible and Critical Race Theory” (p. 5), Ben Hicks describes three Christian responses to Critical Race Theory (CRT).

So how has the church responded to CRT? Essentially three routes have been taken. Some excitedly accept the teaching of CRT with a few caveats here or there. Others take a more cautious view of CRT but seek to make room for the theory as much as they feel they are able. Others strongly warn against it, viewing it as antithetical to the gospel.

In this article we will flesh out those three positions using case studies and, in the process, consider more carefully how we Christians should respond to CRT.

## **OPTION #1: EMBRACE CRT**

Jemar Tisby is author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Color of Compromise* and *How to Fight Racism*, which came out last year. He is CEO and founder of an organization called The Witness

and cohosts the *Pass the Mic* podcast. He holds an undergraduate degree from Notre Dame, an MDiv from Reformed Theological Seminary, and a PhD from the University of Mississippi.

Tisby's bio on his website is a heart-breaking story about how he came to repudiate the evangelical circles in which he was saved and discipled. He talks about learning through experience and his study of history "how closely whiteness and the pursuit of power was tied with evangelicalism in the United States." He says that initially during his time in seminary, he "received a lot of support and found there was a hunger and desire to address racism in the church." However, over time, he discovered that "the cost of having a seat at this table was assimilation to the dominant white cultural norms and theologies."<sup>1</sup>

Where does Tisby stand on CRT? He defines racism as systemic and motivated by power.<sup>2</sup> He says that Christians who fail to speak out are complicit.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that children develop a sense of racial identity from a young age to avoid the "very unhelpful notion of colorblindness"<sup>4</sup> and even suggests that churches pay reparations.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Tisby has thoroughly assimilated CRT.

An especially disturbing quote from Tisby came in response to a *Christianity Today* journalist. The journalist asked, "Many evangelicals approach questions of race *through Scripture alone*. How do you begin a conversation about other dynamics of racism that aren't captured in this kind of approach?" (emphasis mine).

Tisby replied,

We would first need to understand that all theological interpretation is contextual, that we all bring specific priorities to the text based on our own histories and social location. In this sense, there's no such thing as "pure biblical interpre-

tation." All our interpretation is shaped by our histories.

Tisby went on to say, "This isn't to say there are no timeless truths or universal principles, but it is to say that even the questions we ask are going to vary across people groups and across time periods."<sup>6</sup> In this quote, Tisby qualifies *Sola Scriptura* to such an extent that the doctrine itself is in jeopardy.

Perhaps Tisby would protest, "*Sola Scriptura* doesn't mean that the Bible contains all truth. You wouldn't use the Bible as a math textbook." The problem with that argument is that the Bible *does address racism*! And Tisby's answer clearly implies that the Bible's approach to that topic is *insufficient*.<sup>7</sup>

Hopefully, most readers of this magazine would agree that Jemar Tisby's approach is not the correct one. Christians cannot wholeheartedly embrace CRT.

However, does that mean that we must reject it? Isn't there some middle ground? Perhaps there's a way to *use* CRT and still be faithful to Scripture. This is the second approach to CRT that various Christians have taken.

## OPTION #2: USE CRT TO UNDERSTAND RACISM

In 2019 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a controversial resolution on CRT that included the following statement:

The messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention . . . affirm Scripture as the first, last, and sufficient authority with regard to how the Church seeks to redress social ills, and we reject any conduct, creeds, and religious opinions which contradict Scripture. . . . Critical race theory and intersectionality should only be employed as analytical tools subordinate to Scripture—not as transcendent ideological frameworks.<sup>8</sup>

On its face, that statement may seem to be pretty good. It certainly goes out of its way to guard the sufficiency of Scripture. However, there are two major problems with Resolution 9.

**First, by affirming CRT as an analytical tool, the resolution implicitly suggests that Christians are dependent on the worldview behind CRT for its insights on racism.** By way of contrast, consider how the following wording from an alternate resolution proposed by SBC pastor Stephen Feinstein safeguards biblical sufficiency.

The biblical doctrine of general revelation accounts for the fact that truth can sometimes be found embedded in false and unbiblical ideologies, which is part of God's common grace, and thus any accurate insights from critical race theory and intersectionality could be derived independently of them.<sup>9</sup>

So, yes, we often find truth embedded in false ideologies. However, the fact that those worldviews sometimes affirm truth does not make us dependent on them because those same insights are available through Scripture and general revelation.

The fact that we find truth embedded in false ideologies could even be said of false religions such as Islam. ("At least it teaches the existence of God!") The reason for this is that Satan's lies always include truth—that's what makes them compelling! But we don't need to affirm those religions to access the few truths they contain. The same could be said of CRT.

**The second problem with Resolution 9 is that by affirming CRT as an analytical tool, the resolution also seems to affirm CRT's definition of racism as systemic.** It is important to recognize that, according to CRT, all our institutions are *inherently* racist. Everyone is a racist . . . because [insert Postmodernism] there is no absolute truth, and everything is about power. Therefore, you can be guilty of white supremacy without doing anything.

This definition of racism is not incidental to CRT; rather, it defines CRT.<sup>10</sup>

This is the kind of thinking that leads to awkward confessions such as the one given by Matthew Hall, Provost at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Hall has since stepped back from his statements, but in a public video posted in July 2019, he said, “I am a racist. If you think the worst thing someone can call you is a racist, then you aren’t thinking biblically. I’m going to struggle with racism and white supremacy until the day I die and get a glorified body and a sanctified mind, because I am immersed in a culture where I benefit from racism all the time.”<sup>11</sup>

The problem with that confession is that it leads to (or perhaps results from) unbiblical thinking about personal sin and guilt. What specific omissions or commissions is Dr. Hall guilty of? Which commands has he disobeyed? If failure to speak out is such a grievous sin, then why did Paul command first-century Christians to submit to Nero and unsaved slave masters? A biblical case can be made for the existence of corporate guilt; however, what groups does God recognize? Am I automatically responsible for the sins of previous generations of Americans simply because we share the same sin color?

Here is the heart of the problem: *CRT’s definition of racism is unbiblical.* According to CRT, racism exists apart from any moral agency: “The structures are racist.” However, from a biblical standpoint, racism is a subset of partiality, which is a sin. Therefore, racism is sin, *and sin involves choice.* “People are racist.” *So how can a system with an unbiblical definition of racism help Christians understand racism better?*

Stephen Feinstein recommends that the term “institutional racism” be used as an alternative to “systemic racism.” He defines “institutional racism” as “explicit laws or unwritten policies which encourage racial discrimination.”<sup>12</sup> Notice, if we’re talking about something specific, like laws or even unwritten policies, specific action steps can be taken, and specific people held accountable. If, on the other hand, disparity of outcome is the only way to gauge racism, people are left feeling guilty for some nebulous “sin” they had no control over.

Christians don’t need CRT—plain and simple. And affirming it as a diagnostic tool can be dangerous.

That leaves us with the third Christian response to CRT.

### OPTION #3: REJECT CRT

Ironically, one of the strongest Christian warnings against CRT was written by a black man, Voddie Baucham Jr., who grew up in South Central LA before moving to Texas. A talented athlete, he received a full-ride scholarship to New Mexico State for football and had a shot at going pro. He heard the gospel and got saved through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. After graduation, Baucham enrolled in seminary and ended up earning a doctorate. He served as a pastor in multiple black and white churches for many years. In 2015 he and his family moved to Zambia to help start African Christian University.

In Baucham’s book *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Crisis* he presents his own experiences as a counternarrative to many of CRT’s claims. He also attacks social justice on theological and sociological terms. Baucham describes wrestling with the question, “Am I black first, or a Christian first?” He says that question may seem foreign to white Christians, but it’s a real dilemma for many black brothers and sisters. Baucham says that answering that question correctly is vital when it comes to determining where someone lands on these issues.<sup>13</sup>

In his book Baucham emphasizes the fact that Critical Theory is not just an incidental ideology; it is a comprehensive

worldview. CRT has its own version of sin (racism), of confession (“check your white privilege”) of conversion (“get woke”) and of the canon (“educate yourself”—in other words, read authors such as Ibram X. Kendi, Robin DiAngelo, Richard Delgado, Kimberlie Crenshaw, etc.). CRT even has its own priesthood, since only people of color are allowed to speak.

*We have seen that CRT has a wrong definition of racism. It also defines “justice” and “truth” incorrectly.* According to CRT, “justice” is equality of outcome—but that is unbiblical. What if God were held to that standard? He would be considered unjust for sending anybody to hell! The Bible describes justice as “impartial judgment.” But CRT says, “That’s impossible.”

### CONCLUSION

So what are we to take away from this examination of various Christian responses to CRT?

*First, we must reject worldly doctrines that compromise the gospel.* It is so easy for us to be “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” as the apostle Paul put it. Movements such as CRT gain tremendous popularity, and Christians feel compelled to accommodate them, at least to some degree. However, in this case, doing so jeopardizes the gospel.

John MacArthur has likened the church’s current obsession with social justice to its pursuit of the social gospel one hundred years ago.<sup>14</sup> What happened then was that the church got so caught up in social work that it lost sight of the Great Commission. The gospel took a back seat and, in some cases, was lost altogether. A

**CRT HAS ITS OWN VERSION OF SIN (RACISM), OF CONFESSION (“CHECK YOUR WHITE PRIVILEGE”) OF CONVERSION (“GET WOKE”) AND OF THE CANON (“EDUCATE YOURSELF”—IN OTHER WORDS, READ AUTHORS SUCH AS IBRAM X. KENDI, ROBIN DIANGELO, RICHARD DELGADO, KIMBERLIE CRENSHAW, ETC.). CRT EVEN HAS ITS OWN PRIESTHOOD, SINCE ONLY PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE ALLOWED TO SPEAK.**



similar thing could happen in our generation if we are not careful.

**Second, we must cling to biblical definitions and categories.** Do I believe that racism exists? Yes. Does it sometimes take institutional form? Yes. Do I believe that it's sinful? Absolutely! Might I even be guilty of sinful partiality, perhaps without even knowing it? I will certainly grant that. Should I seek to grow in my love for others? Yes, without question. However, accepting unbiblical categories and definitions when discussing these issues can end only in disaster.

So let's be careful. Let's be sensitive. Let's affirm truth wherever we find it. Let's be quick to admit our own sins and the sins of past generations. Let's kill our impulse to pharisaical pride and posturing. Let's listen. Let's be evangelistic. Let's remember that our goal is not winning an argument. Let's be kind. Let's be tactful. Let's be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Let's stand up for the oppressed, including the unborn and victims of religious persecution. Let's seek to grow in our love for minorities. Let's sacrifice. Let's

give of ourselves in practical ways. Let's go above and beyond in loving our neighbors so that false accusations don't stick. But at the end of the day, let's also stick to our guns. We must never let go of the truth.

**Kristopher Schaal** serves as youth and discipleship pastor at Northwest Valley Baptist Church.



- <sup>1</sup> Note the reference to "theologies," plural (<https://jemartisby.com/about/>).
- <sup>2</sup> Jamar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 16.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, 16–17.
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/june-web-only/jemar-tisby-how-fight-racism-three-words.html>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/01/jemar-tisbys-new-book-challenges-white-evangelicals/581494/>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/june-web-only/jemar-tisby-how-fight-racism-three-words.html>
- <sup>7</sup> Tisby's answer also seems to suggest that a single text can have multiple meanings, but that is another issue. (I wouldn't be surprised

if Tisby believes this, but I'm not sure that this quote alone is enough to make that charge. The frustrating thing is that there is a lot in what Tisby says that is true, but what he does with those statements is undermine Scripture as the only authority in this matter.)

- <sup>8</sup> The entire text of the resolution can be read at <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality/>.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://sovereignway.blogspot.com/2021/05/new-resolution-proposal-on-critical.html>
- <sup>10</sup> This fact is very well documented. See, for instance, the answer to the question, "What Is Critical Race Theory?" at NAACP's Legal Defense Fund website (<https://www.naacpldf.org/critical-race-theory-faq/>).
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1liKCY-SevDU>
- <sup>12</sup> <http://sovereignway.blogspot.com/2021/05/new-resolution-proposal-on-critical.html>
- <sup>13</sup> Voddie T. Baucham Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, DC: Salem Books, 2021), 21.
- <sup>14</sup> See, for instance, <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180907/the-injustice-of-social-justice>.

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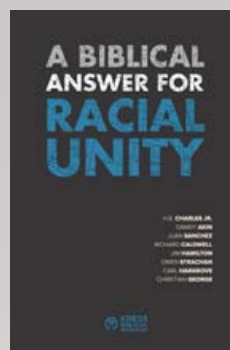
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# Book Review:

## *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity*

**Y**ou run pretty good for a white boy.” This was the comment made to me by my friend William one day at recess. It caused me to pause for a moment. “For a white boy?” I wondered. William was Black and I was not. I suppose I was always aware of the fact that our outer shells were different. His statement was sort of a back-handed compliment. I never really thought about our different skin tones defining us in a broader way—until then. Growing up in the South, I had many more occasions to see the compartmentalization of cultures which were often sorted by skin tones. Sometimes the distinctions were innocent, but other times they were harsh.

Since the '60s and '70s of my youth, society has made increasingly volatile ethnic distinctions. More than ever, people are fed-up and frustrated over the disparity between people groups. There is room for concern because problems need corrected. However, in the way we address the issue, might we make matters worse? What is the best approach?

Eight authors have collaborated on the book *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity*.<sup>\*</sup> Their aim is to provide a succinct resource aimed at anchoring the minds of readers in the authority of Scripture while dealing with this growing concern. Although the book was published by Kress Biblical Resources in 2017, the teaching is timeless.

This book is a good old-fashioned look at personal sanctification. The content is relevant beyond the confines of racial unity and could be a good supplement for helping believers strengthen their overall worldview.

### BELIEF AND IMPLEMENTATION

In the first chapter Richard Caldwell lays out five insightful approaches from 2 Corinthians 4:1–6 on how to bring biblical truth to bear on the issue of racial unity. He points out that it is not enough to *believe* correctly. We must also *imple-*

*ment* those beliefs, or, as Caldwell puts it, “Orthodoxy is not enough. We must also have orthopraxy.”

H. B. Charles Jr. draws out a biblical strategy for racial unity from Acts 6:1–7. There the Early Church dealt with the tension concerning the fair treatment of the widows who were Hellenistic rather than Hebrew. The solution could not be superficial; it needed to protect the soul-transforming message of the gospel. Anybody “can put new clothes on a man. Only the gospel can put a new man in clothes,” Charles notes. Just as the Early Church “emphasized godliness, not giftedness” when assigning helpers to address the need, so we need Spirit-filled servants in our strategy for racial unity today. As the Jerusalem church increased its dependence and emphasis on the Word of God, the church also increased.

