

SEEKING CLARITY AND UNITY

NOVEMBER 6, 2020

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Cover Photo: Bill Bright shares a Campus Crusade newspaper with Olympic Decathlete and youth advocate, Rafer Johnson.

Content Contributors:

Evidence and Analysis Rick James PhD and Kate James MFA

Appendix 2:

Personal Impact Stories Bill Sundstrom MA and Donna Bahlor

Appendix 3:

Evaluation of the “Thrive” Presentation of the Gospel Lewis Winkler PhD

Ethnicity as Identity D Trent Hyatt PhD

Comments on Ethnic Identity Elevated Over Identity in Christ Lewis Winkler PhD

The New Hermeneutic Methodology Harvey Spears

Biblical Shepherding, Truth, and Accountability Ryan Nolterieke ThM

Critical Theory and Cru’s Core Training 4.2 - An Analysis Patrick Keene

Can I believe in CRT and not know what CRT is? Craig Harriman

Appendix 6:

Biblical Theology of Loving in a Divided World and Reaching all Ethnicities

author: Ron Watters PhD; contributors: Steven Fairve MDiv, Amy Gray, Michael Gray, Art Guina DMin, Kirk Irwin, Ray Meister MDiv

Design:

Sarah Kennedy Irwin



November 6, 2020

Steve Sellers
President, Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru
100 Lake Hart Drive
Orlando, FL 32832

Dear Steve,

On behalf of many staff members, thank you for the opportunity to submit this report.

The purpose of this report is to share with you two significant issues we see within Cru that are deeply dividing us. This division was inadvertently produced around an ideology we have adopted to help create a culturally diverse environment throughout Cru and to be more strategic in reaching ethnic minorities. Apart from the different positions that staff members may hold regarding these issues, the disunity burdens us and prompts us to contribute our best perspective in this report.

The first issue centers around our theological concerns. The second issue is the reality of mission drift as Cru seeks to actively engage staff and students to help fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment through advocating for racial justice. We also make two urgent requests that we believe will be critical to help restore Cru to its historical singular focus that Bill and Vonette Bright gave us—the Great Commission.

This report is the product of a group of concerned Cru staff members who came together with a desire to help resolve these issues. What began as a group of five people nearly one year ago has grown to more than 350 staff members who have been meeting weekly and represents, we believe, at least 1,000 staff who share our concerns. From this group, we solicited volunteers to participate in the research and development of content from various organizational sources.

We assigned a team leader for these two issues. A senior female staff member, who wishes to remain anonymous, led the theological concerns team. Chris West led the mission drift team. Additional teams were formed around other topics and needs. Mark Hallsten led a team that assembled educational resources. Steve Pierce provided IT support. Sandel Livingstone leads a team that gathers weekly to pray and fast in the spiritual battle. Our primary writers were Katie and Rick James. Bill Sundstrom and Donna Bahler collected stories of personal impact. Sarah Kennedy Irwin did layout and graphics. Dan Willmann and I provided overall leadership for this effort.

Knowing that our passion is Jesus, our calling is the Great Commission, and our love for one another gives evidence to the world that Jesus is real, we are grateful to serve in a ministry that places such a high value on loving others well. We abhor racism. We are grieved when anyone is not treated with the highest dignity and respect because of their ethnic identity. In the spirit of the Great Commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself,” we submit this report with prayer that God will quickly restore unity within our ministry and return us to our original mission.

Sincerely in Christ,



Scott Pendleton

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The effort within Cru to become a more culturally diverse organization, as well as to become more effective in our scope of reaching every person from every race and ethnicity, is consistent with our core mission to help fulfill Christ's Great Commission. In pursuing these important aims, we have inadvertently adopted a system of unbiblical ideas that have led us to disunity. These concepts have created distrust, discouragement, and a host of other problems including long-term loyal staff members leaving our ministry and a significant number of loyal ministry partners (donors) discontinuing their support of Cru. The racial unity that existed five years ago is far diminished today.

In this report, we endeavored to identify the main problems and make two requests. This report was compiled by a research team of approximately 60 Cru staff members representing a broader group of more than 350 staff members who share these same concerns. While we have been overwhelmed with the amount of evidence we've received from our fellow Cru staff members, only a sample is documented here. Additionally, we've included 40 personal impact stories in the Appendix which reveal the damage to staff members, ministry partners, and students resulting from this new teaching. **Please see "Appendix 2: Personal Impact Stories" on page 39.**

Our prayer is that Cru leadership and the Board of Directors will perceive the organizational crisis we're in and will take swift, decisive, and corrective action to preserve the ministry. The results of our extensive research and interaction with Cru staff and ministry partners can be distilled as follows:

1. Cru has embraced a secular system of ideas that divides humanity into victims and oppressors. This system includes the following ideas:

- A. Society's struggle is about power. Identity is defined primarily by one's race, ethnicity, gender and class. Within each of these identity markers there are victims and oppressors who struggle for dominance.
- B. Racism cannot be eliminated until the oppressed are liberated. Whiteness is the root of the problem and must be dismantled. Only those in a position of power or privilege can be racists.
- C. Epistemology: "Lived experience" provides oppressed people with exclusive access to truth. The views of those claiming "lived experience" must be accepted without question.
- D. American history must be *de-mythologized*. This system of thought demands a selective, dark, deconstructionist teaching of American history, as taught in modern secular academia.
- E. The Bible's role in Cru's teaching and cultural competency training is being superseded by a worldly system of thought that emphasizes division.
- F. The ideas of this victim-oppressor worldview are derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT). **To learn more about CRT, please see Appendix 3: "Critical Theory and Cru's Core Training 4.2 - An Analysis" on page 92 and "Can I believe in CRT and not know what CRT is?" on page 97.**

2. This victim-oppressor worldview is embedded throughout Cru.

- A. National Staff Conferences**—This worldview was first introduced at Cru 15 and continued into Cru17 and Cru19. Whereas our national gatherings have traditionally been times of vision casting, mission reinforcement, inspiration, refreshment, encouragement, and rich biblical teaching, the emphasis shifted toward "thought leaders" who taught on victim-oppressor themes. Many, but not all plenary sessions at Cru19 included aspects of this message—often with hostility directed toward the white majority staff. During a Cru19 seminar, one

Cru national leader was recorded “shaming” a fellow staff woman to tears because she benefited from white privilege. Here are some staff comments:

“The first day I felt like we were bashed for being part of the majority culture...it really rocked me as [our staff conference] had always been a time of refreshment and encouragement”.

“The last two staff conferences have been extremely difficult. I have often thought of leaving staff because of the shift within Cru...I felt labeled...I was filled with pain and heartache.”

“At Cru15 love left the room and was replaced with judgment, unforgiveness, shame and mistrust of one another...the pure gospel of grace in Jesus Christ has eroded and a new gospel has come in built upon accusation, judgment, legalism and performance.”

For three consecutive conferences, speakers were chosen whose views were widely known. Even though concerns were expressed by many staff members after Cru15 and Cru17, more speakers with those same views were chosen. Leadership is accountable before God for those repeated messages. **For more information on Biblical accountability for leaders, see Appendix 3: “Biblical Shepherding, Truth, and Accountability” on page 81.**

B. Local Staff Teams—There has been a growing division and discouragement at the local level as an emphasis on evangelism has in many cases been displaced by social justice ideologies. Staff members who have spoken out about their concerns have felt misunderstood and marginalized, as though they weren’t mature enough yet to “get it.”

“I’ve experienced a lot of racism, but I have reasons why I can’t fully agree with some of the things that are going on. When I voice disagreement, I’m labeled as not teachable, or like I just don’t understand fully, and stuff like that. I think my opinion as a person of color only matters fully if I agree with the social justice narrative.”

“From 2015-18 our team talked regularly in our staff meetings about engaging our students on the issue of racism...about doing what we could to wake up white students to their own racism...and convincing minority students that they had been victims of racism...it became a key focus of our ministry and was regularly discussed by staff and students in almost every Cru setting...for me the effect was alienation...I left the team in 2018.”

C. Our Cultural Journey—Many teams are now working through the 239-page *Our Cultural Journey* curriculum which includes teaching rooted in secular theories on race, sociology, and anthropology. With all the time and energy that field staff are devoting to this training, some staff have reported that Cru’s organizational value on cultural competency has *taken over* their local team’s mission on campus.

In *Our Cultural Journey* the following questions were asked after a condensed American history lesson (pp 171-183):

1. Did you learn anything new from the timeline above? Is there anything you learned that was different from how it was presented to you in school?
2. How do you think these events play into **the systemic racism we see today**?
3. Seeing all this pain and suffering spanning so many years may stir in you an emotional response. Journal out your feelings to the Lord. Ask him to use what you’ve learned to grow your empathy and desire **to tear down the systemic racism we see in our world today**. Ask the Lord to help you to change the history He is writing today.

D. CORE Training—While new and senior staff will learn from *Our Cultural Journey*, CORE Training is specifically for new staff. Much of it is excellent training, but a few sections have a message about dismantling systems that seems to be rooted in secular sociology.

Here are two quotes from the training:

“Dismantling systems that maintain inequality and oppression must begin with power and privilege looking deeply into the mirror and seeing how, and why, they have what they have and are who they are.”

“Can we explore disinvestment and realignment in order to dismantle these systems?”

For an example of how CRT has influenced CORE Training, please see Appendix 3: “Critical Theory and Cru’s Core Training 4.2 - An Analysis” on page 92

E. The Lenses Institute—Lenses has become Cru’s premier offering for cultural competency training. However, our findings regarding Lenses were most unsettling. Lenses’ five-day immersion experience was described by one staff member who attended as “dangerous and divisive.” Staff are required to disclose nothing about the teaching content outside of the training. Independent thinking is discouraged. Most authors and scholars recommended by Lenses are proponents of CRT. **For a fuller explanation of CRT, please see Appendix 3: “Can I believe in CRT and not know what CRT is?” on page 97**

The following quotes are from readings assigned or recommended to trainees:

“To be less white is to be open to, interested in, and compassionate toward the racial realities of people of color... White identity is inherently racist...I strive each day to be less white.”

—ROBIN DIANGELO, WHITE FRAGILITY (a secular academic at Westfield State, MA)

“Any gospel that does not...speak to the issue of enslavement and injustice and inequality—any gospel that does not want to go where people are hungry and poverty-stricken and set them free in the name of Jesus Christ—is not the gospel.”

—IBRAM X. KENDI, HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

Among comments we received in our interviews with staff attendees:

“The training involved shaming most of the majority culture in the room... ethnic minorities are encouraged to view themselves as the ‘oppressed’ and whites are automatically defined as the ‘oppressors’...there is no practical path for unity... I left the training with a tremendous amount of guilt and no way to deal with the blame that was heaped on me just for being in the white majority.”

“The amount of politics at the training was NOT ok...there was a lot of left-leaning agenda presented...” **To learn about Lenses political involvement please see Appendix 4: “Political Activity Reminder” on page 105 and “(&) 2020 Presidential Election Statement” on page 109**

“The danger here is that there are deceptive and divisive elements that have been quickly embedding themselves (intentionally or otherwise) into the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of Cru over the past five to six years, specifically around the social justice movement narratives.”

At one Lenses training in September of 2020 a teacher was quoted by an attendee saying, “Identity in Christ cannot be elevated above our ethnic identity.” This is deeply troubling. **For the full written teaching from this presenter and a point by point Biblical response please see Appendix 3: “Comments on Ethnic Identity Elevated Over Identity in Christ” on page 71 and to understand why identity in Christ is elevated over any other identity see “Ethnicity as Identity” on page 67**

F. Campus Ministry—The campus ministry has elements of CRT in student conferences, retreats, and local movements. A speaker at a recent Winter Conference made the comment, “Sharing the gospel on the street or in malls is elemen-

tary level Christianity. You know what you should be doing. Bringing justice somewhere... This gospel is about justice. Doing justice doesn't save you. But how can you be saved and not do justice?" **For further explanation on the victim-oppressor gospel and a new Cru gospel tool that demonstrates this worldview, please see Appendix 3: "Evaluation of the "Thrive" Presentation of the Gospel" on page 63 & "The Gospel is a Message" on page 83.**

Here are some comments about the issue from students and staff:

"We started getting complaints from students that [racial justice] was being talked about too much.... At every conference and Bible study...at a student retreat really graphic racial stories were told...six or seven students of ours said that they were thinking about leaving Cru because of the retreat...we're not focusing on the gospel as much."

"At a recent Crossroads retreat almost every talk was on immigration or race, sociology, politics...."

"Our daughter and her best friend, students at a Florida university, participated in a December 2019 Winter Conference. Most of the talks were on social justice and racial and gender identity. Students were encouraged to go back to their campuses and sponsor political discussions (Black Lives Matter, Trump bashing, liberal agendas, etc.). As a result, our daughter has withdrawn from Cru on her campus and no longer wants to join staff. Our hearts are grieved that Cru, committed to sharing Christ's love, is becoming a place of CRT indoctrination.... Christ's love is being taken over by bullying activists....her friend came back and fully immersed herself in BLM activism... and has no desire to share the gospel or read God's word."

"As a senior involved with Cru on campus, I was looking forward to Fall retreat as a time of refreshment and encouragement; but for me and many other students it became a time of frustration and discouragement...the second day was focused entirely on racial reconciliation....the third day speaker focused on 'America never being great'...no Scripture was used by either speaker—just ideas and thoughts...I talked with our staff team about this and they felt this emphasis was being mandated from higher up...."

"I used to hear my fellow staff talk about the Great Commission and reaching students for Christ all the time. I don't hear that anymore. Instead, I hear things like, 'Hey, have you read that article from such and such person on white fragility?' or 'We need to watch out for the unequal power dynamics in our office here' or 'How does it make you feel that some staff still don't accept that police are against black people' or 'It's so awesome that our conference will be featuring ethnic identity!'"

G. Institute of Biblical Studies—IBS has offered rich, valuable Bible training for staff from our very beginning. However, racial/social justice teaching is now becoming an element in some IBS classes to undergird Cru's new emphasis. Some classes reflect the subtle shift toward a subjective interpretation of the Bible, saying that:

- › Majority culture *blinds* us in our interpretation of Scripture
- › Western rationality *eclipses* the Bible's narrative worldview
- › American individualism *privatizes* an essentially communal faith

For more information on changes in interpretation, please see Appendix 3, "The New Hermeneutic Methodology" on page 80.

"One of the biggest days [in my IBS class] was when we had to watch a sermon by the Native American man who spoke at CSU [our Staff Training at Colorado State University] a few years ago. I can't remember his name, but I remember us being so thrown off by his thoughts on race and power and privilege. We had to discuss it as a class and my husband and I were the

only ones speaking up about how the sin of racism can be on both parties and not just the person who does not have power and privilege.”

“It was really sad to hear him [our IBS teacher] constantly flogging himself for being a white male who had participated in systemic racism. The really hard part about the ‘CRT gospel’ is that there is no freedom from guilt for the offender. There is only repentance and continual self-condemnation.”

3. There is a gap between the stated message from our national leadership and the teaching emphasis elsewhere.

While our top-level leaders within the organization have assured us that Cru’s mission has not changed at all, the overwhelming message from many other parts of Cru is different. Nearly all staff members agree since 2015 there has been a significant new emphasis on racism, oppression, and justice. We see this new teaching emphasis as a drift from Cru’s clear mission to help fulfill the Great Commission.

To read a Biblical Theology of Diversity and Loving in a Divided World, please see “APPENDIX 1: Application” on page 37 and “Appendix 6: Biblical Theology of Loving in a Divided World and Reaching all Ethnicities” on page 119

Cru’s Statement of Faith says, “Because of the specialized calling of our movement, we desire to allow for freedom of conviction on other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon the Bible alone and that no such interpretation shall become an issue which hinders the ministry to which God has called us.” **For a discussion regarding how Cru’s new emphasis on racism, oppression, and justice is violating our own Statement of Faith, please see Appendix 3, “An Appeal to Uphold Cru’s Statement of Faith” on page 90.**

The national staff conference is our biggest and most important direction-setting event. It seems unfathomable that a visitor to Cru15, 17, or 19 would not see a heavy emphasis on racial justice and oppression—as if this was our mission. Now hundreds of staff are sounding the alarm over mission drift.

“It seems that Cru’s design team for conferences is committed to an agenda of social justice, liberal theology, and CRT. There is a disconnect on what Steve Sellers says and what Cru is promoting at the national conference.”

“I began asking the Lord to keep us true to our original vision of helping to fulfill the Great Commission. The shaming and frustration at the 2017 and 2019 conferences made it obvious that our win-build-send focus is being eroded and minimized by an emphasis on social justice...”

“We were shocked and demoralized by what we experienced at Cru15, 17 and 19...ethnic diversity elevated above our oneness in Christ and the blame for racial injustice was being put on staff. We had hoped that Cru leadership would see how the social justice agenda is a distraction from the gospel... this has not happened and we have decided to leave Cru.”

“The last two staff conferences [Cru17 and Cru19] have been extremely difficult for me. I have often thought of leaving staff because of this shift within CRU. I remember at the beginning of the conference Dr. Bright would have us leave the conference in silence to be alone to confess any sin and to extend forgiveness when needed. We were then to appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit. I am so grateful for Dr. Bright and the Transferable Concepts that developed my walk with the Lord and showed me how to walk in the Spirit. I also appreciate our calling in CRU. If we fail to continue with this calling and get set on a different path, I do not think I can continue with CRU.”

4. Cru’s new emphasis has resulted in people leaving staff.

As staff see the direction Cru is going, and as morale drops ever further, and as the the emphasis on evangelism is being overtaken by an emphasis on social justice, many are leaving.

“In the fall of 2017, at the end of our staff meeting my director shared out of the blue that he and his wife were leaving Cru staff and joining another

ministry doing the same thing on our campus. As I asked in shock what the reason was, he simply said, 'We are tired of going to staff conference every other year and getting beaten up.' They were tired of all the social justice focus and felt like staff conference was no longer building up the staff, but tearing them down."

"At Cru 15, I attended a smaller group designed for staff to ask questions or talk about their feelings. Many people felt shocked from the main meeting and seminar talks on race, BLM, 'white guilt' and so on. The meeting really did nothing to help staff understand the answer to the question: 'Why am I automatically considered racist because I'm in the majority culture?' After the session was finished, I stopped to talk to my former Campus Area leader who was a part of the Cru 15 conference team. I was feeling confused, shaken, and concerned.... Now my Christian employer was embracing it and telling me I was racist. He responded by basically saying, 'Well, you better get used to it because this is the direction we're going now. If you can't go along with it, you will feel so uncomfortable you will want to leave staff. This is not going away.' I felt put on notice: 'Comply, don't ask questions...this is the new teaching and direction of Cru. If you don't like it, then leave.'"

"We know many Cru staff who were very troubled by all that was going on with Cru in the social justice world, but they didn't feel the freedom to be public about it. And while they might consider resigning, I think the majority of staff believe it would be too disruptive to leave, not knowing exactly where they'd go to do ministry or how they'd survive financially. We decided to leave despite both of those concerns, knowing that the God who called us onto staff was calling us off—as a tangible protest that Cru was no longer Cru."

5. Cru's new emphasis has led major donors to stop giving to Cru and to staff.

Financial supporters of Cru (ministry partners) truly are partners with us in their desire to see the world reached with the good news of Jesus Christ. Our supporters give sacrificially to Cru out of a desire to see the gospel advance far and wide. But as they hear more about secular-progressive, victim-oppressor, social justice teaching in Cru, too many have already dropped their support. Staff are often thrust into the difficult position of needing to explain and defend Cru's shift.

"We have been strongly connected as *History's Handful* donors with Campus Crusade for Christ since 1994...we saw the videos from Cru 19 and became greatly concerned that Cru leadership was choosing a worldview that was not biblical...we shared our concerns with top Cru leadership but left each meeting feeling very discouraged...we no longer support Cru financially...a number of other *History's Handful* members share our concerns and are choosing to stop giving to Cru."

"I recently had a supporter question Cru's dive into the social justice movement...the bottom line is I am in danger of losing a 38-year supporter of \$400/month if Cru doesn't change its direction."

"A ministry partner called me to share her concern that Cru's focus on social justice is a compromise of the Great Commission which Cru was founded upon and that she could no longer continue her support of \$100 monthly."

WITH THESE SOBERING REALITIES IN MIND, WE RESPECTFULLY MAKE THESE TWO REQUESTS:

1. Acknowledge that elements of the victim-oppressor worldview have permeated our ministry, creating havoc.

› *The intent here is not to point fingers but rather to come to agreement that non-biblical belief systems have indeed penetrated our ministry and need to be urgently addressed.*

2. Take swift and decisive action to remove every aspect of the victim-oppressor worldview which has influenced our organization at multiple levels.

- › *The need for our leaders to take clear and pivotal action steps to deal with these problems within Cru is extremely urgent. At this time an outside organization is raising funds to produce a film documenting Cru's "mission drift" in making social justice a missional emphasis. If Cru fails to publically acknowledge our mistakes and take corrective action, this movie could have a devastating impact.*
- › *As loyal staff, we stand ready to assist in any way necessary to help resolve this crisis.*
- › *Thank you for your prayerful consideration. ■*

EVIDENCE & ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

We are in a cultural moment not unlike what Dr. Bright faced in the 1960's, and had he leaned into the turbulence of that time, or tried to ride its momentum, populating CSU with radical voices of the day, preaching against the unjustness of the Vietnam War, there is little doubt—at least in our minds—that several billion people would never have heard the gospel. One rally cry from Dr. Bright at CSU or EXPLOR 72, to go “burn your military draft card” and we aren't sitting here, none of us are. It's a sobering thought, and in light of the ways Cru has embraced the social justice movement, we believe the stakes are similar.

TO BE CLEAR

How one views this committee, the work we've done, and the motivation behind our research, is certainly relevant context. So, a few things about us and this group. First, we love Cru. We love its staff and students, we love its leaders, and we love its mission. We left our lives and raised our salaries so we could take Jesus to the nations. Our hearts beat for reaching all ethnics with the gospel, and we have labored and longed for diverse ministries and diverse staff to accomplish the scope of what God has entrusted to us. As to our perspective on social engagement . . .

Cru has always had an eye toward the human condition: Tsunami Relief, Spring Breaks in New Orleans, partnerships with IJM, compassion ministries like Gain. Cru, quite miraculously, has occupied a 3rd space: holding to the primacy of the gospel while neither ignoring nor downplaying the life-change implicit in the gospel. In *Come Help Change the World*, we can see Cru's historic commitment to this middle way.

HERE'S LIFE, founded 1983. Here's Life was launched by a Cru staff team working in New York City. They realized that you cannot talk about reaching a city for Christ without dealing with the very core of that city—the urban poor.

JUSTICE LINC, founded 1974. Despite efforts initiated by government-sponsored programs, evidence reveals their inability to effect lasting change. The power of the Holy Spirit is the only answer to changing lives engulfed by crime and sin. Justice LINC's goal is to reach not only incarcerated individuals, but also their families and their communities.

The staff of Cru live with an internal tension between love and compassion. Compassion gives to others in their need; love gives to others what is truly best for them.¹ Responding to human need is deeply meaningful and emotionally rewarding. Evangelism is not; evangelism is giving the gift nobody wants but everyone needs. Uniquely, staff manage this tension, never letting go of love. However, through Cru15-19, and in no small part through its speakers, that internal tension was unstrung as social justice and humanitarian mission were declared to be “the gospel,” “the mission,” and “evangelism” all rolled in one. We, however, remain passionate about Cru's occupying that 3rd space, and passionately against polarization.

In *The Storm Before the Calm*, George Friedman rightly summarizes, “each of America's colonies was a corporate undertaking owned by investors indifferent to how they made money, or with whom. If the money was made from plantations built on slavery it was all the same.”² To say that slavery was a moral failing of America is a gross understatement. We went to other countries, destroyed those families and communities, trafficked their citizens, brought them here and system-

¹ D. A. Carson, *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5-10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018), 23.

² George Friedman, *The Storm Before the Calm: America's Discord, the Coming Crisis of the 2020s, and the Triumph Beyond* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2020), 27.

atically killed and tortured them, all while carrying on a genocide of the indigenous inhabitants. We are essentially talking about three concurring ethnic massacres. This is not going away; not in ten years, not in twenty. If it's been assumed that we do not grasp the size and significance of the problem, quite the opposite; we are concerned that leadership has not understood the magnitude of these issues, the power of its rage and depth of disaffection, and the political and intellectual forces surging through it. Our concern, and it should concern everyone in Cru, is whether ethnic issues here will prohibit us from reaching ethnic "over there." For the one thing God has made clear to Cru is that if Christ is not preached in every nation, Cru is not merely complicit but responsible.

Finally, as to who we are: we are not a small minority. If the board should allow us to register our full support, we believe the numbers of those who share our concerns would be eye-opening.

THIS WORK

Unity, as much as we all desire it, is not in hand, and there are serious theological issues to be resolved if we are to continue on mission, "standing firm in one spirit, contending side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). This document offers an analysis of concerning theological issues raised by contemporary racial and justice theory³ that are now embedded in Cru. The document proceeds in three parts: part one addresses theological concerns about what Cru is teaching and training staff members and students; part two is theological concerns related to the gospel and our mission; and part three attempts to broadly show Cru's mission drift over the past five years. ■

I. THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS: CRU'S TEACHING AND TRAINING

"Reach the Campus Today, Reach the World Tomorrow," is a great slogan, not because it's clever but because it's plausible: the will, passion, and determination of our staff and students make the mission conceivable. But these same staff and students are also young, impressionable, theologically naïve, and unquestioningly trusting of Cru. For many, we are not building atop a spiritual foundation, we are laying it. This is an immense responsibility and stewardship, and we, along with many others, have become increasingly concerned as to what they are learning from Cru. A staff parent recently shared with us:

Our daughter's friend came back from a Cru Winter Conference and fully immersed herself in #BLM activism, social media campaigns calling all police evil racists, social media bullying & arguing when others express different views or not wanting to join in her anti-police protests & she recruits more activists. She has no desire to share the gospel or read God's Word because she feels that what she is doing is the answer to societal problems and is "God's work."

A different type of disciple is emerging from our conferences, Bible studies, and ministry training. This review was compiled to determine what, at the biblical level, is contributing to this new shift toward race and justice and away from traditional evangelism and discipleship. Our committee and its 60+ researchers have reviewed much of what Cru has taught in print and on stage over the past decade and can say with considerable surety that Cru is teaching an ideology that is questionably biblical, and unquestionably not Cru. What follows is not an exhaustive or petty accounting but a focus on major themes that warrant the label "troubling". We will review them, not by subject, but by venue to get a picture of how these ideas are being disseminated throughout Cru.

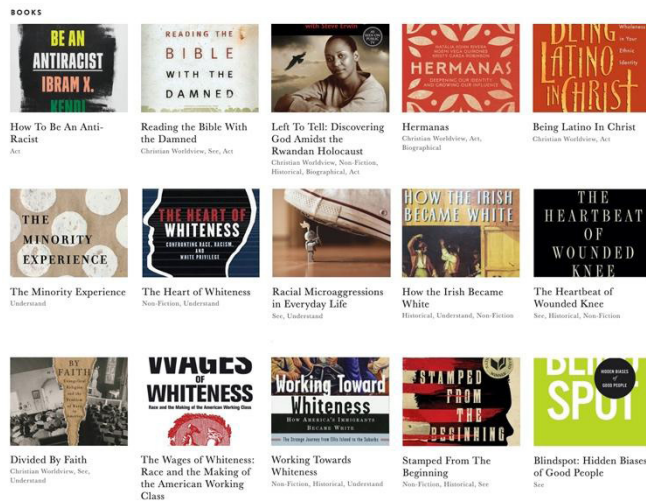
³ Scott David Allen draws a helpful distinction between biblical justice and contemporary movements of social justice in *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Credo, 2020).

1. Lenses and Stewardship of Our Staff Members

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. —COLOSSIANS 2:8

LENSES TRAINING

To complete its task, God has entrusted to Cru what is arguably the most valuable resource on the planet: the radical zeal of youth; it is pure momentum: power to change, faith to go beyond obstacle and limitation. But this zeal is being channeled away from the Great Commission and toward the fight for social justice, a generations of social justice warriors and not Great Commission Christians.. This diverting of passion is happening broadly—at conferences, in discipleship—but here we will focus specifically on LENSES.



The LENSES institute was created by Cru as an ethnicity training center and some staff are required to attend a five-day immersive training. While there isn't space to review the curriculum, the reading list (pictured in-part above) is a primer for the content. Although admittedly pulled from context, the following quotes are from the readings:

To be less white is to be open to, interested in, and compassionate toward the racial realities of people of color... White identity is inherently racist...I strive each day to be less white.

ROBIN DIANGELO, WHITE FRAGILITY

“white people suffer from a malady [called] ‘shriveled-heart syndrome...with other recovering white people...We relocated to a historically black neighborhood and a historically black church to live a life of repentance because, more than anything, we wanted God’s love to heal our shriveled hearts.”

JONATHAN WILSON-HARGROVE, RECONSTRUCTING THE GOSPEL

“Any gospel that does not...speak to the issue of enslavement” and “injustice” and “inequality—any gospel that does not want to go where people are hungry and poverty-stricken and set them free in the name of Jesus Christ—is not the gospel.”

IBRAM X. KENDI, HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

“Europeans crafted a Christianity that would allow them to spread the faith without confronting the exploitative economic system of slavery and the emerging social inequality based on color.”

JEMAR TISBY, THE COLOR OF COMPROMISE

“Whiteness—the whole constellation of practices, beliefs, attitudes, emotions that are mixed up in being white—is the problem. Whiteness is degraded and depraved.”

ROBERT JENSEN, THE HEART OF WHITENESS

“If you are a white male, you don’t deserve to live. You are a cancer, you’re a disease, white males have never contributed anything positive to the world! They only murder, exploit and oppress non-whites! At least a white woman can have sex with a black man and make a brown baby but what can a white male do?”

—IVAN FERNANDO, AUTHOR *HOW THE IRISH BECAME WHITE*

To a Gen-Z audience, any one of these books could be radicalizing.. Even the not-so-conservative *New Yorker* finds *Stamped From the Beginning* an “unreservedly militant”⁴ book. But LENSES is more than reading assignments, it’s a five-day emotionally intensive cultural reorientation. This is not just disturbing from the point of view of our mission, but the psychological well-being of our staff: similar ethnic training in workplaces comes in the form of seminars, not five days and nights. Here are just a few of the troubling comments we received in interviews with attendees:

LENSES STUDENT “As I completed the Cru Lenses Institute training, three words of summary came to my mind: Deceptive, Divisive, and Dangerous. While these are very strong words, I do feel that they are fitting and justified.”

LENSES STUDENT “The danger here is that there are deceptive and divisive elements that have been quickly embedding themselves (intentionally or otherwise) into the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of Cru over the past 5-6 years, specifically around the social justice movement narratives.”

LENSES STUDENT “While it was helpful to hear personal stories and experiences, I found the underlying [and ongoing, yet very subtle] anti-white-American rhetoric to be very polarizing and incendiary. This was confusing, especially if the desired goal is to obtain ‘unity’ and ‘oneness.’”

LENSES STUDENT “My concern is that the training I received was not really about ‘cultural proficiency.’ Honestly, the majority of what was discussed was confined to [negatively] addressing ‘white’ culture here in the U.S.”

LENSES STUDENT “In my specific process group, the lament of ‘being white’ rolled on, with further insight into how we need to address and repent from our systemic racism, our racist tendencies, and deconstruct those [American ‘white’] systems and structures that ‘oppress’ POC.”

PASSION AND ZEAL DIVERTED

Each student, before they leave LENSES must present their own “personalized plan to begin enacting change in their personal lives, families, communities, and in every sphere of life.”⁵ Putting aside the unbiblical content—which is considerable—the glaring question is: how could this not captivate and divert the passion of our staff members and students from doing evangelism and taking the gospel to the world? Passion is emotionally “undeclared;” it can be the ardor of love or anger of injustice depending on which way you point the gun. Our staff members and students come to Cru with a passion to proclaim Christ, and LENSES turns it to outrage and directs it toward the fight for justice.

This is not to minimize Cru’s broader contribution to the body of Christ, but this shows a stunning lack of awareness that the unique “widget” Cru makes for the Body of Christ is the steady flow of students going to the nations. There is an equivalent lack of awareness that denominations historically engaged in social justice send almost no one into international missions. This clear diversion from Cru’s mission doesn’t make logical sense and so probably points to an ideological motivation, not a strategic one.

PODCASTS

More and more discipleship is getting done through podcasts, so it is quite concerning that our staff and students are encouraged as a part of Cru discipleship to engage: *Asian Americana*; *Centering: The Asian American Christian Podcast*; *Erasing Shame Podcast*; *Freedom Road Podcast*; *Native Opinion Podcast*; *Scene*

⁴ Kalefa Sanney, “The Fight to Redefine Racism” *The New Yorker*, 19 August, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/19/the-fight-to-redefine-racism>.

⁵ Taken from [Lensesinstitute.com](https://lensesinstitute.com).

on Radio: *Seeing White*; *Revisionist*; *History*; *Facing Ourselves*; *Combing the Roots with Ally Henny*; *A Sojourner's Truth Podcast*; *Latinos Who Lunch*; and *Truth's Table*. Again, how does this not lead us away from our mission: toward social change and not heart change?

To give some sense of the content of these podcasts, here is an excerpt from *Freedom Road*, hosted by Lisa Sharon Harper, whose book was sold at CRU 17 and who spoke at a Destino student conference. Harper says,

If you are true to the text, if you are true to Genesis 2, then you must except the reality that the first human was non-binary. The first human was Adam which simply means of the earth and it is not necessarily a male construct. So you could argue from the text that the most human humans are non-binary. We've read gender into the Bible and we socially constructed a narrative to fit a particular paradigm... On the question of LGBTQ people in our fellowship, and the teaching "that it was bad," "that it was wrong," But now knowing what I know in terms of the fact that there is an actual [gay] gene—there's a gene, people. There's a gene. You can't pray your genes away.

In 1 Timothy, Paul tells his co-laborer not to allow the church's passion to be diverted or misdirected toward the futile and the divisive. Timothy, in some measure, was accountable for the trajectory of their fervor, and Cru's leadership should assume the same. If a student missionary who felt called overseas suddenly decides to pursue political activism because of Cru, we are not "innocent" for the ministry they would have had or the people who might have "heard." Paul, in fact, implies the opposite: "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26)⁶.

2. Our Cultural Journey and Ethnic Identity

"Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
—2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-17

It's through Staff Training that someone joining Cru learns what the organization values and expects, and since cultural and racial concerns occupy 243 pages, and 1/3 of New Staff Training, it says a lot and says it loudly. The topic essentially takes priority over evangelism and discipleship. This ethnicity component of New Staff Training is titled *Our Cultural Journey*, and four major issues concern us.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

First, we have the same question Professor John McWhorter poses to Robin DiAngelo in his review of *White Fragility*: what's the need for this extensive re-education now that race theory is a cornerstone of college curriculums? McWhorter writes in *The Atlantic*:

Despite the sincere intentions of its author, *White Fragility* diminishes Black people in the name of dignifying us. This is unintentional, of course, like the racism DiAngelo sees in all whites. She operates from the now-familiar concern with white privilege, aware of the unintentional racism ever lurking inside of her that was inculcated from birth by the white supremacy on which America was founded. To atone for this original sin, she is devoted to endlessly exploring, acknowledging, and seeking to undo whites' "complicity with and investment in" racism.

DiAngelo's book is replete with claims that are either plain wrong or bizarrely disconnected from reality. An especially weird passage is where DiAngelo breezily decries the American higher-education system, in which, she says, no one ever talks about racism. I am mystified that DiAngelo thinks this laughably antique depiction reflects any period after roughly 1985. An education-school curriculum neglecting

⁶ Paul claimed "that he is 'clean' or 'pure' with respect to any guilt regarding people's lives...his claim of innocence since he has carried out his calling," Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 629.

racism in our times would be about as common as a home unwired for electricity.

And herein is the real problem with *White Fragility*. DiAngelo does not see fit to address why all of this agonizing soul-searching is necessary to forging change in society. One might ask just how a people can be poised for making change when they have been taught that pretty much anything they say or think is racist and thus antithetical to the good. What end does all this self-mortification serve? Impatient with such questions, DiAngelo insists that “wanting to jump over the hard, personal work and get to ‘solutions’” is a “foundation of white fragility.” In other words, for DiAngelo, the whole point is the suffering. And note the scare quotes around solutions, as if wanting such a thing were somehow ridiculous.⁷

JOHN MCWHORTER is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic* and teaches linguistics at Columbia University.

Many points in McWhorter’s critique of *White Fragility* (which Cru recommends in its training) apply equally to the spate of books occupying the Christian/social justice space: they claim “a missing racist history” when in fact racism has been addressed in the education system for decades. Our staff members come to us right from the university, and most if not all are very familiar with it; there’s nothing new about America’s racism, only that Cru is teaching it.

BEYOND OUR EXPERTISE

In *Our Cultural Journey*, Cru has created what is essentially a 12-credit curriculum on racial theory: a highly complex, theoretical, and controversial subject. Here, Cru seems to have mistaken ethnic experience (being an ethnic minority) for ethnic expertise: expertise being the prerequisite knowledge and analytic skill to engage secular theory at a very high level and synthesize it from a Christian worldview. In lacking this expertise, it seems that Cru has either (1) adopted secular models uncritically, (2) come under the sway of these models, or (3) shopped for outside “experts” who do not share Cru’s missional philosophy (e.g. significant content culled from InterVarsity).

As a case in point, *Our Cultural Journey* curriculum unvaryingly follows the conceptual schema of race theory as taught at secular universities. That schema being: (1) demythologize America, (2) unmask white privilege, (3) schematize oppressor/oppressed or majority/minority culture, (4) expose systemic racism (5) lionize ethnic identity (6) identify “whiteness” as an oppressing power structure (7) outrage through stories and historic examples, (8) intimidate dissent, and (9) mobilize to action. As for the biblical content of the training: it neither tempers nor balances the secular narrative but only serves to underwrite it.

AN UNBIBLICAL PRIORITY ON ETHNIC IDENTITY

Third, Cru’s ethnic curriculum glorifies ethnic identity to an unbiblical degree, to a degree higher than our identity in Christ. This is explicitly being taught, and this post from a staff trainer reveals the thinking behind it:

Identity in Christ cannot be elevated above our ethnic identity. Christians love talking about our identity being “in Christ.” I’ve particularly noticed that white Christians love talking about this. Saying things such as, “My identity in Christ is most important. Ethnicity or race is secondary.” But I no longer agree with these ideologies. To God there is no such thing as “regular or plain Christian.” We are always seen by God as ethnic-specific Christians.

Clearly this is unbiblical, and the apostle Paul is the case in point. As Philippians 3 makes clear, it’s hard to imagine anyone more culturally and ethnically Jewish than Paul, and yet he is able to speak of his Jewish heritage as both “loss” and “filth,”⁸ (Phil. 3: 8) compared to his identity “in Christ.” According to Pauline scholar Michael Bird, “the apostle Paul located his identity and that of other Messiah-believers from other ethnic groups in a position that is ‘in Messiah’ where ethnic, social, and gender distinctions are in some sense nullified.” This is not saying ethnic

⁷ John McWhorter, “How ‘White Fragility’ Talks Down to Black People,” *The Atlantic*, 15 July, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/dehumanizing-condescension-white-fragility/614146/>.

⁸ Michael Bird, *An Anomalous Jew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 52.

or gender identities vanish but are rather transformed—“spliced together”— into a “shared meta-identity” that of being “in Christ.”⁹ This “being in Christ,” is a new, God-created identity that “we might say constitutes a third race.”¹⁰ N.T. Wright makes the same point, that the notion of a “third race” that was neither Jew nor Gentile is “a quintessentially Pauline way of conceiving the church.”¹¹ Critically important is that in this shared identity, “what is effectively negated is the ability of these secondary identities to become vehicles of separation and superiority.”¹²

It’s this way of understanding his new identity “in Christ” that allowed Paul to “play, put on, or act out”¹³ his Jewishness in any way that best served the gospel.

INTENTIONALLY REWRITING SCRIPTURE

Cru’s halo-ing of ethnicity and ethnic identity seems inexplicable given that Genesis roots ethnic diversity in the judgment of Babel: the scattering and confusing of language serving as a quarantine for the spread of human wickedness.¹⁴ But here’s what’s truly disturbing: Cru actually changes the story of Babel in our training material. The account given, is that Babel was a glorious act of divine creation by which God dismantled the sin of clustered homogeneity, and exploded humanity outward into the glorious array of culture, ethnicity, and language we find today:

“But creating this skyscraper to demonstrate to our Creator that we do not need Him and reject His plans in lieu of our sameness and uniformity is bad... So God in His infinite wisdom and great mercy decides to set humanity on track again as we were intended. God in that very moment created something different. He didn’t curse them with difference. He simply realigned creation to look more like it ought to be. God never intended for humanity to be homogenous, to be one language, one culture, or one ethnicity. But, instead, God envisioned a beautiful mosaic of humanity that together reflected the beauty of His character. Often times this passage is taught as a curse. But as we read this we don’t see the Lord call this a curse.” OUR CULTURAL JOURNEY, 126

This amounts to a made-up creation story to serve as the narrative for a non-biblical ideology of race. The intentionality and forethought to rewrite scripture puts this “error” in an entirely different category and *we hope the board understands that.*

3. IBS and Scriptural Study

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”—**1 TIMOTHY 4:16**

One of the more unfortunate books of church history is called *Sic et Non*, which means “yes and no” in translation, and is written by Peter Abelard (1079-1142). Per the title, Abelard took major doctrines of the church and then noted the various positions taken by the church fathers, i.e. “such and such said this, but such and such said that.” Whatever his motivations were, the unintended consequence was the relativizing of church doctrine into a subjective sea of opinions. A Multiplicity of interpretations always takes a toll on the authority and objectivity of truth, and we are seeing this in some of Cru’s theological training.

IBS stands for the Institute of Biblical Study and it is responsible for the foundational theological development of our staff. Appropriate to its role, IBS grounds staff and students in foundational methods of Scripture study, but it has, in tandem with the organization, given new emphasis to the ethnic, the cultural, and the experiential, in the interpretation of Scripture. This focus gives attention to

⁹ Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 53.

¹⁰ Michael Bird, “Paul, A Jew Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, eds. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 184.

¹¹ N.T. Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 1448.

¹² Likewise, NT scholar Love Sechrest writes, “Paul and his Jewish-born and Gentile-born Christian family had become members of a new racial identity” Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectic of Race*, LNTS 410 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 164.

¹³ Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 184.

¹⁴ Hamilton states, “The wickedness of Noah’s descendants resulted in the confusion of language at Babel,” James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 90.

the way **Majority Culture** blinds our interpretation; **Western rationality** eclipses the Bible's narrative worldview; **American individualism** privatizes an essentially communal faith; **Hellenistic dualism** bifurcates a holistic Hebrew worldview; and **Judeo-Christian Ethics** fails to translate into cultures of shame and honor.¹⁵ Other labels could be added, but the point is clear, and the consequences are unfortunate; we'll consider three of them.