### CHRIST IS THE SOLUTION

Using Ephesians 2:14–18, H. B. Charles also explores the role of Jesus Christ personally being the solution for peace. He highlights how Jesus “is our peace,” “has made peace for us,” and “preaches peace to all.” Jesus makes us to be at peace with believers of differing bloodlines because He removes our former distinctions and calls us to be one in Him. Christ made peace for us at the cross, where He reconciled us “to God in one body.” Therefore, can there be “any such thing as an irreconcilable difference if Jesus has killed the hostility between us?” he asks. Charles concludes by emphasizing that Jesus’ work toward racial unity was best accomplished when He preached peace to the Jews who were near and to the Gentiles who were far off (Eph. 2:17). The gospel invites all individuals “into the people of God through Jesus Christ.”

Juan Sanchez discussed God’s “cosmic purpose” concerning racial unity. Simply

put, the purpose is the gathering together “in one all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The unifying of people does not erase individuality. “The Bible celebrates *unified diversity*,” Sanchez writes. Just as we should not push for a monoethnic congregation, neither should we make “a multiethnic church our idol.” A local church should resemble the demographics of the culture where it resides. It is the gospel that ultimately unites “a fractured humanity.”

Sanchez immediately follows with a practical plan for much-needed unity. This plan focuses on our individual commitment to walk in unity, holiness, love, and wisdom. He notes that these are all “facets of the same spiritual diamond.” He points out how we each possess a “sinful proclivity for self-preference.” Thankfully, we do not need to contrive this unity: “This is the unity of the Holy Spirit, and you’re to maintain it.” Sanchez briefly develops the intriguing idea of how unity is promoted as God’s Word “reverberates through the congregation.”

### SUPERNATURAL LOVE

Christ gives the best example of the proper mindset for unity as laid forth in Philippians 2:1–11. Out of this text Danny Akin explains the way a believer’s Christlikeness blossoms into unity, humility, and sensitivity. As Christlikeness germinates within us, we find that “God enables us supernaturally to love people that in our flesh we would not want to be around.” In addition to the character of Christ, Akin also develops the mindset of Christ’s condescension on the cross, and how we are to submissively crown Him as our exalted ruler.

Carl A. Hargrove asserts that “at the heart of the gospel is forgiveness.” Releasing resentment is more important than reparations if unity is to be achieved. The crux of the matter is that “unless there is forgiveness among men there can be no



reconciliation between men.” Hargrove walks through the biblical account of the injustice suffered by Joseph when he was sold into slavery by his brothers. Ultimately, Joseph was sustained by his grip on God’s goodness and sovereignty even in the harshest of circumstances. Hargrove drives the point home with Jesus’ parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18, and stresses that Christians ought to forgive others “because they recognize the extent of their indebtedness before God.”

If you think the observance of the Lord’s Supper is not relevant to a racial-unity discussion, you may change your opinion after reading Jim Hamilton’s chapter. He points out that Paul’s entire reason for giving his instruction in 1 Corinthians 11 is because there were divisions within the church. “There was a self-centeredness, because culture trumped what the Lord’s Supper represented.” Hamilton explains that Paul was countering this attitude by “reminding the Corinthians of the greatest self-sacrifice in history”—Christ on the Cross (2 Cor. 8:9). Hamilton asserts that Paul’s message is, “If you don’t come out on the right side of my instructions here, you’re not a Christian.” Therefore, he also holds that those that “sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30) are “unbelievers whom the Lord has put to death.” For believers, “the Lord’s Supper calls us to repent of worldliness, repent of our natural culturalism.” *Suffice it to say, this is a highly unusual interpretation of this passage, especially since Paul refers to them as “brethren” in 1 Corinthians 11:33.*

Owen Strachan explores the future of the racial unity issue by establishing the

importance of beginning with Creation: “If you want to understand eschatology . . . you need to understand *protology*.” From the outset, “God did not create humanity for division.” However, the original order is upended by the events of the third chapter of the Bible. When humanity does unite in Genesis 11, it is “in their opposition to the revealed will of God.” God intended for mankind to have dominion “over the earth,” but instead depraved humanity seeks “dominion over one another.” There are better days ahead in Christ’s new kingdom. The local church is intended to be the best reflection of that coming kingdom. Even though we are here, we need to yearn for there. “Knowing the future means we can experience transformation in the present.” Strachan concludes with five practical takeaways that I will leave you to explore on your own.

### SPURGEON AND “MAN-STEALING”

In the final chapter Christian George gives a biographical sketch of Charles H. Spurgeon’s antislavery position. More accurately, Spurgeon was opposed to “man stealing.” He paid dearly for his courageous stand of faith when abolition was unpopular with many in his religious circle. He was maligned in print and in the public burnings of his writings. Spurgeon’s position on slavery was born out of his own redemption from sin: “God had to emancipate Spurgeon’s heart before he could help others find their freedom.” Spurgeon desired to help all sorts of victims. He began a school for the blind, orphanages, and nursing homes. Although marginalized in life,

Spurgeon was honored in his death with a sizeable tombstone in Norwood Cemetery. He will be finally vindicated when we gather above.

A few of the authors, such as H. B. Charles Jr. and Juan Sanchez, suggest that we minimize the nonessentials for the greater good of unity within the body of Christ. While commenting on a presidential election, Sanchez stated that it “didn’t matter who got elected.” His concern was that “we were speaking to each other in a way that honors everyone.” While all believers should gravitate to a position of minimizing the nonessentials, would we all agree on what items should be included in such a list? Danny Akin exhorts, “Those of us who are white, who have not grown up in a minority context, we just need to be quiet, listen, and learn.” It is always best to be swift to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19). But can we not speak out of biblical wisdom even if we have not had firsthand experience?

Amazingly there was very little overlap for so many participating authors. There did seem to be good harmony in the main thrust of the purpose of the book. I believe you will find this work to be a helpful primer on the biblical mindset for all facets of unity regardless of your ethnicity.



Carl Wood pastors Anchor Baptist Church in Little River, South Carolina.

\* All of the following quotes are from the book *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity*, Kress Christian Publications, 2017.

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# Getting the Kingdom

**W**hen Walter Rauschenbusch delivered four lectures at Yale in April 1917, he stood before the Yale Divinity School faculty as a fellow liberal. He had imbibed the Higher Criticism, which meant he had no use for substitutionary atonement, no time for metaphysical doctrines such as the Trinity or the hypostatic union of two natures in the Person of Christ, and no tolerance for doctrinal precision without immediate and obvious practical benefit. As he crafted a “Theology for the Social Gospel,” the title of the Yale Lectures when published later that year, he developed the social gospel as the positive religion of the theological liberalism that had been sweeping through Western churches over the previous sixty years. Therefore, it is easy to dismiss his thinking as simply the vacuous humanism of classic liberalism. It is surprising, then, when we look at the core of his message to discover concerns, definitions, and arguments that sound quite contemporary. In particular, at the heart of the social gospel as he envisioned it was a view of the kingdom of God that has remarkable current relevance.

Rauschenbusch made no distinction between the reign of God over all things and the mediatorial reign of God through human agencies on this earth. The kingdom of God for Rauschenbusch is the reign of God over all human affairs at all times. This divine authority is confronted by a kingdom of evil, characterized by human selfishness, greed, oppression, and inequality. He states, “Religious bigotry, the combination of graft and political power, the corruption of justice, the mob spirit, militarism, and class contempt—every student of history will recognize that these sum up constitutional forces in

the Kingdom of Evil.”<sup>1</sup> God’s kingdom is advancing when these social and cultural forces for evil are being counteracted, pushed back, and, if possible, overcome.

## OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND CHRIST

As authority for this social view of evil and righteousness, Rauschenbusch appeals to the Old Testament prophets and to Jesus Christ. The prophets, he says, showed little concern over their own personal salvation; rather, they focused on the sins and sufferings of their people. They viewed people as connected with one another (Rauschenbusch refers to this reality as “solidarity”<sup>2</sup>), and their suffering arose from the oppression and social maladjustment so rampant among them. Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and the others were uninterested in ritual and sacrifice, decrying the people’s tendency to go through religious motions while they perpetuated economic inequality and oppressed the poor. The modern church, Rauschenbusch declares, has exactly reversed this, perfecting theological hairsplitting, liturgy, and sacraments, while ignoring the reign of evil right outside its doors.<sup>3</sup>

In Jesus’ “authentic” sayings (Rauschenbusch, like most liberals of his day, redacted out sayings of Jesus that did not seem commensurate with the portrait of a Galilean fisherman they preferred), the Rochester professor found these same themes re-emphasized. Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount and in His parables, focused on the ethical. The Early Church, as it Hellenized Jesus’ message, lost this focus. The social gospel is an attempt in modern times to recover it. Here is Rauschenbusch rejoicing that Jesus’ ethical emphasis has finally been recovered in modern times:

The distinctive ethics of Jesus, which is part and parcel of his Kingdom doctrine, was long the hidden treasure of suppressed democratic sects. Now, as soon as the social gospel began once more to be preached in our own time, the doctrine of the Kingdom was immediately loved and proclaimed afresh, and the ethical principles of Jesus are once more taught without reservation as the only alternative for the greedy ethics of capitalism and militarism.<sup>4</sup>

## UNWITTING PARTICIPATION IN THE KINGDOM OF EVIL

The heart of Jesus’ ethics was loving one’s neighbor as one loves himself. Therefore, righteousness is unselfishness, with the corollary that sin is selfishness. This must not be understood, he goes on, in merely individualistic terms. Ironically, people who ignore the plight of society around them and pursue their own eternal destiny thereby participate in the kingdom of evil. Rauschenbusch writes,

Other things being equal, a solidaristic religious experience is more distinctively Christian than an individualistic religious experience. To be afraid of hell or purgatory and desirous of a life without pain or trouble in heaven was not in itself Christian. It was self-interest on a higher level. . . . As long as men are wholly intent on their own destiny, they do not necessarily emerge from selfishness. It only changes its form. A Christian regeneration must have an outlook toward humanity and result in a higher social consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Following Jesus means adopting the same others-focus that He possessed. Once we lift our eyes on the multitudes as He

# Wrong

did, we will see the soul-crushing forces of racism, class conflict, and oppression that entrap them. Our societies need regeneration. Mere “individualistic” religion will not help.

Sin is essentially selfishness. That definition is more in harmony with the social gospel than with any individualistic type of religion. The sinful mind, then, is the unsocial and anti-social mind. To find the climax of sin we must not linger over a man who swears, or sneers at religion, or denies the mystery of the trinity, but put our hands on social groups who have turned the patrimony of a nation into the private property of a small class, or have left the peasant labourers cawed, degraded, demoralized, and without rights in the land.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, what good is a religion, Rauschenbusch is asking, that does not address the great social evils of the day?

One might wonder about the role of the church in this program. Rauschenbusch saw no particular value in most of the things the institutional church had been busy with for most of the previous millennia: hammering out doctrinal statements that did nothing but divide men of good will from one another; developing elaborate rituals, liturgy, and religious jargon that excluded people rather than including them and wasted precious resources that might have been used to help others; and sending out “missionaries” who emphasized personal sin and salvation while ignoring the real problems faced by people around the world. Rauschenbusch applauded those missionaries who took education and medicine to the developing world but thought their priorities exactly backward. Most of these missionaries regarded material benefits as strictly subsidiary to preaching the gospel.

But the gospel is material benefit inasmuch as the kingdom of God is defeating the kingdom of evil every time a hungry person is fed or a naked person is clothed.

The church, therefore, should be a gathering of people intent on changing the world by advancing the reign of God beyond its own walls. It has value only as a kingdom-advancing force. Rauschenbusch is bold to say,

Jesus always spoke of the Kingdom of God. Only two of his reported sayings contain the word “Church,” and both passages are of questionable authenticity. It is safe to say that he never thought of founding the kind of institution which afterward claimed to be acting for him.<sup>7</sup>

He goes on to contrast the church and the kingdom:

The Church is primarily a fellowship for worship; the Kingdom is a fellowship of righteousness. When the latter was neglected in theology, the ethical force of Christianity was weakened; when the former was emphasized in theology, the importance of worship was exaggerated. . . . The religious energy and enthusiasm which might have saved mankind from

its great sins, were used up in hearing and endowing masses, or in maintaining competitive church organizations, while mankind is still stuck in the mud.<sup>8</sup>

## A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING AND SUBMISSION

A whole theology has developed, Rauschenbusch says, that values suffering, encourages submission to injustice, and claims that enduring societal wrongs has sanctifying value. This only strengthens the kingdom of evil! Any theology that prevents active engagement in changing the world around us is a false theology and is certainly not the theology of Jesus and the prophets. He knew he would get pushback from conservatives, but he aggressively answered:

The Kingdom of God as the fellowship of righteousness, would be advanced by the abolition of industrial slavery and the disappearance of the slums of civilization; the Church would only indirectly gain through such social changes. Even today many Christians can not see any religious importance in social justice and fraternity because it does not increase

**IF CHRISTIANS HAPPEN TO LIVE IN A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC WHERE THEY CAN VOTE FOR LEADERS WHO SUPPORT JUSTICE, THEY SHOULD CERTAINLY DO SO. BUT REDEMPTION DOES NOT LIFT US OUT OF THE KINGDOM OF EVIL OR PROMISE TO MAKE THE DARKNESS LIGHT; IT EMPOWERS US TO SHINE AS LIGHTS WITHIN THE DARKNESS.**



the number of conversions nor fill the churches. Thus the practical conception of salvation, which is the effective theology of the common man and minister, has been cut back and crippled for lack of the Kingdom ideal.<sup>9</sup>

In an interesting foreshadowing of Carl Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, an evangelical book that castigated mid-twentieth-century conservatives for failing to take broader cultural concerns seriously, Rauschenbusch speaks of the social gospel as "the accusing conscience" of modern theology, peeling back its veneer of spirituality by showing its complicity in capitalism, racism, and other social evils.<sup>10</sup> Because God hates injustice, Jesus and the prophets preached against injustice, and the kingdom of evil is built on injustice, a true theology will focus on the rescue of society from injustice.