INTERPRETIVE LENSES

First, accusations of a “western” or “American” or “rationalistic” or “individualistic” or “colonialist” interpretation of Scripture are typically veiled attempts to undermine evangelical beliefs and practices such as: gospel presentations like *The Four Spiritual Laws*, initiative evangelism, point-in-time decisions of faith or lordship, vocational ministry, sexual ethics, missions, and the like. These labels become the justification to dispose of models, methods, goals, and materials central to Cru's ministry. To give an example, Nancy Murphy (Fuller seminary) has argued that the distinction of body and soul (dualism) is a “western” idea not a biblical one. In the quote below her motivation becomes apparent—to be rid of missions:

I am suggesting that the adoption of [body and soul dualism] in the early centuries of the church was largely responsible for changing Christians' conception of what Christianity is basically all about. I am suggesting that original Christianity is better understood in socio-political terms. If Christians had been focusing more, throughout all of these centuries, on following Jesus' teachings about sharing, and about loving our enemies how different might world politics be today? What would Christians have been doing these past 2000 years if there were no such things as souls to save?¹⁶

This is how scriptural “lenses” are used to sweep away orthodox beliefs and practices, and ultimately undermine the ministry of Cru.

MULTIPLE READINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Second, while it is true that we engage scripture through the lens of our experience,¹⁷ to emphasize and prioritize this is to “relativize” scripture in the minds of our young staff and students. Postmodernism disposed of the “truth of a text” by proliferating subjective meanings. In effect, we do the same in highlighting the many lenses through which we read Scripture: we erode the objectivity of scripture, the knowability of truth, the motivation to study, the fixity of doctrine, and the ideal of orthodoxy. This may not be the intention, but it is the effect.

And so it is with some concern that we note on IBS syllabi titles such as: *Manana Christian Theology from a Hispanic perspective*; *The 3D Gospel Ministering in Guilt Shame and Fear Cultures*;¹⁸ *Global Gospel*; *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*; *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*; *Woke Church*; *The Justice Calling*; *The Minority Experience: Navigating Emotional & organizational Realities*; *Racial Con-*

¹⁵ Aubrey Sequeira of 9Marks writes, “Honor-shame cultures are collectivistic cultures” where “violating community expectations draws ‘shame’ and disgrace, while conforming to social mores advances one’s reputation or ‘honor’ in the community. Many have attempted to...reframe the meaning of the cross to better fit this framework. Some such attempts have been balanced and cautious, while others have been seriously problematic.” The Cru resource *Honor Restored* is a good example of a balanced approach that contextualizes without compromising on penal substitution. Aubrey Sequeira, “Nothing To Be Ashamed Of: Penal Substitutionary Atonement In Honor-Shame Cultures,” *9Marks*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.9marks.org/article/nothing-to-be-ashamed-of-penal-substitutionary-atonement-in-honor-shame-cultures/>.

¹⁶ Nancy Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies? Current Issues in Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28.

¹⁷ For positive contributions of cross-cultural readings see, “Global Readings: Contextualization and Scripture” and “Needing Other Culture’s Input” in Craig Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

¹⁸ While Jayson Georges offers valuable insight he teaches that penal substitution arose from an “Enlightenment worldview” and from the bias of a “Western judicial framework.” Rather, “the categories of law, guilt, retributive justice, and righteousness are inscripturated, biblical categories that are woven into the warp and woof of the biblical storyline and developed across the covenants of redemptive-history in the biblical canon,” Aubrey Sequeira, *9Marks*, August 8, 2019, [9marks.org](https://www.9marks.org).

*flict and Healing: An Asian American Theological Perspective; and Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus; Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance.*¹⁹

To be clear, it is not that such books aren't found in comparable seminary courses, but it is a drift for Cru and for IBS. In the past, IBS would have helped our staff and students to negotiate around these secular ideas and obstacles, and not in any way affirmed them.

UNBIBLICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Finally, the Bible does not encourage us to scour and decontaminate our cultural lenses in coming to Scripture any more than it asks us to clean ourselves up before coming to Christ. According to scripture the "key" to interpreting God's Word is neither "cultural awareness" nor "cultural identity," but rather the posture of our heart. Scripture teaches its own epistemology: among other principles, it teaches a "virtue epistemology" captured by the phrase "He who has ears, let him hear." Virtue epistemology²⁰ says that our ability to access God's truth is largely affected by our willingness to hear, submit, and unreservedly obey it.²¹ This posture of the heart is what allows the Holy Spirit the freedom to lead, guide, and convict.

2 Peter 1:3-4, states: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us His very great and precious promises that we might partake in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by our sinful desire." Our staff members and students need to know how to search out the truth of Scripture and to discern the leading of the Spirit; they do not need this new canon of authors or a new assortment of lenses in order to access Truth.

4. New Staff Training and Glorification of Culture

"All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas." —ACTS 17:21

Like its teaching on ethnicity, Cru teaches that culture is critically important to God because each culture uniquely reflects his glory, and that all cultures are necessary to form a complete picture of God.²² Culture, however, is nothing more than human nature as artifact, and Scripture's appraisal of fallen human nature is not a rosy one. While Genesis states quite glowingly that we are made in God's image (*imago dei*),²³ after the Fall the word image (*selem*) only has negative connotations referring to "graven images or idols" as typifying the creation of human culture. Scripture's negative portrayal of image (*selem*) only changes with the appearance of Christ, the true image of God.²⁴ It is somewhat amusing that Athens, the fount of Western culture (justice, politics, science, philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, etc.) receives only this footnote in Scripture: "Athenians...spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21).

¹⁹ Several titles are from Christian Ethics which, in the current culture of Cru, is a concern, because implied ethics are by definition implied and not in the biblical text, leaving opportunity for biased "principalizing" by social justice proponents.

²⁰ See "The Role of Emotions & Virtues in Proper Cognitive Functioning" in W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 175-196. Also "What is Virtue Epistemology?" in James K. Dew and Mark W. Foreman, *How Do we Know? An Introduction to Epistemology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 115-129.

²¹ Applying God's Word initiates an epistemological feedback loop, affirming or disconfirming what we understood Scripture to be saying. Equally, virtues like humility and courage allow us to hear the hard truth of Scripture not just its encouragements.

²² If true, this would actually argue against marrying outside one's ethnic group, for that dissipates ethnic distinctiveness.

²³ McMartin rightly observes that "from relatively few biblical passages, theologians have wrangled over a wide variety of theories concerning the nature of the image of God." Jason McMartin, "The Theandric Union as Imago Dei and Capax Dei," in *Christology Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 137.

²⁴ Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion*, NSBT 36 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 79-82.

CULTURE CREATION AFTER CHRIST

There is a rebuttal to the grim view of human culture described above, and it is this: now that Christ has come, and has reconciled us, we are restored and unleashed to reimagine and recreate culture that is truly glorifying to God. However, scripture doesn't actually say this; it still speaks of this age as "a time of groaning, futility, hope, and waiting for all creation—believers in Christ included."²⁵ Mark Saucy, Co-Chair of the theology department at Biola, writes that "the error of over realizing the Bible's future promises for culture creation in this current age, is the error of postmillennialism."²⁶ Saucy goes on to cite "Andy Crouch's significant book, *Culture Making*" as a prime example of over realized eschatology. Postmillennialism, also called an "over realized eschatology," is believing that Christian hope and utopian vision are one and the same, to speak in vivified terms of the *imago dei* glowing just below the skin, and to see social justice as the work of mission.

A SINGLE MANDATE

We also note a new emphases within Cru to view Genesis 1 (the command to Adam and Eve to "Be fruitful, increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over it.") as a mandate with significance equal to the Great Commission, so that Christians have two mandates to follow. The mandate of Genesis 1 is understood to be a "cultural mandate" to go out into the world to make and create culture: art, music, science, etc.

Space will only allow two brief comments. First, this understanding of the cultural command in Genesis 1 ignores the way it changes with each new covenant: with Noah, the commandment is repeated, but "subdue" and "rule" are dropped, and with Abraham, the command becomes to "subdue and possess the Promise Land as well as multiply within it." The mandate gets one more revision in the New Covenant, becoming the Great Commission; "Go and make disciples..." The Great Commission is the Cultural Mandate after four covenantal revisions; it is not a second mandate. Making disciples of all nations is now the way in which we are to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth. Second, at strictly a practical level, it should be noted that often ministries teaching the "cultural mandate" tend to replace the Great Commission with it and justify not doing evangelism.

5. Cru and Racial Theory

"Let us do evil that good may result"—ROMANS 3:8

In seeking greater ethnic, social, and political diversity among its staff, Cru's leadership has embraced some of the methods and ideology of what's called Critical Race Theory. Though much is made of CRT's roots in Marxism, to be fair, what novel academic theory isn't Marxist? What CRT seeks is to rebalance the power structures of society (not a bad goal) but through reverse bias, reverse ethnic shaming, reverse stereotyping, reverse narrative, reverse epistemology, etc., where everything negative that's experienced by minority ethnic groups is foisted upon the majority culture, and where the benefits and privilege of majority culture are ceded to the minority cultures. This is not unlike the idea of "sinning more, that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1).

DISUNITY - THE METHODOLOGY OF CRT

It is this principle of re-engineering injustice that defines the methodology of CRT and has become the methodology of Cru: (1) demythologize America, (2) unmask white privilege, (3) schematize oppressor/oppressed or majority/minority culture, (4) unveil systemic racism (5) lionize ethnic identity (6) identify "whiteness" as an oppressing power structure (7) outrage through stories and historic examples,

²⁵ Mark Saucy, "Storied Work: The Eschatology Turn and the Meaning of Our Work," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60.1 (March 2017), 147.

²⁶ Saucy sites "Andy Crouch's significant book, *Culture Making*" as a prime example of over realized eschatology, and videos of Crouch are found throughout our New Staff. Mark Saucy, "Storied Work," 159.

(8) intimidate dissent, and (9) mobilize for social action. This methodology has unraveled the bond of peace in Cru and its sanctions have replaced the governance of the Spirit.

UNITY – THE METHODOLOGY OF CHRIST

As Crawford Loritts notes, racism is merely bias of pigmentation. Beginning at Cru 15, a unified Cru was separated and sorted into “majority culture Cru” and “minority culture Cru” for the sake of greater effectiveness in accomplishing our mission. But division, even for the sake of ministry effectiveness, cannot succeed and the apostle John tells us why. For John, mission follows the blueprint of God’s triune love that flowed out in the “sending” of the Son. The model is “family agape love” flowing over and flowing out in “love of neighbor.” Of course, John learned this model from Jesus: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” For Paul too, this was the model of ministry: family love (between brothers and sisters in Christ) flowing outward. Paul writes: “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other...and for everyone else.” The point is this: to divide and splinter the family of Cru in order to be more effective in loving our neighbor is a subversion of mission. It is to pursue *philos* at the cost of *agape*. Accordingly, if Cru is not unified in love, it doesn’t have a mission.

6. A Few Omissions

“Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” –2 PETER 3:4

Because a curriculum is taught year-after-year, omissions are a unique type of error. Like vitamins, one can go awhile without experiencing the deficiency of a teaching, but over time the effects will show. While no curriculum can contain everything, three omissions are striking. First, there is an absence of eschatology: there is no mention of Eternal Rewards, Christ’s Return, Judgement of Nations, New Heaven and New Earth, Heaven, Hell, etc.. The eschatological hope and horizon of scripture is foundational to the NT; motivating vigilance, perseverance, wakefulness, and urgency. In its absence, Christian hope will root itself in utopian enterprise, as seems to be happening in Cru.

Second, Cru’s Teaching and Training talks a great deal about the principle of oneness and diversity, and yet nowhere is there mention of spiritual gifts, which is the primary NT application of oneness and diversity.

Third, teaching on spiritual battle is absent, which the NT speaks to frequently. It is interesting that these omissions all have the same consequence: the Christian life lived merely on the earthly plane, focused on material struggle, material diversity, material hope, and material transformation of culture.

This concludes the theological review on Cru’s teaching and training; we’ll consider next the theological concerns pertaining to the gospel and mission. ■

II. THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS: GOSPEL AND MISSION

INTRODUCTION

Jemar Tisby speaks for many in the social justice movement when he states, “Christians must realize that fighting racism is not a distraction from the gospel, but it is core to the gospel.” It’s difficult to know what Tisby means by this or what the many speakers at recent Cru staff trainings have meant by it, but much too often we’ve heard “this is the gospel!” where “this” refers to everything from advocacy for the oppressed to dismantling racist institutions. More concerning, it’s become

less clear what some in our organization mean by “the gospel” or “our mission.” In this section we will focus on “gospel” related issues: theological concerns about the gospel message, implications of the gospel, and the nature of gospel ministry. For each, we’ll consider where Cru is trending theologically; “trending” being a good descriptor for a ministry as diverse and disparate as Cru.

1. The Gospel

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.—2 CORINTHIANS 5:14

At CRU 15-19 and at leadership, staff, and student conferences, we’ve had an overwhelming number of social justice speakers and activists. Perhaps Cru assumed that because they signed off on a statement of faith, they shared the gospel in common with Cru. However, it’s quite possible to state that you believe Jesus died for your sins and mean something altogether different from it. This is because the mid-century social gospel, including liberation theology, anti-violence theology, black and feminist theology, CRT, and much of today’s social justice movement have a radically different view of Christ’s atonement. We can summarize this view in two principles: (1) the focus is on the life of Jesus as the model of perfect faithfulness (feeding the poor, liberating the oppressed) and his obedience to the degree that he would suffer death, and (2) the significance of Jesus’s death is for the purpose of “disarming the demonic powers and authorities in this world” (Col. 2:15). In this way the Cross becomes a non-violent act of restorative justice, not penal substitution; Proponents of this theory consider penal substitution to be retributive justice, and think of it as barbaric, or akin to “cosmic child abuse”²⁷ But forgiveness through atonement is “the essence of evangelical Christianity,” for “how we conceive the atonement determines more than anything else our conceptions of God, of man, of history, and even of nature, and vice versa.”²⁸ As Thomas Schreiner summarizes:

The theory of penal substitution is the heart and soul of an evangelical view of the atonement. I am not claiming that it is the only truth about the atonement taught in the scriptures. Nor am I claiming that penal substitution is emphasized in every piece of literature, or that every author articulates clearly penal substitution. I am claiming that penal substitution functions as the anchor and foundation for all other dimensions of the atonement when the scriptures are considered as a canonical whole.²⁹

CHRISTUS VICTOR ATONEMENT

This alternative theory of the atonement is called Christus Victor³⁰ and in practical application it serves to transform the mission of the church to (1) emulating Jesus in serving the poor and liberating the oppressed and (2) expanding Jesus’s kingdom through the tearing down of demonic strongholds of oppression, power structures, and systemic injustice. Christus Victor is similar to the Ransom Theory³¹ of atonement which “viewed Christ’s death as the ransom price paid to Satan in exchange for sinners Satan held captive,”³² and Walter Wink is most notable for

²⁷ Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 182-183.

²⁸ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Atonement,” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Approach*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker academic, 2012), 157.

²⁹ Thomas Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, (Downers Grove, IL, IVP Academic, 2009).

³⁰ Christus Victor was the name of the seminal work that revived *Ransom Theory*, written by Gustaf Aulén. There is now a cluster of related theories under the broad umbrella of Christus Victor, but it’s beyond the scope of this work to explain their nuance.

³¹ Ransom Theory is a name given to Anselm’s view of the atonement, that the cross satisfied God’s honor.

³² J. Deny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 15. According to Derek Flood the problem with penal substitution “(which is typical of conservative Reformed theology in general) is that the New Testament concepts of fall-
enness, bondage, and the satanic are all left out of the understanding of sin. The sole players are reduced to man and God, and sin is conceptualized solely in terms of individual transgression.” Derek Flood, *Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Race, Justice, and the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 46.

repurposing it for the social justice/non-violence movement, translating it into a theology of “nonviolent protest against social or institutional evils, such as nationalism, militarism, and racism.”³³

According to Christus Victor, participation in the work of restorative social justice is how we participate in Christ’s righteousness: salvation and sanctification are indistinguishable.³⁴ We can see this in a quote from Gregory Boyd, a proponent of Christus Victor (his derision of penal substitution is worth noting): “One either participates in Christ’s cosmic victory over the powers or they do not... The idea that one is ‘saved’ by believing in the legal transaction Jesus allegedly engaged in with God the Father can thus be dismissed as magic.”³⁵

CHRISTUS VICTOR + ALLEGIANCE TO KING JESUS

Now, one final nuance needs to be added. If you hold to this Christus Victor view of the atonement, where salvation and sanctification are inseparable from participating in “kingdom building,” then what you are really saying is: we are not saved by faith, but by ongoing “allegiance” to Jesus and his kingdom. And this in fact is the premise of Matthew Bates’ *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*. The book is becoming enormously influential, especially in InterVarsity where Bates was on staff. In his review of the book for the *Journal of the Evangelical Society*, Will Timmins explains how “Bates shifts the gospel center of gravity from what God has done in and through Christ to what Christ is now doing as reigning king.”³⁶ In this “new gospel” the object of our faith or allegiance is in the kingship of Jesus, not his death for sin, and so to explain this gospel to someone is literally to explain the “entire career of Jesus”³⁷ in the Gospels. As Scott McKnight stresses, you cannot “reduce this to four points.” To be “saved” one must fully grasp “the Story of Israel coming to its resolution in the Story of Jesus and making that story our story.”³⁸

So, what is this new gospel we are hearing? It sounds like: Jesus destroyed the powers of sin and Satan on the cross, and we respond by giving him allegiance as king, which we demonstrate by building his kingdom in the world, primarily through feeding the poor, liberating the oppressed, and razing social structures of injustice. In a sense, this new gospel was inevitable because it is the only gospel that can support and justify the social justice agenda.

NOTED EFFECTS

That Christus Victor atonement, and salvation by Allegiance has begun to spread among our staff members and students is clear, to what extent is not. Here, for example, is a social media post from one of our staff:

“For my white brothers and sisters, please take time to lament over what’s going on. Be a humble learner and then look at the example of Jesus, Moses, Esther and countless others in the Bible who risked and suffered for the sake of injustice, who didn’t let themselves sit comfortably in privilege, but aligned themselves with the oppressed and marginalized. There is no divorcing salvation and faith

³³ Marianne Meye Thompson, is Professor of New Testament at Fuller’s School of Theology, Marianne Meye Thomson, “Christus Victor: The Salvation of God and the Cross of Christ,” *Fuller Studio*, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/christus-victor-the-salvation-of-god-and-the-cross-of-christ/>.

³⁴ In Christus Victor “new birth is not a one-time event, but is the beginning of a formative relationship with the indwelling Spirit of Christ whose love transforms us into Christ-likeness,” Derek Flood, *Healing the Gospel*, 76.

³⁵ Gregory Boyd, “The ‘Christus Victor’ View of Atonement,” *Reknew*, November 29, 2018, <https://reknew.org/2018/11/the-christus-victor-view-of-the-atonement/>.

³⁶ Will N. Timmins, “A Faith Unlike Abraham’s: Matthew Bates on Salvation by Allegiance Alone,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60.3 (September 2018), 599.

³⁷ Timmins, “A Faith Unlike Abraham’s,” 598.

³⁸ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 221.

from involvement in social justice.”

Or consider how confusing it must have been for students at winter conference to hear a main speaker say:

“Sharing the gospel on the street or in malls is elementary level Christianity. You know what you should be doing. Bringing justice somewhere...This gospel is about justice. Doing justice doesn’t save you. But how can you be saved and not do justice?”

WHAT WE HISTORICALLY AFFIRMED

In contrast, what Cru has historically taught is the simplicity and sufficiency of faith in Christ alone, and the adequacy of our resources in communicating this message. Like Israel’s *Shema*, or Jesus’s summary of the “the Law and the Prophets,” we see that Scripture itself provides us with divinely distilled passages for the purpose of summarizing the gospel. Romans 6:23 (For the wages of sin is death....) is not a contrivance of the modern gospel tract but the actual “gospel” in its essence. Another distillation passage is 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, which makes clear the full and unmistakable content of the gospel: Who is Jesus? He is the Christ; What has Jesus done? He has died on the cross and rose from the dead. This is the work of salvation. Why has Jesus done this? He has done this to forgive our sins. How should we respond? With repentance (that is, turning to God) and faith.³⁹

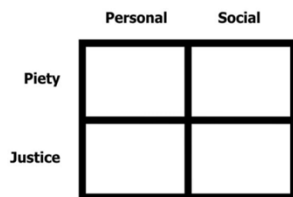
IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOSPEL, NOT ADDITIONS

Are there implications to this decision? Of course, but they are implications of the gospel, not the gospel. The true gospel is a seed and can only travel as such. If a necessary part of the gospel is democracy, guess what? It’s not getting into China. If a necessary part of the gospel is eliminating systemic racism, it’s not crossing over into Russia. Once the seed of the true gospel is planted in a culture it changes hearts—and this change is hard to predict. It comes through God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, not according to our dictates. It’s only after a significant number of hearts are changed that there’s the possibility of societal change. And it’s just a possibility. Society may decide it doesn’t like the implications and so seek to rid itself of these new disciples. In sum, the distinction between the “gospel” and the “implications of the gospel” are very clear.

In opening wide the gates to the social justice movement and its speakers and writers, Cru has invited in multiple distortions of the gospel that are unquestionably having an influence in the ministry, and that influence has only just begun.

2. New Ethic, New Mission

Cru is now teaching a model of ministry that is both a new mission and a new ethic. Our staff are learning the four-paned righteousness window of Carl Ellis pictured below. According to Ellis, the entire Christian life is encompassed by the word righteousness. Righteousness is what God desires from us and, according to Ellis, if you search the entire Bible you will find that the word righteousness has four aspects to it, represented by this four-pane window.



If we pair these dimensions using all possible combinations we get four manifestations of righteousness: personal piety, a right relationship with God; social

³⁹ Keith Johnson provides this helpful summary of the gospel message. For a helpful compendium of the gospel as proclaimed in the Book of Acts see Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Apollos, 2011), 101. Also Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 155–200.

piety, a right relationship with our community; personal justice, which is doing right in relation to our neighbor; and social justice, which is doing right in the political sphere. According to Ellis, “when the body of Christ is fully functional, all four panes will be engaged.” But “unfortunately, for a long time most of us in the evangelical community have been functional in only one pane—personal piety. This means we’ve neglected 3/4 of the gospel’s implications” for our lives.

CRITIQUE OF ELLIS’S MODEL

The model is simple and yet its implications for the Christian life are massive. The model redefines the Christian mission as “justice,” the Christian life as “justice,” and the Christian ethic as “justice,” which is not at all what the New Testament teaches. Problems with the model are manifold, but we will focus on three.

FLAWED METHODOLOGY

First, the method Ellis uses is flawed, and to understand why, consider the following: What if, instead of “righteousness” we observe that the word “Temple” has four different meanings in the Bible: as a building in Jerusalem, as Jesus, as the church, and as the New Jerusalem. And what if we were to conclude from this that we’ve been ignoring 25% of our biblical responsibility in not rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple? You would say correctly that we ignored the progressive flow of God’s revelation, that we failed to allow for nuance between old covenant and new, and ended up with a dramatically non-biblical conclusion.

WRONG DEFINITION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Second, Ellis ignores Jesus’s definition of righteousness in favor of his own. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives the following context for his teaching: “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). From this we know that what follows is going to be Jesus’s definition of righteousness, and here it is: in contrast to an eye for an eye (justice), Jesus’s disciples are to give up all of their rights, love their enemies, give to those who steal from them, rejoice in the confiscation of their property, embrace unjust suffering, and bless those who curse them.⁴⁰ This definition radically, and intentionally, flouts justice (or rather flouts a “justice” dimension of “righteousness”). This is not Ellis’s definition at all. This definition, in turn, becomes the disciple’s definition of righteousness, which is made clear when we observe how many times they reference Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in their epistles.

Jesus’s definition of righteousness, in fact, would give us reason to believe that as the New Covenant approaches, an ethical shift is underway, and this would certainly make sense, because Israel was a country with taxes, an army, and a population of unbelievers as well as believers. Justice rightly served as the front foot in Israel’s moral governance. But with the New Covenant there will be significant changes: the new Israel (the church) is a family of faith not a nation and it is composed entirely of regenerated believers with new hearts and indwelling Spirit. It’s love and the Spirit that rightly govern the family and community of faith. As David Hume famously noted: “justice has no place in close personal relationships, such as the family, where each identifies with the others’ interests so strongly that there is no need and no reason for anyone to make claims of personal entitlement.”⁴¹

THE DISCIPLES FAIL THE FOUR-PANED WINDOW

Third, if, as Ellis says, we’ve neglected ¾ of the gospel’s implications, then so did the Apostles in the book of Acts—there’s no social justice in the book of Acts. And so did Paul, and so did John.... Take, for example, John’s writings: Robert Yarbrough speaks for the scholarly consensus when he writes: in John’s epistles,

⁴⁰ What Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, he models on the Cross. As Christensen notes, Jesus as the suffering servant (via the Cross) is the ethical template for: enemy love, self-giving, humble obedience, forgiveness, and non-retaliation.” Sean Christensen, “Reborn Participants in Christ: Recovering the Importance of Union with Christ in 1 Peter,” *JETS* 61.2 (2018), 339.

⁴¹ David Hume, *David Hume on Morals, Politics, and Society*, eds. Angela Coventry and Andrew Valls (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 68.

“brotherly love is the expressed content of God’s commanded righteousness.”⁴² Or, put differently, “righteousness” in John’s writings means only “love,” not justness. John’s epistles are devoid of justice in exactly the same way Ellis contends the church has been devoid of justice. John gets a 25% grade on the four-paned window just like us. Paul too scores a 25%. as Pauline scholar Michael Bird observes, “judging from Paul’s letters he was hardly engaged in political activism, as he nowhere tries to organize the cabal for the Judean Peoples Front nor does he signal agendas analogous to #OccupyRome or #SlaveLivesMatter”⁴³ (see note44). And, finally, Peter also scores a 25% on the four-paned window as the moral vision of Peter’s epistles is the emulation of Christ as the exemplar of humility, submission to God’s will, non-retaliation, enemy love, and the embrace of unjust suffering, or, in other words, not justice.⁴⁵

WHY WOULD WE MAKE LOVE INTO JUSTICE?

So what would motivate Ellis to construct his four-paned window, and attempt to turn the love command into “go and do justice?” The answer, it would seem, is to make social justice into the mission of the church. This same strategy was employed by the social gospel movement in the mid-twentieth century. Note the recently reprinted editorial in *Christianity Today* from 1966, entitled “The Confusion of Love and Justice,” where the author identifies the intentional blurring of love and justice in order to advance the social gospel:

In expounding Reformation theology, Protestant leaders like Luther, distinguished between the “two kingdoms” of creation and redemption: in the kingdom of men, the Creator rules fallen humanity through Caesar and the law by civil justice and order, whereas in the Kingdom of God the Redeemer rules regenerate believers through Christ and the Gospel by personal faith and love. In the world at large, God achieves his purposes through the state, by the enforcement of law promotive of order and justice. But within the “new brotherhood” or community of the Church, Christ’s law of love takes precedence over all juridical relationships and is decisive in personal neighbor relationships. Today the very content of justice is being widely revised in the attempt to derive a Christian ethic of justice from the love-commandment. Enamored with socialism and ecumenical social ethics more and more advocates are translating love into justice.⁴⁶

THE RESULT OF OUR NEW ETHIC OF JUSTICE

Professor Michael J. Sandel, who teaches the popular online Justice course, harvardjustice.com., has observed that when justice is inappropriately introduced into an environment (like a family or church) where the governing ethics are “benevolence and fraternity” “a re-orientation of prevailing understandings and motivations”⁴⁷ takes place, leading individuals to perform the same ethical acts but from different motivations: justice instead of love. This re-orientation has taken place in Cru and caused an unsafe and divisive workplace. To give just one example:

⁴² Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 2008),197.

⁴³ Michael Bird, Paul, A Jew Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, eds. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 192.

⁴⁴ Pauline ethics is adequately summarized in two seminal works, Richard Hayes, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: a Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1996) and Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul’s Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991). Hayes lists Paul’s defining moral ethics as: (1) eschatological hope, (2) cruciform sacrificial love, and (3) the new community in Christ. Sampley would add to these, “faith expressing itself in love.” Justice is not to be found as ethic in the Pauline corpus.

⁴⁵ See Elritia Le Roux, *The Imitatio Christi and the Ethics of Suffering in 1 Peter and the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018).

⁴⁶ Editorial, “The Confusion of Love and Justice,” *Christianity Today*, July 8, 1966, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1966/july-8/editorials-confusion-of-love-and-justice.html>. The writer goes onto state: “the net outcome in subsequent ecumenical theory was that socialism was assimilated to justice, then sanctified by the lovecommandment, without any biblical authority whatever for this perverse authentication.”

⁴⁷ Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and The Limits of Justice*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 34-35.

On May 29, Steve Sellers posted on workplace a very heart-felt response to the death of George Floyd. The opening paragraph went as follows:

As I write today, I am not sure what I should say or how to say it. The events surrounding George Floyd's death in Minneapolis this week call for a response. Yet, if I call this out specifically, why not every example of racism. Why not publicly and vocally stand for the sin of abortion, the horrors of women being trafficked or for the assault on the biblical view of human sexuality? The Bible speaks to each and every one of these. They are all sin, all unjust, all in need of a righteous response.

Here is how our new and younger staff responded:

Staff 1: While I'm thankful for a thoughtful response from our leadership, I'm curious what the purpose of the second part of the first paragraph is. Upon first reading, it sounds like "all sins matter", and we know how damaging responses of that nature are to those who are mourning, scared, and wounded. I'd encourage our leadership and any staff who is responding to injustice to respond specifically and unequivocally, and not to cloud the conversation with other issues that we can speak to in a different time.

Staff 2: Yes, it sounded like an "All Lives Matter" response and was disappointing to read.

Staff 3: I think this should specifically focus on the injustice of racism and hate and felt it was clouded with other instances of injustice that weren't necessary to mention at this time. Also, we have staff that identify as SSA, gay, or a sexual minority and so lumping in sexuality with human trafficking, racism, and abortion could be VERY triggering and trauma inducing, especially with the verbiage of "assault" being used. I don't see the reasoning or necessity behind this paragraph.

Staff 4: I would say that my issue, and I think that of most speaking up, is calling LGBTQ+ matters an assault, as well as including them on a list with murder and sex trafficking. It was, at best, distracting from the main point and, at worst, very harmful to Christians and non-Christians who either hold different views or who deal with these desires.

Staff 5: I think it's great that Cru put out a statement publicly about George Floyd's murder—I believe that it helps our witness. But I do worry that equivocating a racially fueled murder with the what is called here the "assault on the biblical view of human sexuality" can hurt our witness.

Staff 6: I didn't realize this was posted publicly until just now. That makes that first paragraph even more frustrating and potentially damaging to the ministry of our staff.

In the responses of the staff is evidence of how much the mission and the ethic of Cru has changed, and how rapidly it has happened. A long-respected leader in the organization reached out to our committee wanting to add their voice to ours in noting this tragic change. They wrote: "At CRU 15 love left the room and was replaced with judgement, unforgiveness, shame and mistrust of one another. The pure Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ has eroded and a new gospel has come in built upon accusation, judgement, legalism and performance."

3. A New Jesus

In 2007, Tony Campola and leaders from Eastern College launched a social justice movement called Red-Letter Christians.⁴⁸ The "Red-Letter" refers to Jesus's words in the Gospels. Their point being that social justice was the "real gospel." More than that, they also sought to separate Jesus from the context and commentary of the rest of the New Testament writings. Once detached, Jesus becomes a mere caricature: feeding the poor, dandling children on his knee, etc.. Worse, this caricature serves as an effective spokesperson for the social justice movement, and just

⁴⁸ See, Red Letter Christians, <https://www.redletterchristians.org/>

as effectively as a critic of evangelism. In abandoning sound biblical teaching for social justice motivators and by shelving its transferable teaching materials, Cru opened the door to this caricature and now he is everywhere, leading our staff and students away from Cru. Let's consider both the problem of Cru's teaching materials and the problem of social justice-Jesus.

CRU'S MINISTRY MATERIALS

Cru has uniquely embedded its core values, distinctives, and teachings in its transferable resources. These resources have been a primary means of quality control across Cru's vast and disparate ministries, providing a common language, curriculum, and culture for a global undertaking. A telling fact is that these core materials, such as Transferable Concepts, used to sell in the tens of thousands, then they sold in the thousands, and more recently, in the hundreds. The 2020 average monthly sales of the Transferable Concepts (TC's) is: TC1 8 copies, TC2 6 copies, TC3 8 copies, TC4 8 copies, TC5 4 copies, TC6 4 copies, etc.

There's no other resource within Cru that serves the same function of Transferable Concepts. Further, campus ministries can use any resource they like for discipleship. A new book by N.T. Wright? Sure. A new book by Ibram X. Kendi? Sure. Only The Four Spiritual Laws and Holy Spirit booklet are the same from campus to campus, and this is staggering when you consider that Cru's ministry philosophy of "win, build, and send" as well as "multiplication" is predicated on transferable resources that can be passed along from person to person. The total abandonment of required, transferable resources has massively accelerated drift within the organization. Ungrounded in the Jesus of the Scripture, our staff members and students are completely vulnerable to the caricature of Jesus.

THE CARICATURE OF JESUS

To live and minister in the world of Cru has been to be immersed in the person of Christ, the Jesus of the Gospels. Now it can feel like being surrounded everywhere by a caricature of Jesus.

Jesus' own oppression compels us to minister to the oppressed. We can respond to God by living a life of justice, mercy, and service on behalf of the vulnerable around us and throughout the world. Good works done in the name of Christ are pleasing to God (Colossians 3:17). "Serving the Oppressed"

Jesus said that He came to proclaim freedom to prisoners and to set the oppressed free. What about those who are held captive by modern-day slavery and human trafficking? How do you think that Jesus came to release them? What is our role in that? "The Bookends of Jesus's Ministry"

When we come to the New Testament and observe the life of Jesus, it's obvious that He was continually proclaiming the Kingdom, teaching people the liberating truth and wisdom of God, and bringing help and healing to the hungry, paralyzed, leprosy, lame, deaf, mute, blind, demon-possessed, and brokenhearted; and new life to those in the grip of death (Eg. Mt. 4:23 and 9:35).

"WEAVING SOCIAL JUSTICE INTO CRU MOVEMENTS"

Throughout his ministry, Jesus' example revealed God's heart for the despised, the weak, the abused, and the vulnerable. Jesus spent significant amounts of time with children, women, the poor, the diseased, Samaritans, and other outcast and disliked groups, valuing and loving those who were excluded by the society of his day.

"Why the Rising Social Awareness in the Church Should Encourage Us"

Jesus came to set the captives free. By fighting human trafficking, we can join Him in this work of freeing people from bondage spiritually and physically. Jesus said, 'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.' This means that it is the mission of every believer to set captives free. "Trafficked"

God brings an end to injustice by breaking into history in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus announces the arrival and coming of the dominion - the Kingdom

- of God. While on Earth, Jesus brought rescue to the physically and spiritually oppressed. "Justice and the Gospel"

A BIBLICAL CORRECTIVE

The following are five important biblical correctives from the Jesus of the Gospels.

THE GREATER IMPORTANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL

Jesus's ministry was dualistic⁴⁹ in that the spiritual was always contrasted with the physical, with the spiritual always being of greater importance.⁵⁰ Keeping this in mind, notice what we find in the Gospel of John.

Spiritual children over physical children (1:12, 13); Will of God over will of flesh and blood (1: 12, 13); Baptism of Holy Spirit over water baptism (1: 30); Spiritual wine over physical wine (2: 6-11); Spiritual temple over physical temple (2:18-21); Spiritual birth over physical birth (3:3); Heavenly things over earthly things (3:11-12); Spiritual life over physical life (3:16); Spiritual thirst over physical thirst (4:7-13); Spiritual worship over physical worship (4:24); Spiritual food over physical food (4:33); Spiritual harvest over physical harvest (4:36); Spiritual Sabbath over physical Sabbath (5:5); Spiritual sickness worse than physical sickness ("Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you" 5:14.); Spiritual water over physical water (7:38); Spiritual blindness worse than physical blindness (9:1-18); Spiritual resurrection over physical resurrection (11:24-25); Spiritual king over physical king (12:13); losing spiritual life worse than losing physical life (12:25); Spiritual war over physical war (17:11); Spiritual kingdom over physical kingdom (18:36); Spiritual family over physical family ("My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God" 19:25).

Jesus' words in John 6:26-27 make clear that the spiritual is primary over the physical. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me; you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life..." (Jn. 6:26-27).

JESUS AND THE POOR

While in no way to downplay Jesus's compassion for the poor, this caricature of Jesus, removed from the context of scripture, leads us further and further away from the facts of the gospel. In truth, we do not see Jesus feeding the poor: the only feeding mentioned is of the 4 and 5,000, which the text goes out of its way to tell us was because they were "too far away" to get food, not because they were poor. The disciples weren't poor (blue collar), the women traveling with Jesus were well-off, tax collectors were well-off, centurions were well-off, prostitutes weren't poor having chosen prostitution over poverty. The gospels cite only one individual labeled as "poor:" the woman who gave "out of her want" whom Jesus only observes at a distance. What the gospels signal is what Jesus himself states in the Sermon on the Mount, the "poor" are the "poor in Spirit," those who recognize their need for a savior, the sick who know they need a doctor.

(A related note, in regard to the often-quoted passage in James 1:27, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James uses a word never used for Christian faith in the New Testament, *θηρησκεία*, which means "religion" or "religiosity." In context, he seems to be talking about generic religion, which, unlike Christianity, can be summed up as two things "charity and

⁴⁹ New Testament scholars detect no less than ten species of dualism layering John's gospel. Richard Bauckham finds no less than ten types of dualism layering John's gospel: Cosmic Dualism (forces of good and evil), Temporal Dualism (the present vs. age to come), Ethical Dualism (righteous vs. wicked), Psychological Dualism (possession, etc.), Spatial Dualism (heaven and earth), Theological Dualism (Creator contra creation), Metaphysical Dualism, Ontological Dualism, Physical Dualism (spirit vs. matter) Soteriological dualism (the saved and the lost). Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 119-120.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Pennington writes, "The Gospels, along with the Greek and Jewish traditions of the ancient world, depict an anthropological understanding that emphasizes the inner versus the outer person." Jonathan Pennington. "James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom and Imagining the Kingdom: A Gospels Perspective." Zondervan Academic. Feb. 4, 2016. Accessed May 20, 2016. zondervanacademic.com/blog/

purification from sin.” James describes normative religious behavior: wherever there is a temple, synagogue, cathedral, or mosque you’ll find orphanages and soup kitchens. But the righteousness that Jesus taught, is an ethic impossible apart from the outworking of divine love.)

JESUS IN A TRANSITIONAL CONTEXT

Jesus’s earthly ministry occupies a unique space in God’s progressive revelation. It is before his death and resurrection, before the Holy Spirit is given to the church, the priesthood and temple in Israel are still in operation, and the new covenant does not begin until his blood is spilled. As Larry Helyer notes, “One must respect the fact that there is a progressive unfolding of Jesus’ ethics and not read back into his historical ministry the Spirit guided instruction of the post Pentecostal church.”⁵¹ The way to avoid the errors that Red Letter Christians make is by looking to the rest of the New Testament as the authoritative guide to how Jesus’ words and acts should be applied by the church.⁵²

JESUS’S MIRACLES

There are a lot of different ways to be sick and yet Jesus’s miracles seem to focus on the deaf, the blind, and the lame. Why is that? The answer is the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming messiah, like those in Isaiah: “Then will the lame leap like a deer...In that day deaf people will hear words read from a book, and blind people will see through the gloom and darkness. . . . When he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf (Isaiah 35, 29). What we learn from this is a primary function of Jesus’s miracles was to demonstrate his identity as the Christ.

This helps us understand what Jesus meant when he told John—who was looking desperately for a sign— “go and tell John...the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.” This description is specifically meant to point to Isaiah’s portrait of the messiah. “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer... (Isaiah 35:5-6); the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives... (Isaiah 61:1-2).” Jesus is saying “I’m the guy, without saying “I’m the guy.” And as Jesus makes clear, the poor envisioned are the poor in Spirit.

THE APOSTLES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

These correctives about the ministry of Jesus are substantiated by the ministry of the apostles in the Book of Acts. If Jesus modeled a ministry like that of the social justice caricature, it is inexplicable why his disciples did not emulate it: feeding the poor and caring for the outcasts and oppressed as they went from city to city.

In the final section we will trace how these biblical errors have contributed to the missional drift of Cru. ■

⁵¹ Larry R. Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 191.

⁵² Wellum and Gentry note, “apart from properly understanding the nature of the biblical covenants and how they relate to each other one will not correctly discern the message of the Bible.” Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton Ill: Crossway, 2012), 26-27. For a particularly graphic example of not situating Jesus in a covenantal context and so recapitulating Old Covenant ethics in and through Jesus, see, *The Bible and Social Justice: Old Testament and New Testament Foundations for the Church’s Urgent Call*, MNTSS, eds. Cynthia Long Westfall and Bryan R. Dyer (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

III. MISSION DRIFT

Only 80 years after its founding, Harvard's identity was shifting. A group of New England pastors sensed Harvard had drifted too far and approached a wealthy philanthropist who shared their concerns. This man, Elihu Yale, financed their efforts in 1718, and they started a new school that became Yale University. The pastors hoped to avoid the drift they had seen at Harvard, but today, neither Harvard nor Yale resembles the universities their founders envisioned. So writes Greer and Horst in *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches*.

The authors also cite Pew Charitable Trust, whose founder, Howard Pew, created Gordon-Conwell Seminary. With Howard's passing the Pew Trust has started funding organizations like Planned Parenthood, and recently made news for their ironic defunding of the Seminary Pew helped to start. Of the different examples cited by Greer and Horst, the most cautionary tale for organizations like Cru is the Student Volunteer Movement, a ministry much like ours. At its height, around 1920, it was sending over 1,000 students a year into foreign missions. Now called the YMCA, it's known mostly for its community athletic centers.

While mission drift is not uncommon in either business or ministry, the speed with which it's happening in Cru has been surprising. What makes drift, drift, is that the change is gradual, and this makes it difficult to document. So, like time-lapse photography we'll use snapshots; snapshots of key events and general conditions.

1. U.S. Staff Conferences: CRU 15, CRU 17, CRU 19

If there was an inaugural event, it would be CRU 15. The entire program, main sessions and seminars, were given over to the most radical social justice and CRT communicators. This was organizational change, not officially led, but allowed to happen and it happened again and again at CRU 17 and CRU 19. As one staff member posted, "Does this large ship have a rudder? It should have changed course after the first conference but did not. After the second it turned maybe 45 degrees but needed a 90. Sadly, I've lost a degree of respect for top Cru leadership, first for letting this happen and second for not fixing it when it did." Below, excerpts from Sandra Van Opstal's main session capture the general tone and content of all three conferences, followed by several staff testimonies of what this experience has been like

SANDRA VAN OPSTAL, MAIN SPEAKER CRU 19

"While we built our megachurches, our country was building the largest school to prison pipeline in the world. People were gasping for air under the foot of greed and American exceptionalism and we were singing "it's all about me and how I feel about you Jesus." A theology of intellect and intention but not about action. About how we feel and think but not how we live."

"God is not the only one who is offended. We are a stench to him. New buildings, lights, smoke—it's all idolatry and the young generation will not be fooled by it. This generation resonates with the feeling and the tone of Amos when they look at churches that are disconnected from the cries of people suffering in their own backyard, and our complicity in racist structures and they want to vomit. They smell our stench."

"True worship cannot exist without chasing (social) justice. We need worship that embodies justice.....Inequity in housing and education are not political issues to care about they are human realities. Immigrant children detained, incarcerated and trafficked are not political issues, they are pastoral realities.