While Rauschenbusch deals with several other theological topics, including atonement, regeneration, and eschatology, the heartbeat of his social gospel theology is the kingdom of God. This kingdom, as he understands it, is present wherever God is reigning; this kingdom is expressed whenever love is triumphing over selfishness; and this kingdom

is not confined within the limits of the Church and its activities. It embraces the whole of human life. It is the Christian transfiguration of the social order. The Church is one social institution alongside of the family, the industrial organization

of society, and the State. The Kingdom of God is in all these, and realizes itself through them all.<sup>11</sup>

## SO... WHAT NOW?

How should we respond to this social gospel theology?

There is no room in this social gospel theology for the Great Commission as traditionally interpreted. To the extent that churches focus on rescuing individuals from their personal rebellion against their Creator so that they can live forever in His presence as His worshipers, Rauschenbusch would say we are missing our mission and encouraging selfishness. There is no room in this social gospel theology for a future, mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, a reign that will enforce justice and embody love. To the extent that we encourage suffering people with this glorious future hope, Rauschenbusch would say we are overlooking present opportunities for change by teaching people to accept the status quo. Finally, there is no room in this social gospel theology for a sanctification doctrine that does indeed accept injustice, inequality, and oppression as facets of this fallen world order that God can use to make His children more like Jesus Christ. If Christians happen to live in a democratic republic where they can vote for leaders who support justice, they should certainly do so. But redemption does not lift us out of the kingdom of evil or promise to make

the darkness light; it empowers us to shine as lights within the darkness.

This article is not, of course, equating Rauschenbusch's social gospel with any particular form of social justice effort within evangelicalism today. It is rather issuing a warning. A shift in mission from evangelism to social reconstruction, a shift in emphasis from the future kingdom to present "kingdom" activity, or a shift in sanctification doctrine from enduring suffering to pursuing health, wealth, and prosperity all have precedents in Rauschenbusch. And Rauschenbusch almost completely misunderstood the kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 257.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 108, 134, 175, 179.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 136.

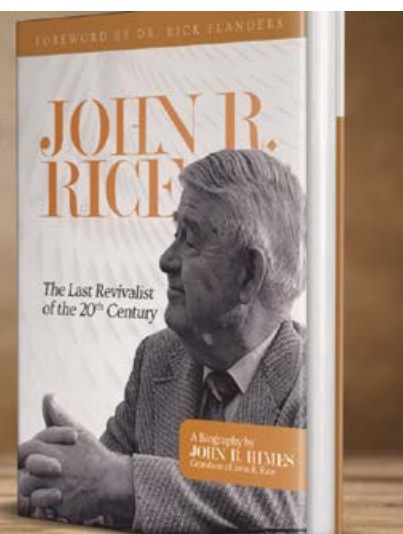
<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 144–45.

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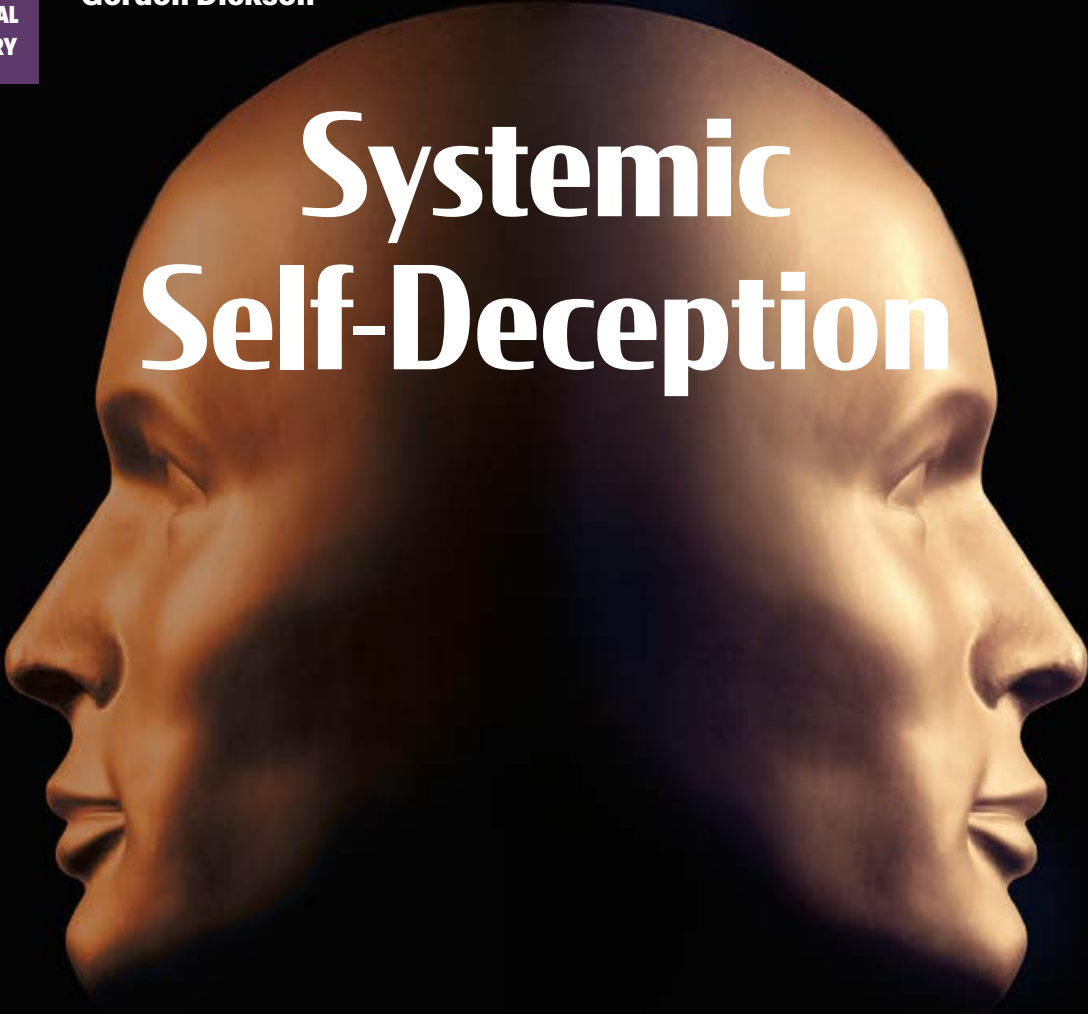


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# Systemic Self-Deception



**F**rom the preceding articles in this edition of *FrontLine* magazine, you can get a clear picture of the dangers of Social Justice and Critical Race Theory (CRT). As Peggy Noonan wrote,

The woke regime rests primarily on a charge that racial evil was systemically and deliberately embedded long ago, by the white patriarchy, in the heart of all American life, and that this ugliness thrives undiminished, which justifies all present attempts at eradication. We are not individual persons with souls; we are part of identity groups marked by specific traits.<sup>1</sup>

Noonan's description of CRT is correct. One of the most prominent charges put forward by CRT is that of "systemic racism."

The term indicates that people are racist without realizing it; they are self-deceived. For instance, proponents have argued that those who are Caucasian are "deceived by their whiteness." When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that, indeed, people are deceived. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Advocates of CRT training insist that they can recognize self-deception and correct it. But their view is far too narrow. They say that Caucasians are being deceived by their whiteness; the Scriptures tell us that all men are being deceived by their wickedness. So the real issue is not about whether or not self-deception exists. The real question is how that self-deception can be corrected. Only the Lord and His Word can deliver us from sinful and systemic self-deception.

To the question posed in Jeremiah 17:9, the Lord answers in the next verse, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins." In the words of 2 Timothy 3:13 evil people are "deceiving, and being deceived." The thoughts and counsel of the wicked are deceitful (Prov. 12:5). Is there a way to escape from sinful self-deception? Yes, sinful men can be transformed by the "Amazing Grace" described in John Newton's wonderful hymn. The gospel of Christ converts men—changing the nature of their hearts. How can we escape self-deception? James 1:22 answers, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Putting the Scriptures into practice helps one to escape from self-deception because these Scriptures enlighten us about our nature and our ways. This is an ongoing process.

## GOSPEL PREACHERS SUCH AS BLACK EVANGELIST HARRY HOOSIER HAD IT RIGHT ALL ALONG. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE ANSWER FOR MEN'S PROBLEMS.

Ephesians 4:22 teaches that we are corrupted by our deceitful lusts, so we must constantly put off the old man—the old sinful self. And this was even true of the man who wrote “Amazing Grace.” John Newton continued as the captain of a slave ship for some time after his conversion. His journals reflect his gradual awakening. How could he study his Bible with slaves bound just a few feet under his cabin? Newton wrote, “The slave trade was always unjustifiable; but inattention and interest prevented, for a time, the evil from being perceived.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, through Newton’s influence, the slave trade was ended in Britain. Conformity to the culture will not deliver us from the oppressive evils identified by CRT. Only the Lord’s gospel grace can deliver wicked men from their self-deception.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE SCRIPTURAL GOSPEL

As other articles in this edition have noted, these social justice theories are warping the gospel in some circles. This has been going on for more than one hundred years. In 1907 Walter Rauschenbusch wrote *Christianity and the Social Crisis* to advocate for a social gospel and social justice. Forty-five years later Martin Luther King Jr. read that book while he was a student at Crozer Theological Seminary. King wrote that the book “left an indelible imprint on my thinking by giving me a theological basis for the social concern which had already grown up in me.”<sup>3</sup> He wrote to his future wife, “Let us continue to hope, work, and pray that in the future we will live to see a warless world, a better distribution of wealth, and a brotherhood that transcends race or color. This is the gospel that I will preach to the world.”<sup>4</sup>

There is a major difference between the gospel revealed in Scripture and the very different gospel advocated by Rauschenbusch and King. Because

King was a self-described “advocator of the social gospel,” his theology was concerned “with the whole man, not only his soul but his body, not only his spiritual well-being, but his material well-being.”<sup>5</sup> Many of the sentiments of Rauschenbusch and King are being advocated by the social-justice movements of today. But the gospel of Jesus Christ, grafted together with something else, ceases to be the scriptural gospel. Only the true gospel of grace can correct the self-deception of the human heart. As one hundred years of history have proven to us, social justice and critical race theory have made the problem worse, not better.

Gospel preachers such as Black evangelist Harry Hoosier (see sidebar) had it right all along. He understood that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer for men’s problems. By God’s grace, that is the only way that mankind can escape from sinful, systemic self-deception.

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<sup>1</sup> Peggy Noonan, “Democrats Need to Face Down the Woke,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 11, 2021, accessed at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/democrats-face-the-woke-elections-socialists-critical-race-theory-schools-aoc-virginia-11636669165>, 11/14/21.

<sup>2</sup> John Newton, “Thoughts on the Slave Trade,” London: J. Buckland and J. Johnson, n.d., 7.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., “Social Gospel,” Stanford University, King Institute (Papers 4:474), accessed at <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/social-gospel>, 11/17/21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Papers 6:126.

<sup>5</sup> “Social Gospel,” The Martin Luther King Jr. Collection, Stanford University, citing Papers 6:126, 6:72, and 5:422, accessed at <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/social-gospel/>.

## PERSPECTIVES CRITICAL RACE

### LAW

“It’s becoming much more responsive, unfortunately, to critical race theory, basically, everything’s about race,” Dershowitz told the John Solomon Reports podcast in an interview aired this week. “Everything’s about race or politics. . . . The justice system has stopped being about is this particular person [being] innocent or guilty beyond a reasonable doubt based on the evidence and based on the law. People today are rooting, cheering for verdicts. They want verdicts to reflect their narrative. They want verdicts to prove their way of looking at the world. Trials and justice have ceased to be about individual justice. They’re about identity politics.”<sup>1</sup>

### MEDICINE

According to *Fox News*, the Biden administration is prioritizing race in the administration of COVID drugs.<sup>2</sup> This is, of course, racism. And the predictable result will only reinforce racism and reactions to it.

### EDUCATION

Critical Race Theory is overturning the American educational system. “The co-founding partner of The Equity Collaborative, the consulting firm hired by Loudoun County [Virginia] Public Schools to promote equity and inclusion into its classrooms, said in a recent lecture that he believes learning should not be the highest priority for public schools because the internet does a better job of informing students of what they need to know.”<sup>3</sup> However, there are some significant indications that the tide is turning against CRT. A recent article in the *New York Post*, written by MIT alumni, indicated that they could no longer support a school that had caved in to the woke mentality. This is echoed by a number of parents who are appearing in school board meetings all over the nation

# ON PROBLEMS WITH THEORY

to protest the use of the CRT philosophy as a guiding principle.

As Dr. Ben Carson, the former secretary for Housing and Urban Development, wrote, “Growing up poor in Detroit, if I had believed, as critical race theory (CRT) proponents claim, that my destiny was based on my race, I would not be where I am today. We cannot allow CRT to rob American children of that same hope that was instilled in me.”<sup>4</sup>

## MILITARY

A retired three-star Marine general wrote recently, “The tenets of Critical Race Theory—a cross-disciplinary intellectual and social movement that seeks to examine the intersection of race and law in the United States, but which has the unfortunate effect of dividing people along racial lines—undermine our military’s unity and diminish our warfighting capabilities.”<sup>5</sup>

## HISTORY

Critical Race Theory is designed to induce a victim mentality based on the amount of melanin in one’s skin. To do this, its advocates must deliberately ignore the victorious efforts of Black leaders such as Harry Hoosier, Robert Smalls, Peter Salem, Phillis Wheatley, and Elizabeth Freeman.

Hoosier is a remarkable example. Dr. Benjamin Rush, who signed the Declaration of Independence, said that the Black evangelist Harry Hoosier was the greatest orator in America. This is all the more remarkable because Hoosier could not read well, but he could recite many Bible passages and hymns from memory. Itinerant Methodist evangelist Francis Asbury met Hoosier around 1775 and began to travel with him from New England to the Carolinas. Thomas Coke, the personal representative of John Wesley,

said that he believed that Harry Hoosier was one of the best preachers in the world!

There are a number of theories regarding the history of the name “Hoosier,” but the one with the best historical background is that pioneers in Indiana identified themselves with Harry Hoosier. Such was the amazing influence of a powerful gospel preacher.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Solomon, “Alan Dershowitz’s stark warning: Justice system becoming infected by critical race theory” (<https://justthenews.com/government/courts-law/alan-dershowitzs-stark-warning-justice-system-becoming-infected-critical-race>, accessed on 11/25/21).

<sup>2</sup> Kyle Morris, “Biden administration guidance prioritizes race in administering COVID drugs,” *Fox News*, January 8, 2022; accessed at “Biden administration guidance prioritizes race in administering COVID drugs,” *Fox News*.