The church is staying silent while we experience another holocaust.”

“Speaking truth to power is not an elective, it is an outgrowth of worship. Chasing justice is a responsibility of a disciple.”

“We must speak truth to power. Greed, idolatry, and white supremacy. Not out there--in here. In how we operate, in how we get to decide who is human and not. In who we decide to shoot first without asking questions. In who we decide to elevate as leaders. The future of the church is young, black brown and yellow bodies.”

“Stay here in Cru, and we will form you to be Christian activists.”

Staff Member at CRU 15—At Cru 15, I attended a smaller group designed for staff to ask questions or talk about their feelings. Many people felt shocked from the main meeting & seminar talks of race, BLM, “white guilt” & victim-oppressor beliefs. The meeting really did nothing to help staff understand the answer to the question: “Why am I automatically considered racist because I’m in the “majority culture?” After the session was finished, I stopped to talk to my former Campus Area leader who was a part of the Cru 15 conference team. He responded by basically saying “Well, you better get used to it because this is the direction we’re going now. If you can’t go along with it, you will feel so uncomfortable you will want to leave staff. This is not going away.”

Staff Member at CRU 17— [Even after CRU 15] we decided to believe the best with Cru and even invited my sister and her new husband who are supporters of ours to come to the “partnership weekend.” Afterwards, we spent hours apologizing to them for what went on, and my sister kept saying to her husband, “This is not who ‘Jim and Jenni’ are.” They continue to support us, but I am so, so glad we didn’t invite anyone else.

Staff After CRU 17 and 19—The last two staff conferences have been extremely difficult for me. I have often thought of leaving staff because of this shift within CRU. I remember at the beginning of the conference Dr. Bright would have us leave the conference in silence to be alone to confess any sin and to extend forgiveness when needed. We were then to appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit. I am so grateful for Dr. Bright and the transferable concepts that developed my walk with the Lord and showed me how to walk in the Spirit. I also appreciate our calling in CRU. If we fail to continue with this calling and get set on a different path, I do not think I can continue with CRU.

2. LENSES, CRT, Ethnic Ministry Training

After CRU 15 organizational outlets were created for teaching and training in the CRT/social justice ideology. (At the time, most people were unaware it was called Critical Race Theory). The intensive 5-day training of the LENSES Institute was established; Race theory was introduced into New Staff Training; Our Cultural Journey curriculum was created; ethnicity specialists were dispatched to different teams and cohorts; speakers from CRU 15-19 spoke at student Winter Conferences, and Cru leadership ignored its organizational stance on political activism. Below: content from *Our Cultural Journey* and Staff Training, staff feedback from the LENSES Institute, and Political activism in LENSES

Staff Training, Lesson 4.2, Privilege and Power “These concepts deserve a complete post, yet within this conversation it is important to note one’s own power and privilege. The very act of defining and categorizing assumes one has the right to do that. Power is a very subtle and slippery social reality. Those with power, yet untrained in its reality, often assume everyone has the same access to power as they. Yet those without power see its use and abuse every day and realize they are without. There is a simulation of power and injustice that I have frequently led. Every time we do it the group with power and privilege begins by assuming everyone has access to the same tools. It is the disadvantaged groups which are the first to realize the game is rigged against them. In day to day life the oppressed are most aware of

inequalities while those with power and privilege often believe everyone is able to experience life as they do. Dismantling the systems that maintain inequality and oppression must begin with power and privilege looking deeply into the mirror and seeing how, and why, they have what they have and are who they are. Only then can we begin to have honest discussions of the power we hold, the dehumanizing categories we have seen as so important, and the damage they have had on our world. When power and privilege are seen for what they are, I believe efforts can begin to realign, share and leverage power in new ways to disarm the race-based bomb we have been handed by our ancestors. Privilege and power come from race, class, culture as well as education.”

Can we look our own power and privilege in the face?

Can we explore disinvestment and realignment in order to dismantle these systems?

Can we move beyond saying we abhor the systems that maintain injustice while still enjoying the fruit they have produced from the oppressed?

Our Cultural Journey, lesson 14, Lament “Self-absorbed Christians who are apathetic towards injustice and a deeply segregated church does not appear without history. American Christianity often operates with a selective memory. A culture of American exceptionalism and triumphalism results in amnesia about a tainted history. The reality of a shameful history operates against the narrative of exceptionalism; therefore, this shameful history remains hidden. Lament recognizes a shameful history. Lament acknowledges the pain and suffering that has led to current injustices. Lament challenges the status quo of injustice. American Christians that flourish under the existing system seek to maintain the status quo and avoid lament....For American evangelicals riding the fumes of a previous generation’s Christendom assumptions, a triumphalist theology of celebration and privilege rooted in a praise-only narrative is perpetuated by the absence of lament and the underlying narrative of suffering that informs lament.” (p.186-187)

LENSES staff feedback “As I completed the Cru Lenses Institute training, three words of summary came to my mind: Deceptive, Divisive, and Dangerous. While these are very strong words, I do feel that they are fitting and justified.”

LENSES staff feedback “The danger here is that there are deceptive and divisive elements that have been quickly embedding themselves (intentionally or otherwise) into the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of Cru over the past 5-6 years, specifically around the social justice movement narratives.”

LENSES staff feedback “While it was helpful to hear personal stories and experiences, I found the underlying [and ongoing, yet very subtle] anti-white-American rhetoric to be very polarizing and incendiary. This was confusing, especially if the desired goal is to obtain ‘unity’ and ‘oneness.’”

LENSES staff feedback “My concern is that the training I received was not really about ‘cultural proficiency.’ Honestly, the majority of what was discussed was confined to [negatively] addressing ‘white’ culture here in the U.S.”

LENSES staff feedback “In my specific process group, the lament of ‘being white’ rolled on, with further insight into how we need to address and repent from our systemic racism, our racist tendencies, and deconstruct those [American ‘white’] systems and structures that ‘oppress’ POC.”

LENSES TWEETS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

@xxxxxxx Fascinating to hear Trump condemn racism and evil, then list DAPL and trampling of native rights as one of his accomplishments

@xxxxxxx Your theology is deeply distorted when you’re completely fine with missionaries illegally smuggling Bibles into countries, yet furious when

some Christian immigrants come to the US undocumented.

@xxxxxxx This is troubling b/c the US Constitution was written to protect the interests of white, land owning men and assumed People of Color were less than human.

@xxxxxxx Like other docs written solely by white men, if we want healthcare to work for All the People we must expand our definition of We the People.

@xxxxxxx People don't yell "mental illness" when terrorist acts are committed by Muslims. But they do it with White perpetrators.

3. Broad Disaffection From The Leadership Of Cru

Spanning from CRU 15 to the current moment there has been a steady decline in the morale of staff, a loss of vision, frustrations with leadership, conflict, toxic work environments and other complaints amply registered in the BMWI morale survey . Below, are excerpts from staff interviews we conducted in the course of our research.

Prison Ministry Staff—We have ministered in prisons for forty-three years. A large majority of the people we minister to come with one major problem—anger. That sin seems to be endemic with prisoners. The social justice movement has given staff a license to hold onto their resentment, bitterness, and anger. Lamenting over the past without confessing personal anger and bitterness will only increase division among the staff. Hebrews chapter 12 says that allowing a root of bitterness will cause MANY to be defiled. I've seen that very thing take place within Cru.

Another aspect of working in prison is observing—and personally experiencing—racism. We know firsthand what racism is. Racism goes both directions. And there's growing racism within Cru. The accusations that are made about white privilege are often nothing more than veiled racism. We've seen the emphasis on social justice cause division, with staff in general and even in our own ministry. Our hearts are deeply grieved by what's happening. Within the last month we participated in a virtual conference with our (City) ministry. In looking over the notes I took, I see that social justice and staff relations were the main topic—probably 95%.

MPD Conference—A campus staff member was sensitive to racial issues and publicly confronted others in group settings. Through his actions and comments, he reinforced the view of whites as oppressors and people of color as victims causing others to feel uncomfortable. He also influenced another staff member to not participate in the discussion.

Staff Friendship Ended—We used to be best friends with another staff couple. We worked together on a campus and stayed close after moving to a new campus. The guys were the best-man for each other's wedding. Our kids were best friends with each other. Now that couple has embraced the 'woke' teachings from recent staff conferences. We tried to have honest discussions and talk through the value of these CRT ideas, but ultimately that friendship is lost.

Student at Fall Retreat—A Cross-Cultural Coordinator for Cru, whom we'll call "Alisa," gave a talk from Daniel 1 where Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah committed to not eating the king's food. She said this was a rejection of the Babylonian culture to preserve their own ethnic identity, instead of an act of faith. God wasn't even focused on, instead, preserving ethnic identity was the focus. A question was asked whether working for social justice and racial reconciliation was a social gospel. Alisa said that the social gospel was part of the gospel. I have talked to our staff team about this; we felt this is not coming from Central Ohio Cru, but from higher up

Bridges Staff—In the fall of 2017, at the end of our staff meeting my director shared out of the blue that he and his wife were leaving Cru staff and

joining another ministry doing the same thing on our campus. As I asked in shock what the reason was, he simply said, “We are tired of going to staff conference every other year and getting beaten up.” They were tired of all the social justice focus and felt like staff conference was no longer building up the staff, but tearing them down.

Cohort Team Leaders—All of us are the same age—about 31 or 32 years old. This conversation happened the day of the announcement that Steve Douglass would be stepping out of the President’s role. At one point, a simple, yet very damning statement was made. As we discussed who the next president would be, someone said, “Just as long as it isn’t a white man.” This was followed by the statement being applauded by nearly everyone in the group.

Lake Hart Staff—A second ministry partner reached out to me on Facebook messenger declaring “It is with a heavy heart that (we) must withdraw our support for Cru Ministry. It’s been troubling to read articles posted on the Cru website that have either strong undertones or overt statements supporting Critical Theory more specifically Critical Race Theory.”

Field Staff—Our conversations with fellow staff have been growing in intensity and concern since 2015. People feel constantly rebuked, dismissed, shamed because we were born white and should be apologizing and stepping aside. They feel we can’t say things without offending or “triggering” someone. The foundation of Cru no longer seems to be Win/Build/Send, . . . but social justice, liberal theology, and CRT. We are aware of many staff who are concerned about the mission drift and doctrinal drift. As a result, many are questioning their calling to Cru.

Minority Staff—I’ve experienced a lot of racism, but I have reasons why I can’t fully agree with some of the things that are going on. When I voice disagreements, I’m labeled as not teachable, or like I just don’t understand fully, and stuff like that. I think my opinion as a person of color only matters fully if I agree with the social-justice narrative.

Students—A focus on diversity and inclusion, Geoffrey says, has been one of the main sources of conflict with our team. We have some who really want to emphasize talking about racial reconciliation. I actually think it should be talked about. But we started getting complaints from students that it was being talked about more than anything else, and at every conference and every Bible study series.

Culture Training—at this ‘cultural training’ there was shaming of most of the majority culture in the room. Since when is shaming an okay method to teach our staff? Do we see Jesus shaming in Scripture to teach lessons? Yet, that method was used over and over and over again at the Cultural Training.

Campus Leader—I’m concerned that we are fostering an environment where ethnic minorities are encouraged to view themselves as the oppressed and whites are automatically defined as the oppressors. In this way, there is no practical path for unity. So I fear there will not be reconciliation, but only a growing resentment on both ends.

4. The Breaking Point: The Present

We consider the current moment to be the breaking point, because consequential developments are happening almost simultaneously: our CRT/Social justice staff have gathered their voice to protest Cru’s white leadership (signed by 500 staff); donors are finding out about the changes in Cru and are leaving; faithful staff committed to the Great Commission are leaving; and *our* group is appealing to the Board to intervene. Below, is the staff protest letter, a letter from a ministry leader who just left staff and the reasons for it, and some reports of donors who are leaving Cru.

STAFF UPRISING

A Humble Request for Leadership Process Transparency & Organizational Fidelity

This is in response to Mark Gauthier's October 1st, 2020 email that went out to all Campus staff regarding the Executive Director of the US Campus Ministry appointment, and in larger response to Steve Sellers and Mark Gauthier being named as Cru Global President and US National Director respectively.

There is encouragement and much to celebrate in Shannon Compere's invitation and acceptance of the role, as she will be the first woman to lead the entire US Campus Ministry. However, full or complete celebration is left wanting because her appointment followed the promotion of two white men into the top leadership roles within Cru. The disappointment lies more in the missed opportunity to align our actions with our words when it comes to expanding ethnic diversity/POC in Cru's top tiers of leadership. It doesn't feel like the crescendo CRU 15, '17, '19 would have resulted in.

Since CRU 15, and throughout CRU 17 and CRU 19, and the advent of the CORE Training and *Our Cultural Journey* courses, along with opportunities for cultural learning through venues like the Lenses Institute, Impact Movement Cultural Competency Training, and Epic Movement Ambassador Training, we have invited leaders (in and outside of Cru) to talk about and move us toward justice, equity and representation as it pertains to ethnicity and gender. Many have called on Cru to diversify its leadership within its board of directors, president, and executive leadership.

It is frustrating to witness three missed opportunities to name a person of color to these positions, and it is difficult reconciling the public internal-statements: "qualified candidates across the diversity of generations, ethnicity, and gender" and the "criteria used to discern the next leader" as per Mark Gauthier's email, Steve Sellers's email, and Steve Douglass's email.

- › Were BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/People of Color) candidates vetted and invited to apply by an open and fair process for ALL three of these positions? If so, did these BIPOC candidates not meet the criteria mentioned above?
- › If there were qualified BIPOC candidates who declined the role or chose not to apply, why did they decline or not apply?
- › Were non-American staff considered for the role of Global President? If so, did these candidates not meet the criteria mentioned above?
- › There is a history of the Church (local and parachurch) turning a blind eye and staying silent to systemic oppression and/or actively engaging in oppression and suppression of marginalized voices.
- › Steve Sellers, Mark Gauthier and Shannon Compere, how will each of you in your own lives and leadership, work to combat anti-blackness and anti-indigenouness and other forms of oppression to BIPOC within Cru, and for our witness to the country and the world? Will you consider being mentored and coached by a non-Cru woman of color?
- › Additionally, will the Board of Directors, US Leadership Team, and each member of the Campus Executive Team make public internally similar statements of your detailed growth plans?

STAFF LEAVING

Dear Committee,

My wife and I were on Cru staff for 37 (and 35) years. For conscience reasons, we left officially on Oct. 2, 2019. Why did we leave? Many factors, but they

all seemed to have a commonality. I'll do my best to explain:

Cru Staff Conferences

Cru '15 began a shift in what we were hearing was Cru's mission. It seemed to us that the Movement was pivoting from a simple, Biblical foundation (emphasis on obedience to God's Word and call to help fulfill the GC) to ... something different that involved an emphasis on race/social injustice/etc.

Cru'17 doubled-down on our concerns, as it became clear to us that whoever was running the program had an agenda to change the Movement's values and identity—its DNA. We saw this in a number of ways:

- › Inviting a liberal scholar (Miroslav Volf) to speak and influence young staff (M. Volf is faculty at Yale, wrote a book equating Christians and Muslims worshipping the same God, etc.). I wrote to the U.S. Director regarding my concerns about M. Volf before Cru'17, but he forwarded my email to Matt Mikalatos to give an answer ... which went nowhere.
- › In addition, for the first time in Cru's history, the main Bible teacher was a woman pastor (Joyce Emery). Her content was fine, but as a pastor, Cru had tacitly endorsed a clearly egalitarian position on women in the pastorate.
- › I was troubled by Andy Crouch putting a political dig into his talk about the President. (I'm not a fan but I felt that a staff conference should remain politically neutral).

Cru'19 broke the camel's back. I won't belabor all of the strife this event caused, but I'll highlight certain aspects of the event that damaged our hearts:

- › Sandra Van Opstal was the most egregious violation of the conference, though almost every speaker seemed obliged to give Cru staff (especially white staff) a beat-down. It was the logical conclusion to Cru giving credence to racial ideology. Others followed suit: Latasha Morrison had us all stand, hold hands, and repent/lament of our racism (whether we have been racist or not). James White used increasingly severe emotional appeals to persuade, something I'm trained to see, as a Rhetoric graduate of UW. Daniel Hill (White Awake) was invited to speak. I could go on and on.
- › Grant Hartley was highlighted in a video testimony at the conference. Why? Grant clearly identifies as a "gay Christian," rather than as a "Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction." There is a significant distinction between these two identities, and our leadership fails to understand the nuances. This was wrong. Worse, as I listened to Grant and looked around Moby gym, I observed: The arena erupted in affirmative applause for Grant when the video ended. I thought to myself, "uh-oh." Immediately after, our woman emcee came up and began to cry, extolling how wonderful Grant is and his testimony. I thought to myself, "Wow, subliminal persuasion just occurred in Moby gym, building a plausibility structure for a new sexual ethic among our staff."
- › Weeks later, it dawned on me: "Hey, Grant's video testimony was planned well in advance of the conference." That meant that someone in leadership (or in a committee) sat back and said, "Hey, you know what would be good for Cru'19? Let's have a gay staff member give his/her testimony and legitimize this 'orientation' to our staff family." It was planned. Planned.

BCWI

The BCWI only served to support my feelings. In fact, I wrote Mark Gauthier about the last BCWI and we spoke for 90 minutes on Zoom about my con-

cerns. It didn't go well.

- › I mentioned to Mark that my hope was to stay on staff, to help “reform” us back to an era that relied on the Bible primarily as our authority. He made it clear, in no uncertain terms, that I would not be doing that. His response, roughly, was “Dan, you’re not going to reform Cru.” At this point I had confirmation of what I’d grown to think: that I wasn’t so much leaving Cru, as Cru had already left me.

CT/CRT

Last year a staff friend sent me a link to an article by Neil Shenvi about the incompatibility of Christianity and Critical Theory. When I read it, the tumblers of the lock all fell into place. Shenvi was putting his finger on exactly what I was experiencing in Cru. Once I’d read Shenvi, I couldn’t “un-see” it in all my dealings with Cru leadership. I saw it when conversing with Keith Johnson, my boss in Theological Development. I also saw it in the Core Training leaders and saw it adopted into the curriculum.

- › By the way, another watershed moment was when Keith eliminated Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology textbook from all IBS classes: a capitulation to Wokeness. We’d lost one of the best systematic theology textbooks due to CT/CRT.

Miscellaneous

- › I noticed my leaders increasingly “toe-ing the line” on the new, undeclared organizational core value of Wokeness. They were providing no pushback to its spread in the organization. I soon realized that I couldn’t say what I thought and still feel safe.
- › Another troubling event: campus staff woman in Cleveland came out as a Gay Christian on her blog Hundreds of young Cru interns, staff and students backed her up on social media, and Cru did almost nothing to educate these hundreds on our LGBTQ understanding from the Bible. It showed our colors, sadly.
- › We knew many Cru staff who were troubled by the same things but didn’t feel the freedom to be public about it, or to resign, not knowing exactly where they’d go to do ministry or how they’d survive financially. We decided to leave despite both of those concerns, knowing that the God who called us onto staff was calling us off -- as a tangible protest (if only to the unseen world) that Cru was no longer Cru.

DONORS LEAVING

Members of History’s Handful—we don’t really feel like we can continue to support this ministry. Shame on Cru. You guys are teaching the gospel of grievances and not the gospel of grace. We are heartbroken. How can this organization that was supposed to be light for God is now going dark, and the leaders don’t recognize it?”

Staff Meetings—In the Campus Ministry, we had all been told that we needed to make racial issues a part of staff team discussion/training, and books had been recommended... I was very upset. I had already been considering whether I could stay on staff in good conscience, with all of this unhealthy preoccupation with race.

Donors Complain About LENSES—In Sept 2020 I was notified by one of my financial supporters that Lenses had some awful cussing on their Twitter site, including other political statements that were anti-police and very political. She was concerned and called me. Embarrassed and concerned I apologized and tried to defend Cru as best I could, but it was hard, to say the least. I then went to the Twitter site for Lenses Institute to investigate and sure enough, the administrator had retweeted dozens of posts from other accounts. Some said, “Defund the Police.” Some contained the “F” word and other cussing.

Some contained political stands. All of which are against Cru policy and brought reproach upon the name of Christ and upon Cru and our staff.

Jesus Film Donor—I have become increasingly aware that Cru has drifted/ is drifting from this original mission. Because of this I have felt led to put a hold on my giving to Jesus Film and will be looking for another ministry to support. Additionally, I have removed Jesus Film from my will. If there is a course correction, I will prayerfully reconsider my decision. —Desiring to participate with you in reaching the world for Christ,

STAFF PRESENT FINDINGS TO BOARD

We have no doubt that the actions taken by the Board in response to this report will be the most consequential to whether or not Cru fulfills the mission God assigned to it. Our prayers are with you. ■

APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF DIVERSITY AND LOVING IN A DIVIDED WORLD - SEC. 3

Summary of Findings on Relevant Issues Studied in the Bible

The previous study (The 69 page, “A Biblical Theology of Loving in a Divided World and Reaching all ethnicities” is contained in the last appendix of this presentation) reveals that the Bible is full of divinely inspired material related to disparity and injustice issues. While it was quite extensive in some ways, it only touched the surface of the related issues in some other ways. Many principles can be gleaned from what was covered. For this report, it is best to focus on the ones most related to current Cru/CCCI problems moving forward.

First, diversity, inequality, and injustice are not new in human history. They are a reality as aspects of life on earth. Sometimes they are a result of sinful human decisions and choices. Other times they are aspects of how God designed things or how society has developed. Some of them are a result of God’s sovereignty with Him working His good will in the midst of them. Moreover, both oppression and suppression of others does exist, including systemic ones that cause or sustain structural disparity in society, especially related to ethical and economic factors.¹

God cares about injustice and He cares about the vulnerable and the wrongly oppressed. Divine justice might be delayed, especially where God is waiting for people to correct the situation. Aspects of unity and equality, along with justice, are expected of those in a covenantal relationship with Him (either under the Old Covenant with Israel or the New Covenant in Christ); and God expects leaders to provide justice, especially for those of whom others might take advantage.

On the other hand, absolute social, economic, or spiritual equality is not taught or envisioned in Scripture either for life on this earth or in the eternal state. Different roles in life can have different aspects of equality and inequality related to them. The concept of servitude has value when spiritually applied to a believer’s relationship to the Lord and ministry to others. It should not be seen negatively and rejected outrightly because of social injustices associated with it historically or currently.

Being created in the image of God provides value for all human life; union with Christ increases that value for believers. Therefore, all humans should be valued and treated with respect, especially other believers,

without regard to areas of diversity that cause devaluing them by those not committed to Christ and His Kingdom. Believers are united in Christ, no matter how diverse their differences. Therefore, mutual identity in Christ must be more important for believers than any other identity whether ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural, etc.

The ethical focus of the Great Commission requires that leaders deal effectively with issues of diversity that could affect unity. Furthermore, inequality and injustice that are counter to God’s character undermine the dignity of human beings and the credibility of the believing community. Leaders must address the concerns of both groups involved, not just one side—otherwise unity is threatened. They also must encourage and facilitate reconciliation among hurt individuals and groups where the hurt is not biblically justifiable. Maintaining and/or restoring authentic unity provides both internal and external credibility for the community of believers. However, wisdom in navigating these issues must come primarily from the study of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Humility and love are the two highest virtues a believer can have, with love the greatest of these. Loving a neighbor as oneself is emphasized in the OT, Gospels, and Epistles. Both virtues were modeled in Jesus. The first allowed His incarnation, the second His work of redemption. All ethical virtues in Scripture find their source and foundation in the character of God. Believers must focus on Him and seek to become like Him in the power of the Holy Spirit as an aspect of their union with Christ and basis for unity in Him.

Where they have failed, whether intentional or not, and hurt has occurred, reconciliation should be pursued. The Scriptures show how this can and should be done. It should be initiated by the one(s) causing hurt (though it can also be initiated by the hurt individual or group) and should involve humility on the part of the offender that includes confession of wrongdoing, whether intentional or not; request for forgiveness; and restitution where needed. On the part of the offended individual, it should involve trusting God in the midst of hard circumstances that may have resulted from the offense; issuing forgiveness, whether requested or not; and a willingness to keep moving toward re-

¹ The term “systemic oppression” is not used here with the emotional cultural definition it has today that involves government policies, their execution in various institutions under its rules and regulations, and the intentional inequality it creates as individuals and groups are associated with separate identities such policies promote. As explained in the introduction to the study, these terms are closely related and overlap; but they are also different in distinct ways. In the Bible, systemic oppression involved activities causing disparity that were both oppressive, and systemically so. On the other hand, systemic suppression involved activities where organized attempts to hinder something advancing without the additional burden of actual oppression being involved.

stored fellowship until it occurs. Separation is sometimes advisable when it is in the best interest of both individuals to avoid increased difficulties and maintain a good relationship with one another. If the relationship is threatened, temporary separation can occur but only long enough to allow hurt feelings to diminish so reconciliation can move forward.

In addition to these interpersonal pathways, believers should be prepared to suffer and not be surprised by it. This can come from the world where it is opposed to Christ and His Kingdom; but, unfortunately, it can also come from within the community of faith. No matter the source, believers must put their trust in God and the power of the Holy Spirit to provide all that is needed to joyfully persevere knowing their suffering is part of sharing what Jesus experienced and He will eventually reward them for it.

Spiritual enemies may be active in seeking to disrupt or destroy unity and relationships. Where they are involved, the struggle is primarily not with organizational leaders, or between those of the majority culture and those who feel some aspect of disparity. Where interpersonal and organizational disputes exist, those

involved should consider how spiritual forces of evil may be causing problems actively and utilize the spiritual weapons listed in the Epistle to the Ephesians to help resolve them

Finally, mission drift can occur as it did with Israel requiring prophetic rebuke; its eventual exile for continued disobedience; and, finally, a leadership change with the coming of the Messiah who enacted a new covenant under which a relationship with God would move forward. Current leaders need to be aware of the danger of mission drift, how drifting can occur quickly or over time, and whether it is occurring under their watch. Steps must be taken to address legitimate concerns, especially from a biblical perspective, and make adjustments to realign so drift does not result in either unnecessary division or God's disfavor and organizational discipline.

Not seen in Scripture on these issues are standards based on ethnicity or socio-economic status for church leaders and for other church positions, except for specialized ministry when it solves problems that would otherwise hinder advancing the Kingdom of God and fulfilling the Great Commission. ■

APPENDIX 2: PERSONAL IMPACT STORIES

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Prison Ministry Staff #41

It's obvious that our win-build-send focus is being eroded and minimized by an emphasis on social justice. We've seen the emphasis on social justice cause division with staff in general and even in our own ministry.

My wife and I have ministered 49 years with Cru. We've been involved with short-term projects in France, Germany, Soviet Georgia, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Siberian prisons, and with Iranian refugees in England.

We always enjoyed the encouragement at staff conferences, but in 2015 we left feeling discouraged. That conference brought to my mind a warning I heard back in the early '70s, when I studied Church History at IBS under Dr. J. Edwin Orr. Dr. Orr was the world's foremost expert on the history of revival, and very involved with Dr. and Mrs. Bright in the first years of Campus Crusade. "Pray that Campus Crusade never loses its main focus of initiative evangelism and the ministry of the Holy Spirit," he advised. "If it does, it will lose its effectiveness. The YMCA was once as evangelistic as Campus Crusade is today."

With those words ringing in my ears, I began asking the Lord to keep us true to our original vision of helping fulfill the Great Commission. The shaming and frustration at the 2017 and 2019 conferences led me to pray with even more diligence. It's become obvious that our win-build-send focus is being eroded and minimized by an emphasis on social justice. I've seen discouragement, disunity and division as direct results. Did we forget "Loving by Faith?"

We have ministered in prisons for 43 years. A large majority of the people we minister to come with one major problem—anger. We constantly have to help believers deal with their own anger and unforgiveness. They can't experience God's love and forgiveness nor walk in the power of the Holy Spirit until they deal with it. They must repent, confess, and renounce their sin. The social justice movement has given staff a license to hold onto their resentment, bitterness, and anger. Lamenting over the past without confessing personal anger and bitterness will only increase division among the staff. Hebrews 12 says that allowing a root of bitterness will cause MANY to be defiled. I've seen that very thing take place within Cru.

Another aspect of working in prison is observing—and personally experiencing—racism. We know firsthand what racism is. Racism goes both directions. And there's growing racism within Cru.

The accusations made about white privilege are often nothing more than veiled racism. We are being judged because of the color of our skin. And how can

we staff be acquitted of assumed guilt when some of our own leadership is preaching white privilege? With this brand of social justice, I'm just an old white man, which gives me no right to speak out at all. I'm automatically judged as being racist because of my skin color. Yet Acts 17 says the Lord made all nations from one man—the human race.

We've seen the emphasis on social justice cause division with staff in general and even in our own ministry. Our hearts are deeply grieved by what's happening. Last month we participated in a virtual conference with our (City) ministry. In looking over my notes, I see that social justice and staff relations were the main topic—probably 95%.

As social justice continues being pushed more and more, my wife and I wonder how long it will be before major division in the movement completely neutralizes and destroys us. The enemy wants to bring in separation so he can steal, kill, and destroy. Something has to change!

Staff Daughter #2

A staff couple's daughter attended a Winter Conference, and no longer feels safe in her Bible study back on campus. As a result, she no longer wants to join staff. Her best friend came back from Winter Conference excited about being a "social justice warrior," and no longer wants to read the Bible or share her faith.

PART 1

Our daughter studies at a FL university. She has been in Cru three years, participated on a summer project and wanted to go on staff after graduation. Then at the Dec 2019 Winter Conference in Greensboro, NC, she attended many talks on social justice, racial & gender identity.

Students discussed going back to their campuses and sponsoring political discussions (such as espousing #BlackLivesMatter & Trump-hating talk.) Back on campus, student leaders became very active in small groups chatting about their political views and not showing tolerance for other views. Student leaders also were active on social media calling out (bullying/shaming) other students/friends if they did not show support for #BLM/activism, police hating, etc., and were "holding people accountable" for their political activism or lack thereof.

My daughter did not feel accepted or safe due to having different political views. She does not believe in the Critical Race Theory and is seeing more & more of this in the Campus Ministry. As a result, she has withdrawn from Cru on her campus and no longer wants to join staff. She doesn't want to attend the Cru small group

Bible Study she was in because of the group chatter about racism, politics, #BLM, & activism.

PART 2

My daughter's best friend came back from the Winter Conference and immersed herself in #BLM activism, social media campaigns calling all police evil racists and social media bullying. She recruits more activists and argues with others who express different views or do not want to join her anti-police protests. She has no desire to share the gospel or read God's Word because she feels that what she is doing is the answer to societal problems and is "God's work."

Our hearts are grieved that Cru, committed to sharing Christ's love, is becoming a place of CRT indoctrination, discipleship and activism, causing some people to not feel emotionally safe. Christ's love is not being demonstrated but rather taken over by bullying activists.

Cru should be a place where people feel welcome & safe despite political beliefs or race. Cru is not supposed to be involved in political endorsements, yet staff and student leaders are very much involved in BLM activism and allowing their strong views and/or intolerance for others' views to enter into Cru "spaces." This results in alienating others who are not political or have differing beliefs.

Unfortunately, Critical Race Theory indoctrination & #BLM endorsement from Cru at Staff Conferences has contributed to staff & students feeling that Cru endorses #BLM and political/racial activism. Anyone who challenges these belief systems or does not support them is labeled "racist," shamed (both in social media & personally) and not tolerated. As Christians we know racism is a sin but ironically this is what we are seeing in Cru/Campus movements, for this philosophy creates an environment of division, partiality & intolerance.

Staff person #2

At Cru 15, I attended a smaller group designed for staff to ask questions or talk about their feelings. Many people felt shocked from the main meeting & seminar talks of race, BLM, "white guilt" & so on. The meeting really did nothing to help staff understand the answer to the question: "Why am I automatically considered racist because I'm in the "majority culture?"

The answers we heard were that because we even asked that question, or we don't understand (and never can understand and no amount of caring or sympathy would help our "whiteness"), it shows our ignorance and racial insensitivity. I have now learned this is common critical race theory teaching - "whites can not challenge or question the theory because they are 'oppressors.'"

After the session was finished, I stopped to talk to my former Campus Area leader who was a part of the Cru 15 conference team. I was feeling confused, shaken & concerned about hearing these answers and so much

praise about the BLM movement because I had already researched their beliefs and felt it was not compatible with my biblical views. Now my Christian employer was embracing it and telling me I was racist.

I didn't mention this but I said something like, "Wow, I'm feeling a bit shocked at what I'm hearing here." He responded by basically saying, "Well, you better get used to it because this is the direction we're going now. If you can't go along with it, you will feel so uncomfortable you will want to leave staff. This is not going away."

I felt put on notice: "Comply, don't ask questions, whites are guilty and this is the new teaching and direction of Cru. If you don't like it, then leave."

Student #1 (from Midwest)

A senior has observed the drift of Cru over the years on issues such as social justice. At conferences and retreats he has often seen people belittled and attacked for holding views that oppose social justice. Then at the last fall retreat on October 2nd and 3rd (online) he witnessed speakers saying unbiblical things and shutting down conversation.

Fall retreat is supposed to be rejuvenating so we can finish the semester well, but for me and many other students it was taxing and frustrating. The second afternoon focused on racial reconciliation.

A cross-cultural coordinator for Cru, [whom we'll call "Alisa,] gave a talk from Daniel 1 where Daniel, Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah committed to not eating the kings food. Alisa said this was a rejection of the Babylonian culture to preserve their own ethnic identity, instead of an act of faith. God wasn't even focused on, instead, preserving ethnic identity was the focus.

Then in the Q&A, I asked where in Scripture should we go when engaging in the racial reconciliation conversation. Her answer was, "Well we should look at all of Scripture because it can be found throughout it." Her job is cross cultural engagement, and for her to not mention a single passage of Scripture indicated to me that Scripture was not her authority.

Finally, someone asked if working for social justice and racial reconciliation was a social gospel. Alisa said that the social gospel was part of the gospel. That answer angered and saddened me because the implication of that statement was that if I don't agree with people on issues of social justice, then I am sinning and going against God.

This shuts down conversation. Many students were fearful of engaging in the conversation because they might be called racist. This seminar frustrated me because the focus was not on the truth of Scripture, but about biases and opinions. Her answers did not send

people to Scripture but to the culture. That is dangerous and could lead people away from Christ.

The final sessions was just as frustrating and tiring. The speaker talked about wholehearted relationships among Christians. Overall the talk had some good things and bad things, but he had many tangents that took pot shots at the conservative political view. He said things like “America was never great,” which had no relevance to his talk, but with which I disagreed immensely.

The thing that frustrated me most was when he said that social justice was God’s justice. He never defined these terms, and again, like Alisa, the implication was that if I disagree on social justice, then I disagree with God, which is sin. When framed this way, there is no room for discussion or disagreement, and it makes students with a conservative view feel alienated and isolated.

Many students at my campus are afraid to engage in the conversation because they have a different opinion.

I have talked to our staff team about this, and we felt this is not coming from Central Ohio Cru, but from higher up. An experience like fall retreat won’t send people to Scripture to find answers but rather to the culture for those answers. Cru is being informed by Critical Race Theory which is a wholly unbiblical world view.

Since I was a freshman I have heard things that go against my own views, which is fine, but at fall retreat it felt as if my view wasn’t even considered legitimate – and even against the gospel. We should be sending students to God’s word. My desire is to see Cru return to Scripture on this issue, which is why I confronted Central Ohio staff and why I am telling my experience now. Scripture needs to be our sole authority on any issue regarding the culture and I hope Cru will return to it.

Campus Staff #4

After attending the Impact Cultural Training in April 2019, “Jenni” expressed concern to her Cru leaders over the repeated “shaming” that occurred, the effect she saw on minority staff friends, and the trend toward more division not less. The following is an excerpt from that letter.

I have sought to be an advocate for our POC staff. I understand the privilege that I come from. But I think we need to look to Scripture for solutions. In Jesus’ prayer in John chapter 17, Jesus clearly indicates that unity is the result of being in Christ (v. 21), having His Word in us (v. 14), being sanctified in truth (v. 17), and the Father keeping us in unity (v. 11).

The world’s solution, and what I sensed being taught at the Cultural Training, was only to offer extra opportunities to ethnic minorities and cast blame on the white ethnic majority. I left that Cultural Training with a tremendous amount of guilt, and no way to deal with

the blame that was heaped on me just for being in the white majority.

What I felt was condemnation from the minority staff and not conviction from the Lord.

This Cultural Training involved shaming most of the majority culture in the room. Since when is shaming an okay method to teach our staff? Do we see Jesus shaming in Scripture to teach lessons? Yet that method was used over and over and over again. I understand points were trying to be made about the oppression that whites were made to feel and how people of color feel those things all the time---but to shame whites over and over...

I’m concerned that we are fostering an environment where ethnic minorities are encouraged to view themselves as the oppressed and whites are automatically defined as the oppressors. In this way, there is no practical path for unity. So I fear there will not be reconciliation, but only a growing resentment on both ends.

I have personally seen this play out on my staff team. Let me share about an African American staff member that I knew as a student and now as a staff member. She was pleasant to be around, engaged in staff meetings, hung out with our staff team, laughed and was full of joy and passion. Then a year ago she went to this Cultural Training and has been a different person ever since. She is resentful, not engaged with our team in staff meetings or outside of staff meetings (and not for lack of trying by the white staff). She is angry and seems to live with a chip on her shoulder. I sense that the Cultural Training opened her own eyes to things she was not even aware of, and she is living with resentment that she doesn’t know how to handle.

I think if you’d poll anyone on my staff team, they would acknowledge this shift that they have seen in her. No matter what we do to move toward her, serve her, get on her turf, etc., she puts walls up and seems to want to stay in this oppressed role (and blame our white staff for not having arrived at cultural competency). I long for us to have the unity that Jesus talks about in John 17 because of us being in Christ. I value my relationship with her and care about her as a person deeply, but it is so hard to watch her growing resentment toward majority culture.

Let me share one last example from the Cultural Training. A video showed how the GI bill declined African Americans home loans after the war. Is that horrible? Yes! But the two African American staff at my table said there were still laws in place preventing them as minorities from getting home loans. I was appalled, as my own mom has been a realtor and I’d never heard of such a law. I asked them to help me to know where I could find this law and they both got angry at me for even asking such a question.

I genuinely hate that things happened 60+ years ago that treated people of color so poorly, but I have yet to

find a law showing where that is still done today. Again, I see them still wanting to be in that oppressed role and because I asked for where the law can be found, I'm treated as disagreeing with them. And when someone in today's culture disagrees with the oppressed, then they are viewed as hating them. I don't hate them but I'm also not going to just believe everything I hear without doing my homework, and I don't see any evidence of a law today that prevents people of color from getting a home loan.

I'm not saying that we don't have room to grow as an organization, or that I don't have room to grow personally, but I feel like the way we are dealing with this issue seems to be hurting more than helping.

I'd also like to mention that the amount of politics at the Cultural Training was not okay with me either. As an organization we have always been encouraged not to publicly discuss politics or endorse candidates. However, at this Cultural Training, there was a lot of political talk from up front. There was shaming of the majority culture for voting for Trump in the last election and calling themselves Christians, telling us we can't be a racist and a Christian, etc.

Campus Staff #19

A veteran staff member observes that younger staff no longer know the DNA of Cru: Win Build Send.

Since 2015 I have written 2 letters to our leadership, but never sent them, because I thought they would not be received well.

Anyway, I have to share an experience that happened in 2015 in a breakout session. The morning session had a young black woman speaking. She was very well spoken, and even though her message did not hit home with me, I felt like I should give it every effort to understand.

I went that night to her breakout session. There were very few people in my age group there...mostly young staff. At the beginning of the time she asked the question "What is Cru's DNA?" There was absolutely no answer from the crowd. I wanted to yell out that it was "win-build-send" but I felt like I could not speak because I was white. And still she waited.

Finally she gave a hint, and explained that as she volunteered with Young Life, their DNA was to reach the football player and cheerleader, and everyone else would follow. A young man in the back said "ours is the same". But then a brave woman who was around my age called out "win-build-send", the speaker misunderstood it to be win-build-sin, and after a laugh the talk went on from there.

That night I felt strangely sad, and I cried myself to sleep. I was grieving the death of the organization I joined so many years ago. The Cru I knew was no lon-

ger in existence. If the young staff had no idea what our DNA was, I knew we were drifting from our mission and purpose and (in my lifetime) we would not get back.

Campus Staff #8

A Midwestern campus staff member describes the drift toward convincing students they were racist. This became a focus of the ministry, alienating some, pushing others out, and causing minorities who had not been concerned about this to leave the ministry because they felt everybody was racist.

From 2015 to 2018, my team talked regularly in our staff meeting about engaging our students on the issue of racism. Most of the conversation framed our conservative leaning students (politically and theologically) as naive and ignorant of their own racism. We regularly talked about doing what we could to wake up our white students to their own racism.

This was often spoken of as students "being on a journey," but that journey usually just meant convincing students that they were more racist than they realized. Additionally, several of our staff "journeyed with" minority students who had said they did not experience much racism. Eventually these students became convinced that they had been victims of racism, but had previously been unaware of it.

As a result, many students became more outspoken about wanting to wake others up to their own racism. It became a key focus of our ministry and was regularly discussed by staff and students in almost every Cru setting. Other students felt ostracized and disparaged by the messaging and some left the ministry. Additionally, a number of minority students actually began to distance themselves from the ministry or friends in the ministry because they were convinced that most of the students were racist.

This was an ongoing culture and process from 2015-2018. I left the team in 2018, so I can't speak accurately to the situation now.

For me, the effect was alienation. At first, I went along with the conversations and the goal. Over time, as I began to see the shift in mindset of staff and students and how some felt so disparaged, I began to disengage from the team goal. I did not confront my leaders, but I ultimately left the team when another opportunity came my way.

I did not communicate my feelings with my director because I could not fully understand or articulate my concerns at the time. Most of my teammates were trusted friends, and the agenda of convincing students of their racism came on slowly and grew over time. Additionally, anyone who pushed back against the messaging was labeled as "not being far enough

along on their journey.” Arguments were discredited because the people making them “just did not get it.” I did not want to get this label, and I did not feel that I was smart enough to explain why I thought this was wrong.

October 2020 update: After our intern/new staff development time today, one intern confided in me that he had initially been excited to join staff with Cru and saw it as a possible long-term career option. However, the increase in “social justice” conversations at Cru events during his senior year made him increasingly uneasy about joining staff. He said that his intern year has been challenging because he does not agree with the messaging from Cru and the promotion of “social justice” causes. He is afraid to challenge the messaging during staff meetings, and does not see himself staying with Cru for much longer.

Prison Ministry Staff #43

I am on staff with the prison ministry. I have been on staff for 43 years. I would like to share how the concepts of Dr. Bright have impacted my life. Here is a brief part of my testimony that will communicate how important the basics of Cru are in changing lives.

I was the first person in my family to become a believer. I was raised in a religious home but it was very confusing. My childhood was very traumatic. My dad was an abuser. I lived in a home with anger, abuse and criticism. This left a deep wound in my heart and I became angry and bitter. When I became a Christian, I struggled within my heart and wanted to resolve the conflict. As I began to grow as a Christian, I learned to take responsibility for my anger, and I learned to confess that as sin. The transferable concepts from Dr. Bright were key to my dealing with my sin issues.