<sup>3</sup> Landon Mion, “Loudoun County’s Equity Consultant Says Relationships, Not Learning, Should be the Focus of Public Schools,” *Townhall*, November 8, 2021; accessed at <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/landonmion/2021/11/08/loudoun-countys-equity-consultant-says-relationships-not-learning-should-be-the-focus-of-schools-n2598783?821>, 11/15/21.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Carson: Fighting critical race theory—here’s how we stop this blatantly racist ideology,” *Fox News*, July 19, 2021; accessed at <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/fighting-critical-race-theory-racist-ideology-dr-ben-carson>, 11/16/21.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Newbold, “A retired Marine 3-star general explains ‘critical military theory’ Task & Purpose,” February 10, 2022; accessed at <https://taskandpurpose.com/opinion/critical-military-theory/>.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen H. Webb, “Introducing Black Harry Hoosier: The History Behind Indiana’s Namesake,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, XCVIII (March 2002), © 2002, Trustees of Indiana University.

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ISSN 1526-8284

## Mailbag

**G**reetings from your supporters at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, SC. I hope this short e-mail finds you prospering in the Lord as well as in your ministries. On January 26th our church held its annual business meeting. In advance of that meeting our Elders discussed the impact that inflation is having, making everyday life more expensive around the world. At our business meeting our people unanimously supported a recommendation that we raise all of our missionary support levels by 4.5%. We know that this will only be a small increase for . . . you, but we hope it will be an encouragement to you and that the Lord will in that way increase its impact. Have a blessed day!

*Doug Becker  
Chairman, Missions Committee  
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I "stumbled" across *FrontLine* while browsing the Internet and searching for an article on "Divine Providence."

*David Gilliland  
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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## FIRST PARTAKER

*“The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits” (2 Tim. 2:6)*

### The Primacy of the Preached Word of Christ in His Church

**A** growing tendency exists today, even among God's people, to undervalue the *public* proclamation of the Word of God (i.e., preaching). This is apparent in popular viewpoints and emphases on discipleship, evangelism, and counseling. Some present discipleship as something which occurs *primarily* in spiritually intimate conversations either in one-on-one or small group settings. One popular book representing this perspective affirmingly quotes a pastor who said, “I really don't believe much discipling is done through preaching. . . . Yes, you can impart information and emotion in preaching, but discipleship is more relational, more one on one. . . . Preaching to make disciples is like going to the nursery and spraying the crying babies with milk and saying that you just fed the kids.”<sup>1</sup>

Others undervalue preaching in evangelism. A popular author in this area placed all methods of communicating the message of the gospel on equal ground and found fault with those who exalt one approach above another.<sup>2</sup> Still others seem to undervalue preaching because of an overemphasis on meeting people's individual needs in one-on-one counseling.

While Scripture models and even teaches other methods of communicating God's Word, *preaching by the man of God, in the context of the local church, is God's primary ordained mode of communicating His Word and of bringing about regeneration and sanctification.* The Scripture demonstrates this, first, by setting forth a context which necessitates preaching's primacy, and, second, by giving additional considerations that establish this.

#### THE CONTEXT NECESSITATING THE PRIMACY OF PREACHING

The Church is the context in which preaching is ordained and primarily practiced. When considered in relationship to one another, three truths taken in sequence lead to the conclusion that the Church's growth and health depend upon the primacy of preaching.

The first foundational truth upon which this conclusion is reached is that Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23).<sup>3</sup> He is the One who governs her. She does not follow the popular opinions of her members or of those outside her. She belongs to Christ, and He is her head.

Second, Christ exercises this headship over the Church through His written Word. This point logically follows from Christ's headship, but the Scripture also demonstrates it. For instance, it was on the basis of the written Word (Ps. 69) that Peter instructed the Church about its first decision to choose a disciple to replace Judas (Acts 1:20–21). And 2 Timothy 3:16 demonstrates this governing authority of Scripture when it teaches its divine origin: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Since Scripture is of divine origin, it carries authority to teach, reprove, correct, and train, and the Church's submission to it is its practical demonstration of Christ's headship.

Third, and critical to this argument for the primacy of preaching, concerns what Scripture says about how Christ mediates His headship of the Church through His Word. He does so through pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:7–13). Not only must all of these men be able to teach the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9), but some of them make studying Scripture their vocation—not only to teach it privately, but to preach it publicly.

In view of the Church's role as the “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), the appointment of such qualified, gifted men to do this vocationally is essential. Paul regards the function of these men as so significant because of its part in safeguarding the Church, for which Christ gave His precious blood (Acts 20:28). This safeguarding occurs primarily when Christ is given His rightful headship in the Church through these men's giving themselves to the study and to the public proclamation of His authoritative Word. These points related to the context of preaching argue convincingly for its primacy.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS ESTABLISHING THE PRIMACY OF PREACHING

Within the framework of the previous points regarding the Church, there are additional considerations related to three issues which help to establish the primacy of preaching: the *content* preached, the *man* preaching, and the *preaching* medium itself. While the last point will argue most directly for the primacy of preaching, the first two will do preliminary groundwork.

***First, the Content Communicated in Scriptural Preaching.*** When Paul set forth Scripture's profitability to equip the minister for "all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16–17), he went on to solemnly charge Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1–2).

Christ's Word must be the content communicated in preaching because, as was demonstrated earlier, it is the means by which Christ practically exercises authority in His Church. A further significance to preaching His Word, however, is that Scripture does not merely reveal correct information about what people ought to do; it *enables* them to do it. "The word of God is quick, and powerful" (Heb. 4:12). Unlike a Dickens novel, or an encyclopedia, or a philosophy book, God's Word does a supernatural work. Regarding the physical world, God spoke it all into existence (Gen. 1) and continues to uphold it by "the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). In the Spiritual sphere, the Scripture teaches that believers are "born again . . . by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23) and are also sanctified by it (John 17:17). The content of the preaching, the powerful Word of God, possesses a supernatural ability to bring about regeneration and sanctification; it is the means by which God creates and matures His Church. Those who undervalue preaching often do so because they attribute the primary cause of spiritual effectiveness to various means of relating the Word to people, rather than primarily relating people to the Word of God, as Scripture teaches. For example, the pastor Gallaty quoted earlier implied that the content of preaching is powerless "information," while intimate one-on-one ministry produces more spiritually effective ministry. God's primary chosen means of communicating His Word and of working in His Church is through preaching, but that is not to say that the secret to its effectiveness resides primarily in the medium of preaching itself. No! It is in the living Word of God!

If ministry effectiveness primarily resides in the Spirit's use of the Word of God, is there any distinction among those who communicate it? Does God care who relates it to His people?

***Second, the Man Communicating in Scriptural Preaching.*** First, note that some men within the church are given and appointed by Christ to His Church for this very responsibility of communicating the Word. Paul explains in Ephesians 4 that Christ gave to His church, "some, apostles . . . some, prophets . . . some, evangelists . . . some, pastors and teachers" (vv. 7–11). Their appointment originates with Christ, and their appointment is to the verbal ministry of the Word. The point earlier that these men mediate the rule of Christ has its beginnings here in Christ's discriminating selection of them from among the people of God.

A second, related point about the man communicating the Word is that he is God's personal representative. Paul said, "We are ambassadors [representatives] for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Cor. 5:20). When the minister speaks God's Word, it comes to the listener with divine authority as from God Himself. The Thessalonians understood this when they "received the Word of God which [they] heard" and "received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13).

The idea of this man functioning as God's personal representative is also seen in the usage of the biblical phrase "man of God." This designation did not originate from his superior likeness to God but from his calling to speak for God.

The first occurrence of the phrase concerned Moses (Deut. 33:1). When Joshua referred to him with this designation he added, "Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee" (Josh. 14:6). Note the progression: the Lord said certain things to Moses, and Moses, in turn said them on His behalf and with His authority to the people. He was "the man of God" in so doing. And then again, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mother, she referred to Him as a "man of God" and related to her husband the Word which He gave to her (Judges 13:6–7). A "man of God" came to Eli and said, "Thus saith the LORD," and gave him God's message (1 Sam. 2:27). First and Second Kings use this phrase fifty-one times to refer to a man who spoke a message on behalf of God.

The designation "man of God" occurs only twice in the New Testament, both times in the Pastoral Epistles. The reference that is particularly important for our consideration is in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, where Paul affirmed the divine origin and full profitability of Scripture for the "man of God." Immediately, then, he urged Timothy to preach God's Word (2 Tim. 4:1–2). It appears that in this preeminent passage on the Word of God, Paul intentionally used this designation for ministers in order to equate their role with that of the Old Testament spokesmen for God.

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Not only is this man appointed by Christ to represent God by communicating His Word, but thirdly, he has been gifted for this heightened, broadened ministry of the Word. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul discussed the variety of gifts given by the Spirit and concluded by saying, “God hath set some in the church . . . teachers” (v. 28). When Paul gave Timothy the qualifications for elders, he specified that they must be teachers (1 Tim. 3:2). Those whom Christ appoints as His representatives the Holy Spirit also gifts to teach His Word. The Spirit does not equally gift every member of the church to minister the Word by which Christ governs her. Therefore, she should give greatest prominence to the Spirit-assisted proclamation of the Word.

A fourth matter to note about the man preaching is that he is uniquely called and set apart to a careful handling of the Word. Paul urged this on Timothy when he said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). If Christ rules His Church by His Word, everything hangs upon the listeners’ accurate understanding of it. The diligent workman aims at so accurately dividing and applying God’s Word that Christ is “enabled” to govern His Church because He has been clearly heard and understood.

A fifth matter to note about the man preaching is that he will be held to a stricter accountability. James discouraged people from taking on a teaching role due to the stricter judgment such people will receive (James 3:1). Paul also warned along these same lines when he couched several sobering realities in his solemn charge to Timothy to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1–2).

The mindset that devalues preaching today is often also accompanied by a devaluing of the significance of the divine work of setting apart certain men to communicate His Word. So, preaching is easily replaced with small-group discussions because it does not matter who represents God by communicating His Word, so long as that person is a believer. But Christ appoints, gifts, calls to God-approved study, and holds accountable *certain* men from within the Church to stand before her as His representatives to speak His Word.

**Third, the Medium of Scriptural Preaching.** The medium of preaching itself is public proclamation. The following points will demonstrate that preaching is God’s *primary* stated means of communicating His Word and of working in people.

First, the primacy of preaching God’s Word can be seen in the family of Greek words used in both the Septuagint and the New

Testament for the function of a herald, the New Testament word for a preacher. A herald proclaimed publicly an authoritative message on behalf of a king. For instance, Pharaoh commanded that Joseph ride in a chariot and that heralds (κηρυξ) go before him and proclaim (κηρύσσω), “Bow the knee!” (Gen. 41:43). Similarly, Haman suggested to King Artaxerxes that he honor someone by giving him royal treatment and proclaiming (κηρύσσω) to the public, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.” The king immediately commanded Haman to do to Mordecai as he had suggested. So Haman honored Mordecai, leading him on horseback through the city, publicly proclaiming (κηρύσσω) the king’s authorized message (Esther 6:9–11).

In the New Testament John the Baptist came as a forerunner to the King, publicly proclaiming (κηρύσσω) a message of salvation to the nation (Matt. 3:2). Jesus Himself, as the King, heralded (Matt. 4:23) that same message.

Paul heightens the significance of the herald idea when he directly connects it to the “man of God” in 2 Timothy 3:16–4:2. It has already been demonstrated that this passage primarily addresses the Word’s profitable use for the “man of God” and that what follows is a sobering reminder of his future judgment before God. For what will he be held accountable? Public proclamation: “I charge thee . . . Preach [κηρύσσω] the word” (4:1–2).

Second, Scripture demonstrates preaching’s primacy not only through the idea of a herald but also by showing that preaching is God’s choice means

of making known the message which reveals salvation. Paul tells Titus of the “eternal life, which God . . . promised . . . But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Titus 1:2–3). God promised and manifested eternal life in the message of salvation, but He made known the message by means of preaching. He closely connected His work of revealing the good news with a certain means of making it known.

A third point related to the medium of preaching that demonstrates its primacy is that Scripture repeatedly associates preaching with the truth’s spiritual effectiveness. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul declares that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” The Greek word used for “preaching” (κήρυγμα) refers to “the content of a message.”<sup>4</sup> However, all major English versions capture the translation by using some form of the word “preach.” While the emphasis lies on the content, the word cannot be divorced from the mode by which the content is given: public proclamation. In Romans 10:13–15 Paul says, “How then shall they call on him

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in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear [the message] without a preacher [participle form of κηρύσσω]? And how shall they preach [κηρύσσω], except they be sent?” Peter says, “Being born again . . . by the word of God. . . . This is the word which by the gospel is preached [εὐαγγελίζω] unto you” (1 Pet. 1:23, 25). When the message comes, is heard, and brings about Spiritual effectiveness, God seems to presuppose the primary medium used to communicate the message: preaching.

**Fourth, the Method of Preaching.** Preaching is a monologue that most appropriately and fittingly communicates God’s all-wise and authoritative Word. It is dominated by one person speaking. In discussions, men give equal opportunity for others to share their ideas and opinions because they mutually recognize their finiteness of understanding. But even in that setting, most of the participants tend to look to the one with greatest wisdom on a topic. If a person of authority sits in on the discussion, everyone generally looks to him. This instinct to look to the one with greatest wisdom and authority is exactly what the phenomenon of preaching satisfies. Preaching gives God the floor, as it were. Through the preacher He addresses entire groups made up of all kinds of people and needs and speaks with infinite wisdom and preeminent authority about everything related to their “life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). When God speaks His Word with clarity through a man gifted and appointed to convey it, He deserves an attentive, listening response, rather than debate or even discussion.