I also learned that I could not live the Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit living through my life. This was huge for me. I began to ask for forgiveness, and that led me to forgiving my father. This was done only with the enablement of the Holy Spirit giving me the ability to do what I could not in my own strength.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit was life changing. I was able to forgive my father and then the Lord gave me an incredible opportunity to lead my father to the Lord. He died in his sleep two weeks later. I was filled with joy that the Lord worked in me and through me to bring my healing full circle.

The last two staff conferences have been extremely difficult. I have often thought of leaving staff because of this shift within Cru. I remember that years ago, Dr. Bright would have us leave the first night of the conference in silence—in order to be alone to confess any sin and to extend forgiveness when needed. We were then to appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit.

During the staff conferences in 2017 & 2019, I heard a different message. I felt labeled as white privilege. This was very confusing to me because my background to me was not privilege. It was filled with pain and heart ache, and I was only able to overcome this anger and bitterness because of the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. I could not understand why asking for forgiveness, and forgiving, and being filled with the Spirit could not resolve this divide. I did my best to navigate through two staff conferences because I have a deep passion to see the women in prison free from the bondage of anger and bitterness.

I am so grateful for Dr. Bright and the transferable concepts that developed my walk with the Lord, and showed me how to walk in the Spirit. I also appreciate our calling in Cru:

Our calling is to help fulfil the great commission by winning, building, and sending in the power of the Holy Spirit and helping the body of Christ with evangelism and discipleship.

If we fail to continue with this calling and get set on a different path, I do not think I can continue with Cru.

International Staff #5

Cru 15: The first day I felt like we were bashed for being white, and I wasn't even sure I wanted to come the second day to be put down again. It really rocked me as Staff Training had always been a time of refreshment and encouragement.

But I had been asked to share a field story about Cross-Roads, so I got to Moby at 7:30 am on the second day to go over the schedule. I was just waiting for things to get started when I heard someone say, “We really got them! People are really rocked.” Then he went on about how they had really accomplished their goal.

I was so shocked I didn't know how to respond. I could not believe what I was hearing. They had intentionally put us down. After the conference my husband and I seriously considered leaving staff. If this was the direction that Cru was going we didn't want to be a part of it. I'm not up on all the philosophical stuff, but I did know in my heart what they were espousing was wrong.

We decided to stay on staff and just stay “under the radar” because we were seeing some phenomenal things happen and really beginning to nationalize the ministry. We ended up totally nationalizing it and working ourselves out of a job 2 ½ yrs ago and handed it all off to nationals in 6 areas of the world.

Cru 17: We decided to believe the best with Cru and even invited my sister and her new husband who are supporters of ours to come to the “partnership weekend.” Afterwards, we spent hours apologizing to them for what went on, and my sister kept saying to her husband, “This is not who ‘Jim and Jenni’ are.” They continue to support us, but I am so, so glad we didn't invite anyone else.

Cru 19: We chose not to go to the main sessions because after the first night I physically could not handle the volume. As we listened to the main sessions while driving home we were really saddened. Later, in talking with some other staff, we discovered that some of the more offensive comments were cut out of the audio we were listening to. Again, one of the only reasons we have stayed on staff is because we love what we do and we are seeing some significant things with StoryRunners and it's a privilege to be part. We decided God called us on staff and we will remain on till He calls us off.

But at this point I confess it is hard to recruit for Cru seeing the direction of heresy that Cru is buying into.

Campus Staff #16

A staff woman describes racially segregated meetings and the impact of "Partners Weekend" at Cru19, and a friend who left staff after becoming a "social justice warrior."

My husband was invited to a staff Zoom call hosted by The Lenses Institute, and was shocked to discover that they were segregated. One Zoom group was for "whites only" and another was for "people of color." Apparently the purpose was to provide "a safe space" because the (uncharitable) assumption was that white people would say insensitive things to minorities. He couldn't believe that decades after segregation ended in America, it has happened again within Cru. He refused to be a part of it.

We were also part of a Zoom call for our larger ministry that instructed us to "confess our white privilege" and to repent of the sins of white culture. Although I am white, I grew up as a minority. I did not grow up with any "white privilege." I grew up racially slandered and discriminated against because I am white. How am I supposed to confess something that is not even true in my personal history? We turned off our webcam and refused to participate. After going through the Workplace Dignity training recently, my husband believes that this "confession time" is bullying and borderline workplace harassment.

At Cru19, we invited our partners to the Partner Weekend, and they heard Sandra Van Opstaal. Awful mistake. We spent 5 hours with them doing damage control, and distancing ourselves and our personal ministry from the racist comments Sandra made. My ministry partner was completely offended at her comment along the lines of, "all you white people are scared of brown people." She works in the tech industry and has tons of brown (Indian) friends.

After this experience, we didn't feel welcome at Cru19. My husband and I had two serious conversations, one after Cru17 and one after Cru19, about leaving staff. It is hard to raise support and live the missionary lifestyle. If Cru is going to abandon the core of its message

(evangelism and the Spirit Filled life) and advance the "CRT gospel", we cannot go with them. We are tired of repeatedly being accused of being racist because of the color of our skin. We do not even minister to white people! But that doesn't matter. We constantly have to battle against the lies thrown at us by the CRT crowd that we are racist just because we are white. My husband said to me, "as a white male, is there even a place for me here anymore?"

On an even sadder note, I have a friend who used to be on staff, but now labels herself a "social justice warrior". She and her husband left ministry and then left evangelicalism altogether, because they are both now LGBTQ affirming. She is now attending a liberal LGBTQ affirming seminary. My heart is grieved to see how the seeds of "social justice" led her to embrace other aspects of Critical Theory. This has then led her to compromise the Bible and affirm the sin of homosexuality in the name of "inclusiveness."

Campus Staff #44

Bob* had a victim mentality and was hypersensitive on racial issues. Nearly all our interactions were only about race related issues. He requested to be dismissed from the group portions of a virtual MPD conference.

First Incident: Before the conference began, Bob was asked a question about how much emergency savings he had. Bob said, "Are you asking that because I'm an ethnic minority?" The exchange and consequent conversation wasn't hostile. Bob might have been feeling overwhelmed at all the financial questions, but, to me, it illustrates that Bob was filtering his experience through the lens of race. Nevertheless, both parties left with good feelings.

Second Incident: During the conference, a small group leader introduced "Mary" and said something like, "So, Mary, I know you're a mom, do you disciple women?" Mary proceeded to explain her role seemingly without offense. Bob, however, felt that Mary's "introduction" was demeaning to her, and in a later email said, "I believe that phrase is extremely demeaning and disrespectful. To even ask that question communicates deep assumptions about a woman's role in our ministry." Afterwards, Bob contacted Mary by text to see if she was emotionally OK and, eventually, Mary asked to be excused from the future required meetings because of her racial discomfort.

Again, this illustrates an extreme sensitivity to racial and gender issues. Social Justice warriors look for anything that seems like racial or gender oppression or persecution, no matter how minor or unintended. Their radar is alert for any possible offense. It leads to anxiety on the part of the staff of color, a lack of unity due to their inability to operate in such an environment, and (later) confrontation with leadership.

Third Incident: One required assignment was to view a video by a black comedian, Michael Jr. (who has performed at our Cru conferences).⁷ The purpose was to help participants understand the importance of sharing a compelling vision with passion in their MPD presentations. In the video, Michael Jr. asks a black choir director to sing *Amazing Grace*, which he does. Then, Michael Jr. asks the same man to sing the ‘hood version’ and gives some stereotypical experiences of the ‘hood’ such as young girls getting pregnant, a relative being in jail, etc. With this in mind, his second version was amazing – full of heart and emotion.

During our small group discussion, we turned to this video. An older white staff we can call “Dave” began describing the video. Bob interrupted and said, “You should be careful about saying he’s from the hood.” Dave was defensive and said something like, “I’m just describing what was in the video.” Then Dave became quiet and stopped talking. Since I was leading the discussion I moved on without addressing the issue.

Later in an email, Bob said, “This phrase perpetuates that this is the African American experience. *It is dangerous to share this idea.*” Bob continued, “Dave repeated this quote on the call, and it made me feel extremely uncomfortable hearing a white man repeat it.” I respectfully warned Dave that when saying ‘hood version’ and referring to African Americans, that it could come across disrespectful. But, Dave interrupted me, dismissed my opinion, and defended his intentions repeatedly saying, “That’s not what I meant. Did you watch the video? He said it in the video, I am just repeating what was said.” Dave was not willing to hear my opinion. He was not willing to consider that he could be wrong.

Meeting with Campus LDHR: In a follow up meeting about these incidents, it was communicated to us that as white leaders, we are to allow staff of color to point out any discomforts they have and we are to accept and accommodate and apologize for anything they bring up. She communicated that Cru is trying to be a more accepting environment for staff of color.

Jim Hocker, a leader in Valor

I was the Valor National Director back during Cru15. Many of my staff were shaken to the core [at Cru15], and my wife and I surely were. At the time, I was on a national team and was outspoken at our meetings after that, and was rebuffed.

Prior to Cru17 I stepped down and took on the new role of Valor Global Missions Director and started working with foreign military academies. I was in the best of both worlds because I had one foot in Valor and one foot in Global Missions. Both ministries were immune to the CRT stuff but that changed when we reorganized. We got a bunch of new CRT-affirming folks [as our leaders]. I still thought we were immune, but we had a Zoom call where we spent well over an hour

lamenting, crying, and praying after the Brianna Taylor and Ahmad Aubrey incidents.

Most of us kept our mouths shut during the call, and there was no dissension as they spun the 1619 Project narrative. The new people took over the call. At one point, a new lady prayed, “Oh Lord, this has been going on for 400 years. How much longer will you continue to allow the majority culture to get away with this?” I’m on the call thinking, well, “that’s me she’s praying against!”

Cru staff culture is so toxic now. Folks who see the anti-biblical aspects of the CRT they have rammed down our throats for the past 5 years are afraid to speak out, yet their leadership style has bred a culture where radical staff who have bought into their narrative feel free to sign an open letter, and they aren’t reprimanded (or fired) for doing so!

Can you imagine any company where staff would sign a letter like that, blasting the CEO, and put it on the company bulletin board, and not get fired? In the Army you’d get court martialed.

Affiliate Staff #11

An affiliate staff member attends staff conference because he loves Cru, though is not required to attend. Yet the approach taken by speakers makes him angry rather than wanting to be part of the solution, which they never spelled out.

My issue is simple: the last three Staff Conferences were unpleasant affairs. The first one was awful – talk after talk seemed to have the goal [of saying] that I was an awful person and there was no redemption. I walked out of several sessions to maintain my sanity. I figured that leadership would learn from the feedback but that did not happen. The second conference was almost as bad. At the third conference I was so gunshy from the two previous conferences that I just didn’t attend anything that I had the least suspicion would be like the prior two conferences.

As affiliate staff, I don’t have to attend. I do so because I love Cru and love my compatriots in my ministry. I realize that there are still disparities among the races, primarily due to underlying historical issues that have in large part been corrected. I realize there is some degree of prejudice in many, often so subtle that they don’t realize it. But the approach taken by the speakers made me angry rather than making me want to be part of the solution (which they never spelled out).

Does this large ship have a rudder? It should have changed course after the first conference but did not. After the second it turned maybe 45 degrees but needed a 90. Sadly, I’ve lost a degree of respect for top Cru leadership, first for letting this happen and second for not fixing it when it did.

Let's move on from the marxist Black Lives Matter approach to racial injustice, both within Cru and as a country. The United States and all its institutions, Cru included, are not perfect. We must always strive to improve, both individually and as an organization and

nation. But we must never forget that Black people have more opportunity in these United States than anywhere else in the world.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

Staff member #12

A campus team leader shares his feelings after a member of his cohort said that he hoped the next president of Cru would be anybody but a white man.

This story came in a text thread of Cohort Team Leaders. All of us are the same age—about 31 or 32 years old. This conversation happened the day of the announcement that Steve Douglass would be stepping out of the President's role.

At one point, a simple, yet very damning statement was made. As we discussed who the next president would be, someone said, "Just as long as it isn't a white man." This was followed by the statement being applauded by nearly everyone in the group.

It revealed that most of the group felt this way, and that clearly if I did not see things this way, I was not only the minority but I was flat out a bigot. It is hard to explain what went on in my thoughts and feelings in that moment but questions started to stir in my head:

"Are we not to celebrate if a Steve Sellers gets the job who has devoted his life to the ministry of Cru?"

"I am a white man. What does this mean for my future opportunities?"

"Does this mean it is only right if I sit on the sidelines and watch women and people of color move up into positions of influence?"

For the first time in my life, I felt ashamed of both my gender and ethnicity - not because I was associated with someone or a group of people doing something wrong but because I was being told that my time was up and that it would be selfish if I wanted to be in leadership.

It was a simple enough conversation but it was one of the first moments where I actually worried "Has this gone too far?"

Campus Staff #9

During a recent Cohort Team Leader Meeting (Sept 2020) on Zoom, our cohort leader suggested that we all need to be praying that we as leaders would be replaced by minorities one day. It was a comment in passing, so no one responded to it directly. This was a general meeting, but part of the time was focused on Race and Ethnicity.

As a result, I have lost a lot of trust in my cohort leader. I don't know what his agenda is and how this will af-

fect leaders being chosen in the future. I have not yet brought this up because it was a recent interaction and I am a new leader. However, I do feel that I can approach him about it and plan to in the near future.

Minority campus staff member #36

A campus staff member in his 20s, whom we'll call "Samuel," has Hispanic roots. Nonetheless, he sometimes disagrees with Cru's approach to social justice because it seems to get more attention than the gospel.

On his campus staff team's focus on social justice:

"It's definitely been something that's really talked about. I don't not think it should be talked about, but I think in the ways that it is, or in ways that people who may disagree are kind of talked down to—I think that's a problem. When I was a student, we were having a lot of these conversations. I talked to one of the staff and he said, I had a "white savior complex"—and obviously I'm not white. So it was a little insulting and really hurtful. I'm Hispanic.

I've experienced a lot of racism, but I have reasons why I can't fully agree with some of the things that are going on. When I voice disagreements, I'm labeled as not teachable, or like I just don't understand fully, and stuff like that.

I think my opinion as a person of color only matters fully if I agree with the social-justice narrative. Granted, it's not with everyone on staff. One of my team leaders is super great and really listens to me....I don't expect someone to fully change their minds on my words, you know, but I'd like to be treated as an equal-value opinion from someone who's thought about this for a really long time."

Does he still share his thoughts?

"After a while, it's just tiring, so you don't want to expend much energy into it because you have so many other things. I don't feel like I'm going to be listened to."

Has the social-justice narrative affected relationships?

"We had a speaker come to our fall retreat. He was very divisive on the issue and it was pretty rough for our team. We got over it, we prayed a lot together, came together, especially because a lot of the students pushed back pretty hard. It was kind of humbling on all sides.

I think I have a hard time when we go to conferences and stuff like that, more national or regional things. It's just more like in your face and the main thing that's talked about at conferences."

One more thing, he adds:

"I've heard people say, 'As Cru, we've gotten the gospel right. But now we need to talk about X,Y,Z because we've never talked about these things.' I get the heart behind that, but we're never going to just get the gospel 'right'. The gospel is so easy to get wrong. I do believe we should talk about race in America, but first the gospel, then everything flows out from that. It's the thing I'm most passionate about, and I feel like it's getting missed. If we read the Bible, the gospel is the imperative. That's my main thing."

Samuel has a desire to work with churches one day. Asked if he knew that Cru had major ministries in that area around the world, he said:

"I actually heard about that from a podcast that I was listening to. It's not Cru-affiliated; it was a Nigerian Anglican thing. They were saying that they do a lot of church planting with Cru and I was like, 'I've never heard that before'."

John Anderson

Summary: A campus staff member becomes aware that Cru's approach to racial issues is showing partiality, which God hates, according to James 2. This led him to go to part-time staff.

After joining staff, I became aware of certain practices that are unbiblical and contradict Scripture: we were being taught to treat white people differently than non-white people.

What opened up my eyes was when somebody brought up James 2 about God hating partiality. And I began to think, "In our work that we claim is racial reconciliation, are we following [the Scriptural] standard? Are we following/liking those who are speaking because they are qualified teachers of the Word, or because they are also x and y skin color?" And it seemed obvious that we show partiality.

Our message in this area is exactly the same as the world's, just with Jesus sprinkled on top. There's virtually no difference. If you look at the open letter to Steve Sellers, you could not tell that it was sent by a

group of Christians writing to a leader of a Christian organization. It's exactly what you would see in an business or college. And that should be an eye-opener. We've been shaped by a framework of partiality, but we don't recognize it because we have been indoctrinated and taught for years that it is ok, even though God hates it.

I'm not denying systemic racism, but in elements of justice there must be an actual example, with the evidence from two or three credible witnesses, like the Bible calls for. And in Cru we broad-brush certain ethnic groups, like white people, without evidence. So we are actually doing evil and injustice as we claim to be doing justice. I find it quite hypocritical - we're railing against systemic injustice and we're actually performing systemic injustice!

What I find shocking is the subjective view we have of truth and experience. The line that is used over and over—and it's always directed at white people—"there's a blindness we can't overcome without the help of a person of color." That undermines the Scripture, which says the mind of Christ is given to all believers.

I believe we've over-estimated how much power a cultural lens has on a person. The Bible is clear that when we are walking in the Spirit, He will transform us and renew our minds. But regarding racial unity, we're taught that it is impossible for a white person to ever be free of their biases. And this definitely shows partiality because it is only one group whose lens is said to be oppressing and dominating

All this shows a really low view of the power of God and a low view of Scripture. This low view of God is the root issue -partiality is just a symptom.

This is a dangerous ideology, for if we let this subjective lens come in, then we will naturally begin to apply it to other areas, and then all of a sudden everything becomes subjective, and Christians don't have anything to stand on anymore.

So my concern started out small, noticing a different standard. Then I saw that God hates partiality. And third, I realized that it has hurt our view of how we understand truth and actually undermines Scripture. And I don't think you have to know about Critical Theory or Cultural Marxism to have the biblical discernment that these teachings contradict Scripture. As a result of seeing all this, I have chosen to go to part-time status.

STAFF/STUDENTS LEAVING CRU

Dan Flynn—Reasons I left staff

My wife and I have been on staff for 37 and 35 years, and I was a TL/Director for 27 years, most of those in the Mid-Atlantic, where we sent many students onto

staff. We always felt we were "lifers," but for conscience reasons, we officially left staff in the Fall of 2019.

Why did we leave? Many factors worked together, but they all seemed to have a commonality. I'll do my best to capture some of the reasons here.

Cru Staff Conferences:

Cru '15 began a shift (for us) in what we were hearing was Cru's mission. It seemed to us that the Movement was pivoting from a simple, Biblical foundation (emphasis on obedience to God's Word and call to help fulfill the GC) to ...something different that involved an emphasis on race/social injustice/etc.

Cru'17 doubled-down on our concerns, as it became very clear to us that whoever was running the program had an agenda to *change* the Movement's values and identity/DNA. We saw this in a number of ways:

Inviting a liberal scholar (**Miroslav Volf**) to speak and influence young staff (M. Volf is faculty at Yale, was recently divorced and remarried, wrote a book equating Christians and Muslims worshipping the same God, etc.)

In addition, for the first time in Cru's history, the main Bible teacher was a woman pastor (**Joyce Emery**). Her content was fine, but as a pastor, Cru had tacitly endorsed a clearly egalitarian position on women in the pastorate, which I find impossible to reconcile with the Scriptures

I was troubled by **Andy Crouch** putting a political dig into his talk about President Trump. (I'm not a Trump fan and didn't vote for him in 2016, but I felt that a staff conference should remain politically neutral).

Cru '19 broke the camel's back. I won't belabor all of the strife this event caused, as I'm sure many have weighed in on the strident nature of the conference. But I'll highlight certain aspects of the event that damaged our hearts:

Sandra Van Opstal was the most egregious violation of the conference, though almost every speaker seemed obliged to give Cru staff (especially white staff) a beat-down. It was the logical conclusion to Cru giving credence to Critical Theory premises. Others followed suit: **Latasha Morrison** had us all stand, hold hands, and repent/lament of our racism (whether we have actually been racist or not). **James White** used increasingly severe emotional appeals to persuade – something I'm trained to see as a Rhetoric graduate of UW. **Daniel Hill** (*White Awake*) was invited to speak. I could go on and on.

Grant Hartley was highlighted in a video testimony at the conference. This was a *huge* problem for me. Why? Grant clearly *identifies* as a “gay Christian,” rather than as a “Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction.” There is a significant distinction between these two identities, and our leadership fails to understand the nuances. This is enormous and egregiously wrong. Worse, as I listened to Grant and looked around Moby gym, I observed:

The arena erupted in affirmative applause for Grant when the video ended. I thought to myself, “*uh-oh.*”

Immediately after, our woman emcee (I forget her name) came up and began to *cry*, extolling Grant's

testimony and how wonderful he is. I thought to myself, “*Wow, subliminal persuasion just occurred in Moby gym, building a plausibility structure for a new sexual ethic among our staff.*”

Weeks later, it dawned on me: “*Hey, Grant's video testimony was planned well in advance of the conference.*” That meant that someone in leadership (or in a committee) sat back and said, “*Hey, you know what would be good for Cru'19? Let's have a gay staff member give his/her testimony and legitimize this 'orientation' to our staff family.*” It was planned. Planned.

Note: Prior to Cru'15, we'd left campus and moved to the Midwest to work as its Theological Development Director. In this role (and also as Core Training Development Coordinator), I saw significant theological drift occurring in the organization. I was deeply troubled by it.

Looking back, I believe I was seeing Critical Theory taking hold in the decision-making of leaders nationally and in my cohorts, and as a result, I began to lose respect for our high-level leaders.