Job wished for a “discussion” with God about his situation, earnestly desiring to “order [his] cause before him, and fill [his] mouth with arguments” (Job 23:2–4). When God finally came to him and spoke, Job responded, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further” (40:3–5). When God speaks, He restores an exalted view of Himself and humbles the listener to his appropriate place. Preaching does this best because it comes as the single, divine voice in the Word preached. The method itself, as a single voice, properly represents what ought to be the case in the world: God should be speaking, and man should be listening and obeying. What a glorious manifestation of the subduing power of God when in the church those who once rebelled against His rule now sit listening attentively and gladly to the preached Word. This medium in which the Word of God comes points to its primacy.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to establish that *the preaching of the man of God, in the context of the local church, is God’s ordained and primary mode of communicating His Word and of bringing about regeneration and sanctification.* As stated earlier, other forms of communicating God’s Word are not the issue. The problem lies in what is made primary in the church, and why. When other forms of ministering the Word become primary, the change generally comes due to the pressure of popular opinion or apparent lack of interest in preaching rather than a keen interest in God’s revealed will. In addition the problem of uninterest in preaching is viewed as unique to the times, generational and natural rather than spiritual or moral. Church history demonstrates, however, that lack of interest in preaching is common to sinful man and corresponds proportionately to the *spiritual* condition of every generation. It is also equally true that effective preaching is common to the work of God’s kingdom throughout time and has historically accompanied works of revival. Whatever the opinions of the world and even the modern church, the minister must hold firm his stance that Christ is Head of the church, rules her by His Word, and mediates that rule chiefly through appointed and gifted men who proclaim the message of that Word: Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1–2)!

***When God speaks, He restores an exalted view of Himself and humbles the listener to his appropriate place. Preaching does this best because it comes as the single, divine voice in the Word preached. The method itself, as a single voice, properly represents what ought to be the case in the world: God should be speaking, and man should be listening and obeying.***

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<sup>1</sup> Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2013), 25.

<sup>2</sup> “In the Bible, there is no single method of communicating the gospel; instead there is a variety of methods. . . . Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians often get stuck on one particular method and end up believing it is the only or best method” (Sam Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018], 16–17).

<sup>3</sup> Mark Minnick, “Ministry Philosophy of Mount Calvary, Part 1” (Mp3). Sermon, Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC (October 20, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Friberg, s.v. “κήρυγμα, ατος, τό.”

## Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*

When someone as widely read as Joel Beeke describes a work as “the very best book ever written on sanctification and its relationship to justification,”\* one ought to take notice. Beeke is commending *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* by the Puritan Walter Marshall, recently republished (Soli Deo Gloria, 2021) with an introduction by Beeke.

Having ministered in the Church of England for eight years, Marshall was among two thousand ministers ejected from their pulpits in 1662 for not conforming to the *Book of Common Prayer*. He spent the rest of his life shepherding a nonconformist congregation in southeast England.

Marshall wrote *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* in part to refute antinomianism, which denied that the OT law functions as a rule of life for the Christian, as well as neonomianism, which viewed faith as a replacement of the law that forms part of the ground of justification alongside Christ’s righteousness. Yet Marshall’s work is not primarily a polemical treatise; he wrote out of his own profound struggle to understand and experience sanctification. Marshall organizes his work through fourteen “directions,” moving from foundational theology to practical expression.

First, we must know the means to holiness. Holiness is a radically spiritual thing—not essentially a matter of external works but of love for God—and so it is a work of God’s grace. The chief means He uses to accomplish this work is Scripture. Marshall desires to get his theology of sanctification by sitting at Jesus’ feet through the study of the Bible.

Second, we need several endowments to enable us to obey God’s Law. We need a heart inclination to obey as well as the persuasion that we are reconciled to God through Christ’s righteousness, that heaven is our destiny, and that God has given us sufficient strength to desire and to do His will.

Third, we receive these endowments from Christ as we fellowship with Him through the Spirit, and for this to happen we must first be united with Christ. Fourth, we become united with Christ as we hear the gospel and the Spirit enables us to receive Christ through faith. Marshall’s exposition of union with Christ is the heart of his book, the core of the gospel mystery of sanctification.

Marshall’s next three directions reinforce the foregoing ideas negatively. The fifth direction states that we cannot practice holiness while we remain in our natural state. Nor, sixth, can we practice holiness if we view our obedience as a condition for salvation. And seventh, contra “preparationism,” we must not wait for some evidence of holiness before trusting in Christ.

In short, eighth, we must seek holiness in its proper place. Union with Christ, justification, and the Holy Spirit necessarily precede our pursuit of holiness by faith. Similarly, ninth, if we would

perform the duties of God’s law, we must first receive the comforts of the gospel. Tenth, this requires basic assurance of salvation. Here Marshall upholds the Reformers’ teaching that the “direct” act of faith in Christ includes a kind of assurance even while later “reflex” acts of faith admit of degrees of assurance.

The eleventh direction urges readers to believe in Christ without delay and then to grow in that faith by returning again and again to the gospel. Twelfth, believers must go on to live in a way that reflects our new state in Christ rather than our previous natural state: Paul’s “put off/put on” dynamic. This includes the recognition that sanctification is progressive and that the Lord is exceedingly patient with our failings. Thirteenth, we must make diligent use of all the means God employs to advance our sanctification. These include Scripture, prayer, and the fellowship of the saints. Marshall’s discussion here is especially lengthy, encouraging often-neglected practices such as psalm-singing and fasting.

Finally, Marshall advises his readers to take encouragement from the excellencies of biblical sanctification. He extols God’s method for holiness as a confirmatory and delightful way to live. This is followed up with a sermon on the doctrine of justification from Romans 3:23–26.

Many will not accept Marshall’s Reformed interpretations, such as his description of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as “sacraments,” his freighted comments relative to divine covenants, and especially his approach to the Mosaic Law. Finally, Marshall’s writing style is characteristically Puritan, and his complex sentences and paragraphs can diminish the work’s devotional impact.

Nevertheless, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* remains a classic worth thoughtful reading. Controversies over sanctification continue to resurface and to confuse God’s people. Marshall’s work ministers timeless biblical instruction for the nourishment of the believer. He understands well the severity of human corruption and our inability to become holy apart from God’s grace. He is a faithful teacher of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, and he shows how that doctrine is the stabilizing foundation of the believer’s pursuit of sanctification. Most importantly, Marshall foregrounds what has sometimes been backgrounded or even missed by Christians concerned about holiness: holiness is not fundamentally about changing behavior but about experiencing and reflecting our union with Christ. As Beeke puts it, “The primary secret of sanctification is a personal and vital union with Jesus Christ.”

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\*[www.joelbeeke.org/2021/06/the-gospel-mystery-of-sanctification/](http://www.joelbeeke.org/2021/06/the-gospel-mystery-of-sanctification/)



## This Man, Melchizedek

To say that a particular psalm takes preeminence over all other psalms is probably a stroll on the boardwalk of foolishness. Yet it is significant that Psalm 110 is the most quoted and, perhaps, the most alluded to psalm in the New Testament. And within Psalm 110 is a reference to an individual named Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is mentioned in only three books of the Bible: Genesis, Psalms, and Hebrews. We have already mentioned Psalm 110:4. Genesis 14:18-20 speaks of Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek after returning from the slaughter of the kings. The final mentions of Melchizedek are in the book of Hebrews (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17).

The perplexity about Melchizedek centers on his person. Who, exactly, is he? There have been speculations about this: the Holy Spirit, a divine virtue, an angel. Within my years of being a believer, none of these have proved convincing. One popular notion is that Melchizedek is a *theophany*, a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Son of God. There are valid considerations along that line of thought. However, I want to argue that Melchizedek is not a theophany but a historical human person, *a man*.

These considerations are not given in any particular order of importance. The royal priest, Melchizedek, was made “*like unto the Son of God*” (Heb. 7:3). Therefore, Melchizedek was not the Son of God. Being made “*like the Son of God*” implies a distinction between Melchizedek and any pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. Similarly, Christ is a priest “*after the order of Melchizedek*.” Again, this implies distinction since Christ is not a priest after the order of Himself, nor is Christ Melchizedek.

The biblical statement that Melchizedek was the King of Salem (i.e., Jerusalem; cf. Ps. 76:2), confirms that he was a man rather than a *temporary* manifestation of the Son of God. Melchizedek’s being a King-Priest over a city implies that he was a well-known historical figure. Abraham was aware of Melchizedek, for he gave to God’s representative on earth a tithe (Gen. 14:20). Therefore, Melchizedek must have had permanent residence in the city of Salem.

The strongest argument for Melchizedek’s being a theophany is Hebrews 7:3: “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” Keeping the context of the writer of Hebrews in mind is helpful. The context is the contrast between a royal-king priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. As far as Genesis is concerned, Melchizedek did not become a priest by inheritance, nor did he convey his priesthood

to his son(s). The Levitical priests inherited the priesthood from their parents. They had to trace their lineages. They were born and died of the tribe of Levi as a succession of priests. Melchizedek had no lineage proving his priesthood, and neither did Christ. The genealogy of Christ established His human and kingly lineage but not His priesthood. Scripture states that Melchizedek did have a “descent,” that is, human lineage, but his priesthood did not. “But he [Melchizedek] whose descent is not counted from them [Levites] received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him [Abraham] that had the promises” (Heb. 7:6).

Throughout the Book of Hebrews, there is no implication that Melchizedek is anything other than *human*. The writer of Hebrews contrasts the priesthood of Melchizedek to the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11–12). He compares the person of Melchizedek to Abraham (Heb. 7:4, 7) and Levi (Heb. 7:9–10). He notes that *every* high priest is “taken from among men” (Heb. 5:1), as well as the necessity of the Son of God taking on humanity (Heb. 2:14–18). In every case, the underlying assumptions are *historical human comparisons*.

This *man*, Melchizedek, was the type of Christ as our Priest-King, although Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. The Scripture suggests that Jesus Christ, the Son of God’s appointment as High Priest, occurred simultaneously with His appointment as King (Ps. 110:1). Yahweh who “said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee” also said, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:5, 6). At the resurrection of Christ, the Savior was made both King and Priest on behalf of His people. His present reign is preeminently as *Savior* to Jew and Gentile unto the “uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8; Ps. 110:2). His priestly duty is preeminently interceding on behalf of His people: “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:24–25).

We might be wary of promoting Psalm 110 as the apex psalm. However, the discussion of Melchizedek, among other truths, makes this psalm significant to the Old Testament saints, to the church, and to every believer. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” We have a High Priest that is after the order of Melchizedek—foreshadowed and foretold from long ago.

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## Prison Ministry in Light of Matthew 25:45

**F**undamental Baptists have a firm grip on the gospel of Jesus Christ; they cherish it and work diligently to share it with the lost. Yet their commitment to sharing the gospel with prisoners often pales in comparison to that of compassionate Evangelicals who will work with almost anyone. In light of biblical admonitions, we must not ignore our responsibility to minister to prisoners, especially Christians in prison who seek to live a Christ-centered life and to evangelize their fellow prisoners. We should be suspicious of anecdotal views of prisoners that assume “they brought this on themselves” or of accepting a “lock them up and throw away the key” mentality that leaves no room for biblical commands to love them, comfort them, and try to reach them for Christ.

Scripture presents an abundance of preaching material on prison ministry. The story of Joseph, Daniel in the lions’ den, and the three Hebrew “children” thrown into the fiery furnace are well-known texts. Other Old Testament saints that were imprisoned offer powerful messages for believers: Samson, Jeremiah, Micaiah, Zedekiah, and others. The New Testament is replete with prison ministry as well: John the Baptist struggled with doubt in prison; Peter, James and John, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and the great apostle Paul were all prisoners. Paul especially taught powerfully from prison and then was executed as a prisoner of Rome. All of these stories offer powerful spiritual applications.

Most notably, our Lord was crucified between two prisoners who typify all mankind—both were guilty, but one had submissive faith while the other had defiant rebellion until the end. Christ’s offer of salvation to the dying thief should convince us of our Savior’s commands to minister to—to “visit”—those in prison. When pressed with the question, “When saw we thee . . . in prison, and did not minister unto thee?” His answer was clear: “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” (Matt. 25:44–45).

### PRISON MINISTRY IN LIGHT OF RACIAL TENSION IN AMERICA

Unnumbered martyrs over the centuries walked in the footsteps of the great apostle Paul who asked for and received the succor and support of believers. Inmates are not sent to prison *for* punishment but *as* punishment. They are locked away from the general public and their own families. They have lost their freedom and live in a regimented, monotonous, sometimes dehumanizing place. They literally live in cages. (The Greek word *phulake* is variously translated as “keeping watch,” a “hold,” or “cage”; in Revelation 18:2 it is translated both as “hold” and

“cage.”) The notion that prisoners “have it easy” is misinformed. Confinement in the United States is usually miserable. This is especially so for African American men.

One in three African American males is incarcerated during his lifetime. Blacks make up about thirteen percent of the nation’s overall population but forty-six percent of the prison population. The incarceration rate for African Americans is so high that young black men without a high school diploma are more likely to go to jail than to find a job.

Without intervention, imprisonment sadly turns into a family affair with a pervasive cycle of repeat offenders within the same household generation after generation. Despite the dire statistics, there is a hope stirring in the inner cities across America—there is growing evidence that lives can be changed and communities restored! For example, a program called JUMPSTART provides Christian discipleship and job training and has produced a remarkably low recidivism rate in South Carolina of only 3.17%.<sup>1</sup>

### IMPACT OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP ON RECIDIVISM

Kairos Prison Ministry International, Inc.<sup>2</sup>, is a lay-led, interdenominational Christian ministry in which male and female volunteers bring Christ’s love and forgiveness to prisoners and their families. The Kairos programs take the participants on a journey that demonstrates the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. (A “Kairos Walk” is an extended weekend “retreat.”) In a study of 505 inmates released from Florida prisons, the recidivism rate was 15.7% among those who had participated in one Kairos session, and it was 10% among those who had participated in two or more Kairos continuing ministry sessions. The non-Kairos control group in the study had a recidivism rate of 23.4%.<sup>3</sup>

### GENERAL PRISON STATISTICS

There are approximately 2.3 million persons incarcerated in America’s prisons—a five-hundred-percent increase over the past thirty years. Of course, ninety-five percent of people in prison will be released eventually, but sixty-eight percent of those released will be rearrested within three years. The United States leads the world in incarceration with 716 imprisoned persons per 100,000. Other nations don’t even come close. The United Kingdom incarcerates 147 per 100,000. Norway incarcerates 72 per 100,000. As the world’s leader in incarceration, in 2014 the US represented *five percent* of the world’s population, but it housed *twenty-five percent* of the world’s incarcerated people:

- Men incarcerated in 2013: 1,463,454
- Women incarcerated in 2012: 113,605
- Youth incarcerated in 2013: 54,148<sup>4</sup>

## AN INTERVIEW WITH A VETERAN PRISON CHAPLAIN

The following is from an interview with Federal Prison Chaplain Brian J. Wright conducted by Joe Carter.

***Do you see any similarities between prison life in the days of Jesus and today?***

Two significant similarities are worth mentioning. Both then and now, there are various levels of custody and kinds of punishment. People are sent to different types of prisons, or even placed under house arrest. People serve long sentences, are deported, or are even put to death.

A second similarity would be the shame and pain that comes to those in prison. There is general shame from being in chains. There is shame from the humiliation of once being a person of higher status. There is even shame that comes from family and friends. As for pain, it is both physical and emotional. But for the most part, emotional pain is the worst. An inmate told me the worst part of incarceration is not where he is (prison, serving his sentence), but where he is not (home, serving his family).

***Where would you turn in the Bible to help someone live a gospel-centered imprisonment?***

I would probably start by turning to Acts 28 and 2 Timothy. Given those two similarities of prison life, the apostle Paul also experienced various levels of custody during his life. On the one hand, Acts 28 implies that Paul had a remarkably light custody, somewhat similar to a federal prison camp today. On the other, 2 Timothy points to a much more serious and extended incarceration, which ultimately resulted in Paul's death under Nero, somewhat similar to a maximum-security facility today. Yet regardless of where he was detained, Paul shows the Christ-centered hope available in every situation and how anyone can model a gospel-driven imprisonment.

***What about the shame and pain you mentioned?***

Paul's imprisonments took an emotional and physical toll on him. In 2 Timothy alone, he mentions tears shed on his behalf (1:4), the suffering he endured (1:12), the abandonment he received from those around him (1:15; cf. 4:11), and the chains he bore (2:9). Nevertheless, as he awaited his execution (4:6), he did not give up: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (4:7). Even without an "out-date," Paul finished the agonizing race God had sovereignly marked out for him. He did not believe he was a victim of circumstances or society. Rather, God was in absolute control.

## AN APPEAL FOR HUMANE TREATMENT

The Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution, as well as numerous state laws, prohibit cruel and unusual punishment. Such punishment is unbiblical. And yet, in the United States the neglect of the incarcerated during natural disasters is a stain on our nation and the Christian principles on which it was founded. Consider the following.

Of all the devastating hurricanes America has experienced over the last twenty years, Katrina is perhaps the best known. Before Katrina struck, the mayor of New Orleans and the governor of Louisiana called for complete evacuation of the city, but prison inmates were not moved because the sheriff announced that the prisoners needed to "stay where they belong."<sup>5</sup> Some eight thousand prisoners were abandoned in their cells, some in sewage water up to their chests. "Prisoners" included hardened criminals, arrested persons not yet tried and sentenced, some with only minor traffic violations, and children—juveniles as young as thirteen! After three days, authorities attempted an evacuation; it took an additional three days, with hundreds of inmates placed on a highway overpass under armed guards with attack dogs. Food and water were scarce, and medical care was almost nonexistent. These cruel and unusual circumstances were not entirely manmade, but little-to-no action had been taken to prevent the human suffering that occurred.

Katrina hit the US in 2005, yet in 2017 Hurricanes Harvey and Irma struck with similar life-threatening torments for incarcerated people.

## HISTORY OF PRISON MINISTRY

Let us conclude with an extended quotation from the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*.

Following the apostolic injunction to "remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them" (Heb. 13:3), Christian pastors and lay persons have exercised a ministry of visitation and compassion in prisons for centuries. An important institutional step was taken in the early 1800s, however, when the Quakers of Philadelphia established the concept in the U.S. of isolating offenders to encourage reflection, meditation, and penitence—the source of the word *penitentiary*. More recently Christians were influential in the formation of the American Correctional Association in 1892 and have promoted prison reform and the establishment of rehabilitation programs.

Until the 1920s and 1930s the prison chaplain was often the only professional person employed full-time by the prison (except the warden). But gradually educators, social workers, psychologists, medical personnel, and recreational specialists were added to prison staffs and began to take over functions for which the chaplain had been responsible. The change forced a reexamination of the clergy's role. Attention got focused specifically on

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# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and My Journey with God

It was Thanksgiving weekend 2005, Fort Carson, Colorado. I was an Army chaplain stationed with a unit of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division preparing for a year's deployment in Iraq. Three months before this my unit had completed a one-month-long train-up in the Mojave Desert. In our train-up soldiers were chosen to be "victims" in mass casualty exercises.

A mass casualty (or MASCAL) is defined simply as one more casualty than the medics are prepared to handle. Victims were instructed to lie down on medic-provided stretchers, tags dangling from a limb explaining what type of injury they had. The medics were to react to the "injury" to get practice for real life in the combat zone. (To be clear, practice can never replace real life.) As the medics were practicing and honing their skills, I, the chaplain was to move about observing and giving comfort and offering Scripture or prayer to any who would desire it. During the practice, where everything was relaxed, no one wanted my services. After a time, the practice got old, and the medics and the "casualties" began visiting like they were at lunch. I had not been to war before, but I had a sense that the environment of the medic station in the war zone was going to be much more businesslike than what I was experiencing in this practice.

## IN THE WAR ZONE

Four months later, after we entered theater Iraq and settled into the mission before us, the reality of the dangers became clear. My main focus, after visiting with soldiers and conducting Bible studies and chapel services, was to stand by at the

medic station and assist with stretcher bearing when casualties were expected. Sometimes we would see half a dozen soldiers come in, other times many more. A few times we had actual MASCAL, with upwards of fifty or more at once.

As I observed those coming for treatment for real-life carnage, trauma began setting in. God sustained me. Some soldiers I encountered would have questions about how God would allow such terrible things to happen. It got me thinking about how sheltered we are in America; we are pretty comfortable. Even as soldiers, we had not experienced carnage such as we began to see in Iraq in everyday life. In those moments, when someone close is near death, the doctors and hospitals would pull them away from us; we were not allowed close contact. Sometimes, in those closing moments when all medical "miracles" were expended and the doctor said, "There is nothing else we can do," we began to go to God to seek His help. The attitude of "God is our last resort" and "It is time to call in the chaplain" may be where many of us are today. My military experience has shown me that military personnel for the most part do not give God much room to operate in their lives. They are provided with all physical necessities. They are clothed, fed, paid pretty well, housed, and even for the most part given meaningful employment, particularly during war. But some of our soldiers are still struggling with purpose and meaning.

As I look back on my deployment in Iraq, I remember visiting with some soldiers I got close to and noticing how distant they seemed. It's called "the shock of the one-thousand-mile stare." Normal,

casual conversation was hard to come by for them. The things they had seen and felt in the war were troubling them. The daily stress "head on a swivel" feeling that if a bomb, mortar, and some other explosives were to suddenly intrude on their life, they weren't sure what would happen to them. It reminded me of Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world [eternity] in their heart." God made everything beautiful, but war is not beautiful. Soldiers struggled with bringing these ideas to match. War brings an abrupt change of thought to those who think about eternity. War brings death to our thinking. Death is not a comfort to those without the Lord. Getting close to the possibility of death or seeing it around you is stressful.

## BACK HOME

The year after my deployment I required surgery. You can read further about this incident in my book *Biblical Cures for the Wounded Spirit*. The Army required me to be in a rehabilitation unit in recovery and during that time God opened doors for me to minister to soldiers suffering with PTSD. I conducted counseling and did Bible studies and took time to start studying PTSD more carefully. I learned about correct therapy and popu-







lar but incorrect therapy. I found soldiers who were struggling with the therapies that were being used on them, but they were not getting better. In fact, they were getting worse. Medications were causing them to zone out. They would isolate from family. Sometimes they would get violent. They would forget about important events, family activities, and life's responsibilities. Simple life experiences became a drudgery. Fear and guilt and lack of peace were common issues, and the psychological help that the Army was supplying was not helping.

## SEEING PTSD THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

I studied my Bible and read about King David and his description of being a mighty warrior. David saw war, and he fought in wars. He had been traumatized by war. His psalms would often describe the pain and anguish that came from the experiences in a war zone. Psalms such as 31, 142, and 143 describe this. Soldiers today are not generally attuned to the spiritual aspects of what war can do to a warrior's spirit. But David was a man after God's own heart. As I read carefully through some of his psalms, I could see David's faith shining through and God providing him comfort in his trials. For instance, in Psalm 144:1 and following:

"Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me." David gave all credit to God for teaching him the art of war. Then he leaned on God for the spiritual therapy for all the soulish issues that were to come, because of the brutality that God had led him into. David learned that what God had led him into, God was also able to bring him through. God could confront the issues that his psyche (soul) would need to endure. God is ready to walk with us through all the traumatic issues we go through in our lives all because of that sin curse we experience in this life.

Researchers have increased their studies on the brain since the 1980s. During this time, the term PTSD came into common usage. The emphasis on neurology has increased to where it is now a leading emphasis in psychology.

America has a history of godliness in its foundation, but at the same time forces have been at work to tear down and remove that godly influence. In my book on PTSD I mention a brief background of Sigmund Freud, who was godless in his thinking. He, among others, led people away from God, and some men of God decided that

this area was not of a spiritual nature. They steered clear of Scripture for help, and psychology took over. Secular psychology is based almost entirely humanism. Wise use of medication in mental dilemmas can be an asset, but the tendency is to lean entirely on medications to the point where trust and hope in God are removed and replaced by drugs alone. A physician once said that negative thoughts are not removed by not thinking about them; rather, they are removed when you overwhelm them with truth. The Truth is a Person, Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Philippians 4:8 says that whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report . . . we are to think on those things. This is where I recommend meditation in the Scripture—a renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). Joshua 1:8–9 as well as Psalm 1:2 and Psalm 119:11, 15, 23, 34, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148, and others speak of meditation in Scripture. Time spent in His Word will make the ultimate difference.

Our military personnel need help from the Scriptures to overcome PTSD. Our doctors try, but they cannot match what the Word can do.

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**Wayne Keast** retired as an Army Chaplain in 2012. He lives in Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, and ministers to soldiers there who desire assistance from the Bible in defeating PTSD.



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# The Highest Calling



**T**welve weeks had come and gone faster than the blink of an eye. I was again in a situation where I was leaving my children behind, and it seemed to get harder each time. My third daughter had been born just twelve weeks prior, but what I remember most about that day was the look on my now-middle-child's face: her two-year-old big, beautiful brown eyes looked rather accusatory, or maybe heart-broken, as I drove away. By worldly standards, I should have been finding fulfillment in my job as a practicing audiologist. I had become a doctor just past the age of twenty-five and worked at a successful medical practice with a schedule full of patients for whom I could provide help. But something wasn't right.

## THE CULTURE VS. GOD

The culture, being firmly in the grasp of the Prince of the Power of the Air, denies what God calls "good." The Reformation brought us a rekindling of biblical roles, with the title of "housewife" temporarily rescued from being the pejorative that it had become in the Middle Ages. This small light, however, was quickly dimmed by the first wave of feminism and was smashed to pieces by the second wave. This first movement picked up steam in the nineteenth century, and the role of women as defined by God was attacked in everything from managing the home to being a wife and mother. Birth control came onto the scene, allowing families to "play God"; women could more easily pursue careers without worrying about children to tie them to the home. The culture says that fulfillment for women comes, essentially, from doing what men do.

God paints a different picture for us. As the Creator of gender and gender roles, He has not only defined but deliberately designed unique roles for men and women. God's observation of Adam's work leads him to express in Genesis 3:18, "I will make him an help meet [or "fit"] for him." This is the first definition of her role: she is uniquely suited to be a *helper fit* for Adam. The beauty here is that every woman will nuance her role differently because every husband is different and every home is different, but the principle remains the same. The Bible gives further definition to those roles in both Proverbs 31 and Titus 2. Much of the Proverbs 31 wife can be summed up with verse 27: "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." She is a hard-working Renaissance woman: buying fields, making clothes, baking bread—and doing all of it to benefit her household. Paul exhorts women in Titus 2:5 "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands."

Gender roles are no small matter either. As traditional roles are restructured, the culture promises equality and fairness. "You can do whatever your heart desires!"—the message is repeated ad nauseum, specifically targeted to women, in everything from clothing to movies to toddlers' board books. This is not a message from God. Equality in the Bible refers to our worth. Our worth does not come from our accomplishments but rather from who our Creator is. He has gifted us in unique ways for the building up of His church and for His glory. When we look with scorn at the idea of managing the household, it is not the nebulous "patriarchy" that receives our glares, but rather our Creator. God is a good and gracious God;

doesn't it follow that the roles He has carved out for us are for our good as well? Home can be a place of pain, betrayal, longing, and emptiness, or it can be a place of warmth, growth, comfort, and security—and at the center of the home is the woman God has placed there.

## MY JOURNEY

For many years, I longed to be a stay-at-home mother but because of past immature choices (i.e., school debt), it was not an option. While we were blessed along the way with godly families watching our children, I knew that God had intentionally given into our home these eternal souls. My primary responsibility was not my patients, and with each passing day it was more difficult to hand off my children to another. My husband and I prayed together, budgeted carefully, and, by the grace of God, with the arrival of my fifth child I was able to be a fully stay-at-home mother. It is a gift that I hope never to take for granted.

The poison of centuries of feminist thinking has so permeated our lives that it can be hard to tease out what God has called us to versus cultural norms and demands. Circumstances and seasons will vary from home to home, and my experience is not prescriptive for everyone. But God's plan is good, and His creation will benefit most by trusting His design.

**Katie Pitts** and her husband, Chris (an FBI active duty Air Force Chaplain at Malmstrom AFB in Montana), have been married for thirteen years. She homeschools her five children and blogs at [sensible discipleship.com](http://sensible discipleship.com).





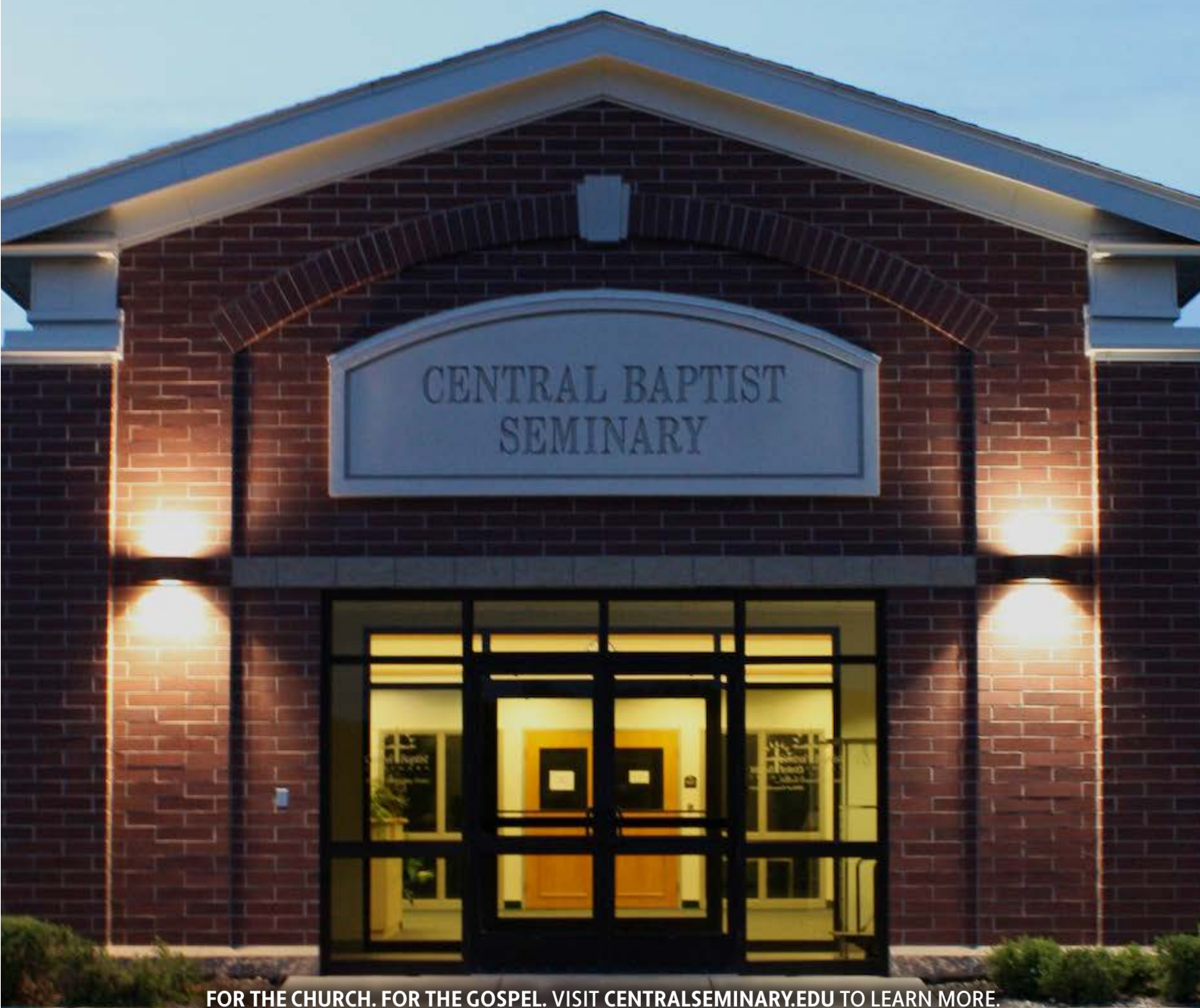


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## Prison Ministry in Light of Matthew 25:45

(Continued from page VIII)

doing pastoral functions. In the mid-1930s the Federal Bureau of Prisons asked the Protestant churches (the then-Federal Council of Churches) to endorse the maturity and quality of training of prison chaplains. CPE [Clinical Pastoral Education], although in its infancy, became a requirement of endorsement, and the prison chaplaincy thus became the first established chaplaincy to require CPE in the training of its candidates.

As years passed many states also set standards, and the major denominations established departments of pastoral care and standards for endorsement of prison chaplains. Nonetheless, high standards for readiness to minister in prisons and jails have not been accepted by some fundamental, evangelistic, and independent church groups. Some state and local authorities have not been concerned, and early in 1982 the Federal Bureau of Prisons retracted its position with the churches and moved to do its own screening of chaplain candidates, calling upon church representatives only when needed. Today much prison and jail ministry is done by part-time persons and volunteers who have not been trained in the available body of knowledge regarding the understanding of persons, relationship skills, organizational structure, and pastoral care.<sup>6</sup>

**John C. Vaughn** is the former pastor of Faith Baptist Church (Taylors, South Carolina) and former editor of *FrontLine* magazine. During his many years of pastoral and evangelistic ministry Dr. Vaughn has served in various chaplaincy roles. He currently serves with the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

<sup>1</sup> Sources include <https://www.jumpstartvision.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> This example is not intended to be a blanket endorsement of Kairos; it is just to serve as an example of how gospel ministry of Kairos impacts recidivism.

<sup>3</sup> See [kairosprisonministry.org](http://kairosprisonministry.org).

<sup>4</sup> The Sentencing Project, US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Columbia Law School, Student Paper on *Prison Preparedness and Legal Obligations to Protect Prisoners During Natural Disasters*, by William Omorgieva, May 2018.

<sup>6</sup> "Prisoners and Prison Chaplaincy" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Ed. Rodney J. Hunter, 953–54.



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## “Embarrassing”

**H**ave you ever earnestly, repeatedly prayed for something that you honestly believed to be consistent with God’s will, only to have that request not just delayed but flatly denied? How do we square our negatively answered prayers with the New Testament’s seemingly open-ended promises about prayer? C. S. Lewis summarizes the issue with a candor that is simultaneously disconcerting and yet helpful, because he refuses to paper over and ignore the disconnect we sometimes feel between doctrine and experience.

The New Testament contains embarrassing promises that what we pray for with faith we shall receive. Mark 11:24 is the most staggering. Whatever we ask for, believing that we’ll get it, we’ll get. . . . How is this astonishing promise to be reconciled (a) with the observed facts? And (b) with the prayer in Gethsemane, and (as a result of that prayer) the universally accepted view that we should ask everything with a reservation (“if it be thy will”)? As regards (a) no evasion is possible. Every war, every famine or plague, almost every deathbed, is the monument to a petition that was not granted. But (b) though much less often mentioned, is surely an equal difficulty. How is it possible at one and the same time to have a perfect faith . . . that you will get what you ask and yet also prepare yourself submissively in advance for a possible refusal? . . . As regards the first difficulty, I’m not asking why our petitions are so often refused. Anyone can see in general that this must be so. In our ignorance we ask what is not good for us or for others, or not even intrinsically possible. Or again, to grant one man’s prayer involves refusing another’s. . . . The real problem is different; not why refusal is so frequent, but why the opposite result is so lavishly promised. Shall we then . . . scrap the embarrassing promises as “venerable archaisms” which have to be “outgrown”? . . . If we are free to delete all inconvenient data, we shall have no theological difficulties; but for the same reason no solutions and no progress. . . . It seems to me we must conclude that such promises about prayer with faith refer to a degree or kind of faith which most believers never experience. A far inferior degree is, I hope, acceptable to God. Even the kind that says “Help thou my unbelief” may make way for a miracle. . . . What do you think about these things? I have offered only guesses.

So wrote C. S. Lewis in his semi-clandestine work on prayer, *Letters to Malcolm*.<sup>\*</sup> His suggested solutions are, he admits, “only guesses.” Careful and concentrated exegetical attention may be more helpful in arriving at a satisfying and self-consistent resolution. For example, Lewis’s suggestion that such a great “degree or kind of faith” is a rarity to which most Christians never rise fails to notice that Jesus expressly *de-emphasizes* the degree of faith in a similar passage: faith “as a grain of mustard seed” is all that is required to move mountains (Matt. 17:20).

The emphasis in both Matthew 17 and Mark 11 is the simple assurance that there is no limitation with God; we may approach Him with any request in implicit confidence that it will never be beyond His power. It does not require a great degree or kind of faith, only faith in a great God; it is not the “power” of *prayer* nor the “power” of *faith* that “works” (as though it were some form of magic), but God. Jesus is granting not an open-ended promise about getting whatever we want by prayer (that, as Lewis implies, would be a nightmare), but an open-ended assurance that God is able to do anything we could possibly ask of Him.

### PRAYER PROMISES IN JOHN’S GOSPEL

As absolute and unqualified as they may sound, the Johannine prayer promises include built-in qualifications that are often overlooked.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:13–15).

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love (John 15:7–9).

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another (John 15:16–17).

# Prayer Promises?

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23–24).

When you read these statements in their fuller context, it's clear that they are not blanket promises of blank checks in prayer. The one praying is never conceived of as asking and receiving independently of his/her ongoing relationship of remaining in and obeying Christ—especially with respect to loving the brethren (note above 14:15; 15:9; 17).

Jesus never promises, “As long as you are a Christian, you can get anything you want from God.” The Christian who is genuinely remaining and obedient in his relationship to Christ will wish/will/desire and hence ask for those things that are in keeping with the will and aim and purposes and pleasure of God. In his comments on John 15:7 Leon Morris writes,

We should not overlook the importance of “my words.” The teaching of Christ is important and not lightly to be passed over in the interest of promoting religious feeling. When the believer abides in Christ and Christ's words abide in him then . . . his prayers will be prayers that are in accord with God's will and they will be fully answered.

It is also necessary to remind ourselves that all four Johannine promises occur within the context of the same discourse to the disciples (probably within minutes of each other); so none of them can be isolated and viewed independently from the others. In other words, *this is a contextualized body of teaching, not a series of acontextual isolated sayings.*

## PRAYER PROMISES, INTUITION, AND EXAMPLES

We intuitively understand that even such an apparently open-ended promise has limits. Would such promises override things *clearly* contrary to God's will (just because we ask and Jesus promised)? What about things *possibly* contrary to God's will? Or things that are contrary to God's will in areas we have no way of knowing what God's will is?

Paul—an *apostle*—pleaded with the Lord three times to remove a hindering circumstance, and the answer was “no.” He did not receive what he asked. Such a passage surely curbs any mistaken assumption that these promises represent an unconditional blank

check in prayer, even if our walk with God is as faithful and obedient as the apostle Paul's!

As another example of what we intuitively understand about the dynamics of prayer, consider Mark 10:35–40; though it's not technically a “prayer,” the points of similarity are self-evident. Jesus' response to the earnest request of two disciples illustrates some of those dynamics: (a) they didn't know/understand what they were asking (10:38); (b) the presence of certain prerequisites for some requests (10:38); (c) the will of God is, as always, the decisive factor (10:40); (d) wrong motives may always be lurking behind some requests (10:42–45, implied).

This self-correcting intuition is confirmed by our consummate Exemplar in prayer. If anyone could be assured that *whatever* he asked the Father was certain to be granted, surely Jesus could.

Yet when He besought His Father earnestly that “if it be possible” the cup set before Him might pass from Him, he added, “nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” He frankly expressed His profound and passionate desire in what must surely have been full knowledge of the Father's will in this matter, to which the sinless God-Man submitted His own desire. The debate over exactly what the cup was is immaterial to the point before us, which is that *Jesus consciously submitted His request to the will of the Father.* If you would be and pray like Jesus, go thou and do likewise; and when we do, whether it ends up being our will or the Father's, then whatever we ask really will be granted!

But we are not left to interpret Jesus' promises in John's Gospel on our own. Jesus directed the Spirit to have John include an inspired commentary on those promises that he recorded in his Gospel. The next column will explore the prayer promises we find explained in John's first epistle. Then we'll be in a position to put all the pieces together into a more definitive and scriptural perspective than Lewis's “guesses.”

---

\*In his introduction Lewis says he would feel presumptuous writing a book about prayer outright; so instead, he wrote on the subject indirectly by airing his own questions and thoughts in the form of correspondence between himself and an imaginary friend (“Malcolm”). Hence my descriptor “semi-clandestine.”

---

**Dr. Layton Talbert** is professor of Theology and Biblical Exposition at BJU Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.

## Choice, Not Chance

It is interesting to see what has happened in our culture over the last twenty-four months. The power of social media and opinion polls are at an all-time high. Social justice, cancel culture, and woke culture have dominated the news, blogs, and Twitter.

The question every church must wrestle through is, Is championing social justice issues to be the main focus of the church, or is there a greater need?

### AROUND OR THROUGH?

There is an interesting passage of Scripture in John 4 that I think addresses this issue. In John 4:4 we read that Jesus felt the need to go through Samaria—and not only to go through but also to stop at a city named Sychar.

At this point in history there was strong racial tension between the Jews and the Samaritans. Many Jews would rather go out of their way and go around rather than through Samaria. Samaritans were half-Jews, and there was a great hatred between the two groups for many reasons that had built up over the centuries. In fact, when Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for water, she is stunned because as she states in verse 9, “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” There are many wrongs that had been done to the Samaritans by the Jews, and Jesus was clearly aware of that. Yet He was more concerned that this woman and the people of Samaria would be prepared for the next life more than that they would have a perfect life now.

Many on Palm Sunday thought Jesus was going to free them from Roman bondage, shouting, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” Yet again Jesus’ greatest burden was preparing them for heaven, not making everything right now.

It is a grave mistake to let good things take us away from the most important thing. John 4:1–43 is a great lesson on evangelism. It is one of the rare times in

Scripture where Jesus makes the first move. Many times in the New Testament, people are talking to and coming to Christ. Here in this passage, Jesus engages in conversation first. From the text, the woman is surprised Jesus says anything to her. How many of us are at the well, the coffee shop, walking in our neighborhood, sitting on an airplane, working out at a gym, and we act as though we are in an elevator? We all know the unwritten rule in an elevator is to say nothing. Many times we have great opportunities, but we say nothing.

The disciples in this passage go into a town full of lost people and come back with bread. They knew that the person at the well was the Christ. They were so convinced they had all quit their jobs to follow Him. Yet they did not share that with anyone in town. The woman, on the other hand, can’t help but tell everyone about the person she met at the well who knew everything about her and who had given her living water.

### AN INTENTIONAL PASSION FOR WITNESSING

Not only must we be intentional in witnessing, but we must have a God-aligned passion for lost people. John 3:16 is found in just the chapter before, where Jesus tells Nicodemus that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Throughout the Gospels you will read that Jesus was moved with compassion. Do you care about lost people? Would your calendar for the last two months back that up? Someone once said, “Show me what you do, and I will show you what you believe.” In other words, if you say you believe we should read our Bibles every day, but we don’t do it, we don’t really believe that. If we say we believe we should be telling lost people about Jesus and what He has

done for them but we never do it, we don’t really believe it.

Jesus needed to go to Samaria in part because there were a lot of lost people there who needed “sowing.” If we are only a friend, or a coach, or a coworker, but we never give the gospel, we are like a salesman who tells you all about a product but never asks if you want it. We need to earn the right to be heard, but then we need to speak up.

I have often wondered if our biggest problem is a lack of love for God. We all naturally talk about what we love. If you are a hunter and you shoot a trophy, you will naturally share that over and over again the rest of your life. The same would be true of a golfer who gets a hole in one. For the rest of his life, he would share that story to those who hadn’t heard it.

We probably agree that the moment we got saved eclipses both of these, but when is the last time we shared it? All of the new Christians I know respond similarly to the woman at the well. They immediately want to tell their friends, family, and coworkers about Jesus.

Success in witnessing is not based on chance. It is based on choice. Will someone come up to us and ask us if we could share with him how he could get saved? There is a chance, but it will probably be rare. However, if we make a choice to take advantage of the everyday moments in life, we will probably get to be part of seeing someone go from hell to heaven. God is a just God, and He does desire justice for all, but more importantly He desires that all men would come to the saving knowledge of the truth.

May we be careful to not let good things squeeze out the best thing. May we skillfully and passionately take the Word to the World.

---

Jim Tillotson serves as president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa.





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#### **Wyoming Regional Fellowship**

Sinclair Baptist Church  
400 Lincoln Avenue  
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#### **Alaska Regional Fellowship**

Soldotna Baptist Church  
223 E. Redoubt Ave.  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
(Coordinator: Bruce Hamilton)

### June 13-15

#### **FBFI Annual Fellowship**

Mount Calvary Baptist Church  
115 Cedar Lane Rd.  
Greenville, SC 29601  
864.233.1684

### September 13

#### **NYC Regional Fellowship**

Bethel Baptist Fellowship  
2304 Voorhies Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11235  
718.615.1002  
(Coordinator: Matt Recker)

### October 15

#### **New England Regional Fellowship**

(Meeting with the New England Foundations Conference)  
Heritage Baptist Church  
186 Dover Point Road  
Dover, NH 03820  
(Coordinator: Taigen Joos)

### October 17-18

#### **Central Regional Fellowship**

Wheatland Baptist Church  
1139 McKinley  
McPherson, KS 67460  
(Coordinator: David Byford)

## 2023

### January 31

#### **Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship**

Westside Baptist Church  
6260 West 4th Street  
Greeley, CO 80634  
970.346.8610  
(Coordinator: Dan Unruh)

### February 6-7

#### **FBFI Winter Board Meeting**

Colonial Hills Baptist Church  
8140 Union Chapel Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46240

### March 6-8

#### **South Regional Fellowship**

Keystone Baptist Church  
15 Keystone Lane  
Berryville, VA 22611  
(Coordinator: Tony Facenda)

### April 23-24

#### **Northwest Regional Fellowship**

Monroe Baptist Church  
1405 West Main Street  
Monroe, WA 98272  
(Coordinator: Greg Kaminski)

### June 12-14

#### **FBFI Annual Fellowship**

Faith Baptist Bible College  
900 Northwest 4th Street  
Ankeny, IA 50023

## 2024

### March 11-12

#### **Northwest Regional Fellowship**

Westside Baptist Church  
1375 Irving Rd.  
Eugene, OR 97404  
(Coordinator: Greg Kaminski)

## News From All Over



At the end of January 2021 **Dr. David Innes** was promoted to Pastor Emeritus at Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco. Approximately forty pastors, mission directors, and other associates from across the country met for a luncheon in his honor. Dr. Bob Jones III was the keynote speaker for this historical transition. Dr. Innes's long-time associate pastor **Dan Pelletier** moved into the senior pastor role. The entire staff at the church remains in place, and the work continues in the city. The church "[covets] your prayers as the church and staff [adjust] to new leadership after forty-five years with Dr. Innes as pastor." With over sixty years of pastoral experience, Dr. Innes has a wealth of knowledge and pastoral wisdom to share with pastors and churches. Contact Dr. Innes at [dinnes@hamiltonsquare.org](mailto:dinnes@hamiltonsquare.org) if he can be of help to you, especially in gaining an understanding of biblical fundamentalism.



**Gerry and Connie Carlson** are living and serving at Maranatha Village, Sebring, Florida. After retiring from Positive Action for Christ in 2014, they moved to Maranatha, and then in 2016 Gerry agreed to head up the marketing and development ministry for the village. God has blessed the ministry there: they were at full capacity this past winter. Their new pastor, Dr. Daryl Jeffers, an FBFI Civil Air Patrol chaplain, is already extending that ministry. This April Pastor Jeffers will be introducing his chaplain ministry to their church at a Village Dinner with a full presentation.



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# Regional Reports

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Dan Unruh

The annual Rocky Mountain Regional Meeting of the FBFI met on Tuesday morning, February 1, at Westside Baptist Church of Greeley, Colorado. The attendance of over fifty included the volunteer hosts and hostesses of Westside Baptist who welcomed and served pastors and their wives who came from Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska.

Our speaker, Dr. Bruce McAllister (director of Ministry Relations at Gospel Fellowship Association Missions) came all the way from South Carolina. He focused on “Finishing Well” in three forty five-minute sessions throughout the morning: “The Obligation to Finish Well,” “Obstacles to Finishing Well,” and “Opportunities in Finishing Well.” Since Dr. McAllister is frequently in conversation with men in the ministry who are in transition, he encouraged younger couples to plan ahead now for great golden years and encouraged maturing couples to prayerfully formalize their retirement years’ plan for ministry. Each session concluded with discussion and a time of prayer.

Breaks between the sessions allowed ample time for good fellowship with refreshments and interaction with some exhibitors.



## FBFI WINTER BOARD MEETING

Doug Wright

The title “2022 FBFI Winter Board Meeting” may sound like a boring event. But I’ve mentioned before that the winter board meetings are far more than simple board and business meetings.

This year’s meeting was held February 7–8 at Northwest Valley Baptist Church in Glendale, Arizona. The two-day meeting included board and committee meetings, but the objective of the gathering went beyond that. Board members and invited guests listened to presentations on subjects that are pertinent to our current ministry environment. These topics often represent research that is foundational to the FBFI Position Statements (<https://fbfi.org/positions/>). For example, this year the presentations were

- “God-Free Ministry—The Seductive Illusion of Self-Sufficiency (Rev. 3:14–22)” by Nathan Steadman.
- A report on our interactions with BJU Leadership.
- “An Update on the State of Conservative Resurgence in the SBC” by Larry Oats.
- “Insight into Interacting with, Reaching, and Discipling People in the LGBTQ World” by Matt Recker.

There were significant discussions regarding Bob Jones University. The FBFI leadership took a specific private board-level action step and determined to pray earnestly for the future decisions of the University board and leadership.

Our host church, Northwest Valley Baptist Church, took great care of us, and the committees met and gave reports. These included reports on the finances,

future meetings (e.g., the upcoming annual meeting in Greenville, South Carolina), *FrontLine* magazine, Proclaim and Defend, and Position Statements. As always, we enjoyed the fellowship part of our gathering. It is encouraging to spend time with other servants as we seek to honor Christ.

The 2023 Winter Board Meeting will be February 6–7 at Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Indianapolis.

## SOUTH REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Doug Wright

The South Regional Fellowship meets in local churches most years. However, this year we met at the Wilds Christian Camp in North Carolina, on March 14–17. Our attendance has rebounded to near pre-pandemic levels as a strong group of friends met for preaching, fellowship, the Wilds’ activities, and a great time of spiritual refreshment.

Gary Reimers, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, preached helpful expository messages from Matthew 6 and Ephesians 3 on the theme “Committed to Service, Devoted to Prayer.” The thrust of his messages dealt with answering the question, “Is God satisfied with your prayer life now?” The scriptural guidance from both passages is critical to a more effective prayer life. Ken Collier, who said he now has the title “Coach” at the Wilds, drew from his extensive knowledge to tackle the other half of the theme. His lessons on leadership and commitment to service reinforced the need for character-based servant leadership. In addition to the two keynote speakers, several workshop speakers addressed subtopics fitting with the theme.

Meetings such as this one have accomplished their purpose when people leave encouraged and equipped. Those goals were accomplished at the Wilds. Our thanks go to the Wilds’ staff and to Tony and Karen Facenda, who go above and beyond to make the South Regional Fellowship well worth putting on your schedule. The South Regional Fellowship





rotates between the southern, mid, and northern parts of the region. The 2023 fellowship is in the northernmost part. It will be March 6–8 at Keystone Baptist Church in Berryville, Virginia.

## **NORTHWEST REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP**

*Don Johnson*

This year's Northwest Regional Fellowship met March 21–23 at Galilee Baptist Church in Kent, Washington. Our theme was "Revival," and our speaker, Nathan Mestler (president of International Baptist College and Seminary, Chandler, Arizona), gave four very powerful messages from Psalm 119. (Audio from the messages can be found at [proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org). Search for "2022 Northwest Regional Fellowship.")

We all rejoiced in the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions that allowed us to hold the conference. Our Regional Coordinator, Pastor Greg Kaminski said, "This year's Northwest Regional was such a blessing. We were thrilled with the number of young adults who were there. The conference was more than we expected because God put us together to be encouraged by His amazing Word."

Those attending the meeting testified about new opportunities, growth in churches, new converts, and a general feeling of optimism. We still have many daily challenges, but the Lord is blessing the churches of the Northwest.

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# Unexpected Ministry on Top of the World



In March of 2020 I was sitting in my office in the midst of an unknown COVID environment, and I received a rare phone call from an office I should have recognized. The chaplain on the phone introduced himself, and for the next few minutes we engaged in small talk. After a while and with a stutter in his voice, he told me I'd been matched. I thought to myself, I know I'm in California and *The Price Is Right* is not filming, and I'm already married . . . so matched for what? The assignment chaplain officer stated I had been matched for a one-year unaccompanied remote tour to Thule Air Base, Greenland.

For those who are not familiar with remote tours, it's a tour without your family. In the course of a career, each active-duty chaplain must serve one remote tour. However, it should not be my time, right? I did a remote tour to Turkey while I was in the Air National Guard . . . but here's the key: I was not active duty at that time.

With many other factors in consideration, I accepted this unplanned assignment only to find out that I should not have moved because of the program I was in. After discussing this opportunity with my family and praying about it, we decided to accept this assignment.

My family would relocate to North Carolina, and I would proceed to the Top of the World. A remote overseas assignment involves a great deal of logistics; however, this one pales in comparison to an ordinary move. For one, it was a very

short-notice assignment notification. Second, I had to move during COVID. Lastly, there was stop movement by the Department of the Defense at the time, meaning that no one in the Department of Defense could move (temporarily or permanently) without the written permission of the first General Officer.

By God's grace we found a house for the family in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and I left for the tour in June 2020. I would be the only Chaplain on the island for the next year. Because of COVID, I had to quarantine in my room for fourteen days straight. I could not leave my apartment. And what's more, I had arrived in the middle of summer 2020 for twenty-four hours of daylight.

Thule is located seven hundred miles North of the Arctic Circle. If you have ever been to Alaska, you might have experienced the "dark season"; however, this is farther north than Alaska, and the dark season is really dark. The dark season lasts for three months, and the light season lasts for three months, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This phenomenon is fine during the light season, but in the dark season—there can be issues. Physically, a lack of sun leads Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). One must take Vitamin D and sit in front of a light that mimics the sun's UV rays. People chose many ways to cope with the lack of vitamin D and the very depressive mood a lack of sunlight causes.

After my mid-tour I spent another two weeks in quarantine in my dorm room. The experience was quite challenging—in the dark season. I was thankful when the time was up. Over the horizon a very faint and thin light lined the south horizon for an

hour or two each day by the Winter Solstice. This darkness led to people trying to cope in a myriad of unhealthy ways. Once January hit, my door was nonstop with people in need of counseling. It was very exhausting and rewarding. I was the Installation Chaplain, so my two-person Religious Support Team had the sole responsibility of providing spiritual care for the entire base.

The year flew by. The views in Greenland are simply breathtaking. The weather in the height of winter was very cold and windy. Coupled with the snow that did not melt during the dark season and the hurricane force winds (it peaked at 117 knots during my tenure), the time at Thule was a weather adventure.

The ministry was great. I was in charge of the worship service as the Installation Chaplain, and I led a weekly Bible study. Before I left for Greenland, I asked the Lord to give me three people who were interested in full-time ministry. God, being as great as He is, answered this prayer. It was such a joy to disciple, mentor, and be blessed by these three men.

The ministry and the opportunity in Thule will forever be near to my heart. My supportive family made this ministry possible. Despite being away from them, I still made it to my wife's birthday and Thanksgiving. I had an opportunity to officiate my daughter's wedding. The capstone of my time in Thule culminated with my promotion on one of the highest structures on Top of the World.

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# When Spiritual Exertion Leads to Physical Exhaustion

**T**here is a danger for many Christians serving the Lord of experiencing “spiritual burnout.” This phrase has become very popular in the last few years. It describes people who have ministered under heavy responsibilities and intense circumstances and are now drained mentally, physically, and spiritually. The results can be devastating! We know we are in a spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons. Ephesians 6:12 says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” The Scriptures also warn us in 1 Peter 5:8 to, “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” The Devil’s devious ways have been used to bring down many of God’s people in the ministry. We mustn’t think for a moment that it couldn’t happen to us! We are given this exhortation in 1 Corinthians 10:12: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:3, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” So we are aware of the opposition that we encounter from the unseen powers of darkness. However, we are also

aware that the constant spiritual battles and conflicts we face may lead to physical exhaustion.

It has been my privilege to labor with many godly pastors, missionaries, and laymen in my years as an evangelist. Many are still faithfully serving the Lord; however, there are some who have left the ministry and are no longer serving Christ in any capacity. They have told me that they could no longer stand the pressure of opposition to their leadership. Others have said that they grew weary of having to fight issues regarding separation and standards. The constant, intense spiritual exertion has led to physical exhaustion for them. Several have had complete physical breakdowns; sadly, some have even committed suicide. Could it be that someone reading this article right now is in danger of this very thing?

We find in the Scriptures some people who got tired of spiritual warfare and turned back to the world. Second Timothy 4:10 says, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” Even our Lord Jesus Christ experienced His disciples leaving Him. We read in John 6:66–67, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” These two examples from the Bible should caution us to take heed and guard

our walk with the Lord, lest we go the way of Demas and the disciples.

What steps can we take to prevent this from happening to us? First, we must see the necessity of physical rest in our service to the Lord. In Mark 6:31 we read, “And he [Jesus] said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” Jesus knew that strenuous spiritual activity must be balanced with physical rest.

Second, we must not lose sight of our Savior in our service. In Matthew 11:28–29 Jesus said to His disciples, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Third, we must all realize that we cannot do the Lord’s work all by ourselves; we must rely on His strength. Remember His words in Matthew 11:30: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” I trust that the Lord will use these principles in your own life to keep you faithfully serving Him.

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