BCWI:

The BCWI only served to support my feelings. In fact, I wrote Mark Gauthier about the last BCWI and we spoke for 90 minutes on Zoom about my concerns. It didn't go well, and it became the final straw that broke the camel's back for me.

I mentioned to Mark that my hope was to stay on staff, to help “reform” us back to an era that relied on the Bible *primarily* as our authority. He made it clear, in no uncertain terms, that I would not be doing that. His response, roughly, was “*Dan, you're not going to reform Cru.*”

At this point I had confirmation of what I'd grown to think: that I wasn't so much leaving Cru, as Cru had already left me.

Neil Shenvi and CT:

Last year a staff friend sent me a link to an **article** by Neil Shenvi about the incompatibility of Christianity and Critical Theory. When I read it, the tumblers of the lock all fell into place. Shenvi was putting his finger on exactly what I was experiencing in Cru.

Once I'd read Shenvi, I couldn't “un-see” it in all my dealings with Cru leadership. I saw it when conversing with Keith Johnson, my boss in Theological Development. I also saw it in the Core Training leaders and saw it adopted into the curriculum.

By the way, another watershed moment was when Keith eliminated Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* textbook from all IBS classes. He gave three reasons, but his third (Grudem's stand on “the Wall” and “Trump” not appealing to some staff) I saw as capitulation to Wokeness. We'd lost one of the best systematic theology textbooks due to CT/CRT.

Miscellaneous:

I noticed my leaders increasingly “toe-ing the line” on the new, undeclared organizational core value of Wokeness. They were providing no pushback to CT’s spread in the organization. I was required to *train* our P&C team in Cultural Competency (from the Core Training curriculum), despite an ideological veil that hangs over that module (in my mind). I soon realized that I couldn’t say what I thought and still feel safe.

Another troubling event: a campus staff woman (Steph Kumler) in Cleveland came out as a gay Christian on her blog (www.skumler12.wixsite.com/themessesof-steph/post/out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new). Hundreds of young Cru interns, staff and students backed her up on social media, and Cru did almost nothing to **educate** these hundreds on our LGBTQ understanding *from the Bible*. Cru covered its butt legally and for PR reasons, but there was no seizing this moment as a *teaching opportunity* to give our staff a biblical worldview on LGBTQ matters. It showed our colors, sadly.

We knew many Cru staff who were troubled by all that was going on with Cru in the Social Justice world, but they didn’t feel the freedom to be public about it. And while they might consider resigning, I think the majority of staff believe it would be too disruptive to leave, not knowing exactly where they’d go to do ministry or how they’d survive financially. We decided to leave **despite both of those concerns**, knowing that the God who called us onto staff was calling us off—as a tangible protest (if only to the unseen world) that Cru was no longer Cru.

Major Donor Rep #1: Why we are leaving staff

Our association with the JESUS film began as financial donors to the ministry. We loved how God was using the JESUS film to reach everyone, everywhere, with the gospel in their heart language. In fact we loved how God was using the ministry so much that 16 years ago I left my career in sales management in the packaging industry to join the JESUS film as a development rep. Since that time we have continued as financial partners with the JESUS film.

In 2015 we attended the staff conference, looking forward to being encouraged in the mission with other Cru staff. We were shocked and demoralized by what we experienced. We actually sent Steve Sellers an email after the conference to express our concern about what was being shared from the stage. Our prayer was that in 2017 Cru would return to the focus on Jesus and the Great Commission. What we experienced in 2017 and 2019 only deepened our concern about the direction of Cru—it seemed to be moving from a God-centered and God-focused ministry to a ministry that had adopted cultural ideas, ways and messages.

Ethnic diversity was being elevated above our oneness in Christ and blame for racial injustice was being put

on staff, who by the power of the Holy Spirit love all men. We were being instructed to ask forgiveness for the sin of others simply because someone had identified us as part of a group. The repeated instruction for lamenting clearly demonstrated that forgiveness was not available, only continued shame because we were identified as oppressors because of our race (that sounds like racial profiling and discrimination to me).

We have always believed that the answer to social injustice and racial issues is the simple gospel - we are all sinners, Jesus died for our sin and was resurrected and we can have a relationship with Him because of His sacrifice, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. That same Spirit would change us from the inside out and that change would impact our world and society. The gospel is the answer!

Cru’s embrace of worldly ideas about racism and social justice, informed by the destructive false teaching of Critical Race Theory, has been troubling to us. We have struggled over the years with raising funds for the JESUS film, for we knew that some of those funds go to support Cru. We had hoped that Cru leadership would see how the social justice agenda is a distraction from the gospel and that Cru leadership would return the ministry to its calling to the Great Commission.

However, this has not happened, and we have decided to leave Cru. This has been a difficult decision, and we hope that our decision will, in some way, influence Cru leadership to return to Cru’s holy calling to bring the true gospel to the world.

Bridges staff member #13

A Team Leader abruptly leaves staff in middle of school year, due to Cru 15 and 17.

In the fall of 2017, at the end of our staff meeting my director shared out of the blue that he and his wife were leaving Cru staff and joining another ministry doing the same thing on our campus. They left just a couple months later, leaving a big hole in our campus leadership.

We were totally shocked. He had given no indication of discontent with our ministry. As I asked in shock what the reason was, he simply said, “We are tired of going to staff conference every other year and getting beaten up.” They were tired of all the social justice focus and felt like staff conference was no longer building up the staff, but tearing them down.

Since he was being forced as a staff member to attend, the only way out was to resign.

Campus Staff member #38

In his 20s, staff member Geoffrey has seen strains within his team and even with students over the emphasis on diversity and inclusion. Although he really likes his team, he plans to*

leave Cru after this school year as he wants to move toward long-term international missions.

A focus on diversity and inclusion, Geoffrey says, “has been one of the main sources of conflict with our team. We have some who want to emphasize racial reconciliation. I actually think it should be talked about. But we started getting complaints from students that it was being talked about more than anything else, and at every conference and Bible study. Every few weeks, it was mentioned in large group talks. And the students were kind of done with talking about it.”

At a retreat for a couple hundred students, Geoffrey recalls, the speaker told “really, really graphic racial stories, which have a place, but they didn’t really have anything to do with the message. A lot of the students weren’t warned about that, and there were also some theologically questionable things that he said. Six or seven students of ours said that they were thinking about leaving Cru because of that retreat. That caused a firestorm, with some saying, ‘We swung too far in the pendulum. We’re not focusing on the gospel as much.’ Others felt, ‘No, we need to keep focusing on diversity. This is like Cru’s top-level thing’.”

Regarding Critical Theory: “I didn’t think of it as bad or negative because I had been subtly told in classes, you know, that’s how the world works. But more recently, I’ve looked at it to see where the negative impact of it is and how does critical theory line up with the gospel. And what I’ve discovered is that it doesn’t.”

Why Cru’s emphasis on social justice? “I think it’s Cru as an organization. I don’t think it’s my team leaders. I think it’s being told them from their leaders and their leaders all the way from the top. I understand there’s a big desire to be more diverse. I agree with that, but I

think we’ve taken that so far that it’s become our main focus. An example is Crossroads.”

At a recent Crossroads retreat, he said, “almost every talk was on immigration or race, sociology, politics. There was one five-minute talk about Mission STINT admissions. Everything else was about contemporary issues. My heart just broke because I had just come from a missionary training school that so clearly emphasized the priority of taking the gospel to the nation’s unreached. It was so clear from Scripture. Then I go to Cru’s conference the next day and I hardly heard it. If I had come there as a junior who was hoping to take the gospel to work or something, I would think the gospel was learning about immigration. I would not think there’s any need to do missions from that conference. I couldn’t even find how to connect with missionaries; they were in a side room. So I’ve seen the numbers decrease. It really hurt me, because I definitely see a priority to go to the nations. I want to see every nation reached, and we can’t just focus on domestic issues.

“I’ve felt hesitant [to bring up my concerns]. I have a pretty big team and I know there’s disagreements. The team leaders have pressure from their leaders. There’s not much I could do. So I kind of see it as not helpful to bring up something that disagrees with the prevailing opinion.

“There’s another staff guy, a person of color. He doesn’t agree with a lot of the stuff, but he actually has more of a voice, because he’s a person of color and Cru is emphasizing that a lot more. He actually disagrees with it quite a bit, but he just stopped because he felt very uncomfortable after a while. They’re all talking about people of color experiencing things, but he’s like, ‘You guys are stereotyping me’.”

DONOR CONCERNS

Major Donor #2

What makes major donors of more than 26 years feel they can no longer partner with Cru? One couple explains why and the heart-felt concerns they have.

Major Donor #2 have been strongly connected as donors with Campus Crusade for Christ International since 1994. Before their marriage, Judy served 21 years as a staff member, including training staff preparing to go overseas. Their enthusiasm for helping fulfill the Great Commission led them to partner as members of History’s Handful and by supporting the ministries of individual staff members.

Cru 15 and Cru 17 triggered their concern that the U.S. ministry was drifting from the gospel, a focus on Scripture and the Great Commission. Comments from friends caused them to begin research Critical Theory.

Videos of Cru 19 content caused even greater concern. Eventually, they spoke with Steve and Judy Douglass at a Global Briefing last year. After that, Steve Sellers contacted them on New Year’s Day 2020. Steve Douglass asked them to talk with Mark Gauthier, which they did in September. Each time, the couple expressed their view that in an attempt to increase the U.S. ministry’s diversity and stay relevant in a fast-changing culture, the leadership was choosing a worldview that was not biblical: Critical Race Theory, or Critical Theory as it is now sometimes called.

With each Cru leader, they said, the conversation was cordial, but they left feeling they were not believed. Judy recalls, “When we talked with Mark Gauthier, he said, ‘Well, there are some things that need to be changed.’ But, as the ministry seems to be moving down the CT road, they told him, ‘Well, we don’t really feel like we can continue to support this ministry.’”

They also expressed concern regarding giving Cru 12 percent. “We have individual people we support because they need support, they’re doing a good job, they haven’t bought into this. But we even hate giving the 12 percent because of what it goes to.”

At the end of the hour with Mark, David recalls, “We said, ‘Shame on Cru. You guys are teaching the gospel of grievances and not the gospel of grace.’”

“We are heartbroken,” David comments. “How can this organization that was supposed to be light for God is now going dark, and the leaders don’t recognize it?”

Major Donor #3

Concerns about Cru’s drift toward “wokeness” and social justice issues cause this couple to have second thoughts about their giving to Cru, and they no longer encourage family and friends to give to Cru.

We have been ministry partners with the JESUS Film Project since about 2006, and have felt very comfortable giving to JFP because of it being “under” Campus Crusade for Christ. [It seemed] like every “spot on the map” we could invest in was another step toward making Jesus known among the nations. What an exciting time!

We even felt compelled to share the ministry of JF with all of our friends and numerous family members, and we were thankful and extremely encouraged when others “joined” as ministry partners. After we sold our family business in Florida, we made provisions in our estate to gift sizable monies to JFP after our death.

What a blessing to be part of JPF! So many staff became our dear friends. This was such an encouragement especially during the overwhelmingly sad and sudden death of our son in 2009. The support from JFP staff friends was incredible.

Then in 2015 we heard about some of the disturbing content at CSU. In 2017 and 2019 we heard more of the same about this idea that being “white” was wrong. I personally was very disturbed by what I [began] reading on Workplace prior to the appointment of Steve Sellers as the new Cru president.

Since that appointment we have further concerns that Cru has definitely drifted from their mission and vision statements. These other issues are obviously taking over the priority of the ministry. There appears to be a “rising up” in order to demand that “people of color and ethnicity” be given leadership positions on the basis of their color and ethnicity.

We understand training materials, especially for Campus Ministry, incorporate a lot of content on this matter. To us, this feels like a huge distraction from the ministry we have respected and trusted to invest our monies in for the purposes of kingdom work. In addition to this, we feel it is infringing on the integrity

of the ministry and focusing on “worldly problems.” Seems like “the main thing” is not the main thing any more.

The purpose of our letter is to let you know that we have very real concerns and these have made us uneasy about what we give to Cru and ministries under Cru. Sadly, we are very hesitant to share any Cru ministry opportunities with our friends and family because of these concerns. We are reviewing our will and estate giving at this time.

On a more personal note, we are very concerned for the many staff we support in other countries. The last thing we want to do is stop supporting them, however, we feel we have a responsibility to stay true to the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We feel when a ministry begins to stray off the biblical path and supports things like CRT, social justice, “equity”, “wokeness” etc. we may not have a choice.

Staff Member #18

A long-time major donor, Jack Klemke, encountered troubling information on Lenses, and also from past staff conferences. As a result, he will no longer give to the U.S. ministry.

A major donor, Jack Klemke, called us on October 7 to inform us he can no longer support Cru in the USA. He has been a major donor of Campus Crusade for many years and was one of History’s Handful.

He said he has been listening to messages given at CSU over the past few years, and has become very uncomfortable with the emphasis on social justice. He added that he did his homework and came to the conclusion this issue is based on Marxism. He asked me several specific questions, which I am including below.

As a result, he will no longer send support for us to the USA because he does not want the US ministry to get 12 percent of his support. This is due to his concern about the new emphasis on social justice. Fortunately, he is still willing to give to other parts of the world, and we will make arrangements with the region to which he will send support.

Questions from Mr Klemke:

What are the implications of Cru sponsoring the Lenses Group?

- *Is this Cru’s primary focus?*
- *Is this another Gospel? Gal. 1:8,9; Jude*

Having attended the on-line, Cru 2019 staff conference, [I noticed] the bulk of the time was focused on stirring up emotional “lament.”

- *Was this the intent?*
- *Would Jesus our Lord approve?*

Is there another option for financial support of staff and groups retaining focus?

Will Social Justice, Critical Race Theory, and Progressive Christianity be promoted internationally?

Comments from Mr. Klemke:

As previous associate staff of CCC and financial supporters thru TKF, we are saddened by this apostasy and heretical, enemy directed distraction.

We suggest clear repentance, purging, and return to what God has so blessed.

John Dickerman

John Dickerman, former AIA staff for 13 years, taught high school for 20 years after staff then retired. Now he has a vision to plant churches in southern Minnesota. He wants to use the Cru Church Movements training called SENT 6:7, but upon promoting it to pastors and potential church planters, he has gotten pushback to the effect that “Cru is going woke. We don’t want our people influenced by this, so we are skeptical of the training.” John tells them his church elders have approved it, and there is no “wokeness” in the training. In other words, he can no longer rely on the credibility of Cru to promote the training, instead he has to rely on the credibility of his church.

Cru’s drift has affected John in at least two other ways as well. “If we’re being visited by a staff in a support maintenance meeting, I am going to bring up this issue, and see where they’re at. And [their stand] would affect whether or not we’re gonna support them.

“Also, when I have friends with kids in college, I have always enthusiastically encouraged them to send their kids to Cru. I don’t know that I can do that now, mainly because my own personal credibility [is on the line].”

Staff Member #12

I am a Campus Team Leader in the Midwest and am in my 9th year on staff. My wife and I lost a supporter of \$100/month three days after our third son was born in January 2020. The conversation began in August a couple of weeks after Cru19. This supporter called me out of the blue and said he’d heard some concerning things about Critical Race Theory that had been said from stage.

At that time, he told me that he was just beginning to explore the “justice gospel” and critical race theory and that he was concerned but wanted to continue to talk about it. We exchanged text messages over the next few weeks as he presented articles that affirmed his point of view that the “social gospel” was, as he put it, a “Trojan Horse” sent to destroy churches and evangelical organizations.

From the very first conversation, I felt paralyzed. After all, I wasn’t the one making these decisions for Cru, and I was trying to figure out what I even believed about all of this stuff. Finally, in January, this partner had enough and texted me that he would no longer be able to support Cru. He had returned from a conference put on by his Acts 29 church that helped him

determine that Cru was not only going the wrong direction but was fundamentally wrong.

Bridges staff #17

A veteran staff couple report on the dismay resulting from the past three staff conferences, and talk about how their pastor and a supporter are considering discontinuing their support of Cru.

Some of our supporters, churches and pastors have asked pointed questions regarding who the Cru National Staff Conference speakers were and what they said. We have also had countless conversations with other current staff who felt attacked/slapped in the face and do not understand why we have shifted to having “thought leaders” (whose thought?!) instead of biblical teachers at our conferences.

Since 2015 the national staff conference has become one constant rebuke/shaming of whites. The past three national conferences have been a total beat down; they are no longer an oasis of encouragement to keep pressing on in ministry because of a high calling and a glorious God, or because the world is worth the sacrifice.

Our pastor came to Christ through Cru in the 70’s and has spoken at many Cru conferences. He heard about our staff conference and was deeply concerned that unbiblical theology was being taught. He was also concerned that a female “pastor” spoke. Not that a female who spoke, but one who called herself an ordained pastor.

He said his church, which has supported a large number of Cru staff since 1980 (including us!) is considering ending their support for the organization and its staff if it is no longer teaching biblically accurate theology.

The Mood Among Staff

Our conversations with fellow staff have been growing in intensity and concern since 2015. People feel constantly rebuked, dismissed, shamed because we were born white and should be apologizing and stepping aside. They feel we can’t say things without offending or “triggering” someone. They feel the design team for conferences is largely influenced by northwest/west coast hipsters who have an agenda and are not honoring toward the actual history of Campus Crusade or the thousands of faithful older staff upon whose shoulders they stand.

It seems they want to take Cru in a different direction entirely, and there is no solid biblical foundation. The foundation of Cru no longer seems to be Win/Build/Send, or Win the campus today and the world tomorrow...but social justice, liberal theology, and CRT. We are away of many many staff who are concerned about the mission drift and doctrinal drift. As a result, many are questioning their calling to Cru.

Support issues

A couple that support us called and expressed their concern about the clear shift to social justice, liberal culture and CRT. He said it seems Sellers seems deaf to the obvious disconnect between what he (Sellers) says and what Cru is promoting at the national conference. He also said they are having pause when it comes to supporting the organization, and can't believe he is writing those words. They did attend the first weekend of the 2017 conference.

They wrote the following: *We believe in the people we support, but it is getting difficult to hit the give button for Cru. I feel like I might not be doing the right thing.*

Lake Hart staff member #46

Lost Supporter #1

When one of my ministry partners contacted me about Cru's social justice stance based on some of the speakers at our Cru19 conference, I wasn't sure how to respond to them. They wondered why so many speakers were focused on race and social justice issues and not on gospel related issues. They had already called Cru to try to get answers to their questions prior to reaching out to me but I could not answer some specific questions. So, I asked our communications department for help on a response.

Thereafter, I sent content from an official clarification letter that clearly declared our calling to help fulfill the Great Commission by winning, building and sending, in the power of the Holy Spirit and to help the body of Christ do evangelism and discipleship. I also attached a couple of old resources that were given to me to pass along. However, my letter didn't satisfy them and they still felt our conference speakers were too focused on race and social justice.

A short time later I received a reply back from them with a link to a Bill Bright Transferable Concept on how to introduce others to Christ with a note, "Watch this. I know there will be some things that will stand out to you. Thanks." Then, one week later they let me know that they would be leaving my support team at the end of the year because of their concerns for the direction Cru is taking. Starting January 1, I will lose \$400 monthly in support from them.

Lost Supporter #2

A second ministry partner reached out to me on Facebook messenger declaring, "It is with a heavy heart that (we) must withdraw our support for Cru Ministry. It's been troubling to read articles posted on the Cru website that have either strong undertones or overt statements supporting Critical Theory more specifically Critical Race Theory. This promotion of ethnic Gnosticism is troubling and the moral asymmetry goes against the teachings of Jesus and our very identity as image bearers.

"We believe this is a compromise of the Great Commission which Cru was founded upon. This ideology is on

a collision course with a Christian Worldview and we are saddened that Cru has either deliberately or ignorantly chosen this path. Either way, we simply can no longer partner with Cru. This is not a condemnation of you personally but as supporters our only recourse is to withdraw our financial assistance."

I unfortunately have not felt like I have any answers to share with her, so I have not had further conversations with her on this. They stopped their support of \$100 monthly after this conversation.

For both of these experiences, I didn't really feel like I had anyone to talk to that would be able to help me get answers or resolve anything. My supervisor told me to let her know if she could help in any way, but she's salary staff and I didn't feel like she would be able to help me much in the situation. I talked to one of my LDHR representatives and they weren't able to do much other than apologize for what happened and for all I was going through. I'm not frustrated with the individuals for not having the answers, I think I'm just frustrated that I kept being told to reach out to other people over and over again. Trying to be a good advocate for my ministry partners on top of raising additional support was exhausting and overwhelming to say the least.

Cru City staff member #20

There is a group of people raising money to make a movie to expose ministries which have drifted, called "Enemies within the Church." And as I said, the people behind this movie are very, very persuasive. Their movie will include exposing Cru's apparent or supposed drift, and Cru's alignment with socialist principles.

Some of my supporters invited me to attend a fundraiser for this movie. And I watched potential supporters and actual support team members swallowing the whole thing. It was very painful. One of my most loyal supporters, who had been on our team for four decades, stopped giving us \$2000/year due to this. The potential supporters did not join our team, and another partner is also considering ending his gift of \$2000/year.

30 year JESUS Film major donor and affiliate staff

During the past 10 years I was privileged to serve in a number of positions, like Magdalena USA,"JESUS" film women's strategies, and Women for JESUS (a part of Development), which worked to involve major donor women with the ministry.

During all this time my husband and I continued to support the ministry financially. We felt we were joined with a like-minded organization committed to the mission of reaching people for Christ—WIN, BUILD, SEND.

I have become increasingly aware that Cru has drifted/ is drifting from this original mission. Because of this I have felt led to put a hold on my giving to JESUS film and will be looking for another ministry to support.

Additionally, I have removed JESUS film from my will. If there is a course correction, I will prayerfully reconsider my decision.

Dave Wilkins

I recently (in September) had a supporter question Cru's dive into the movements that have co-opted the word 'justice.' The bottom-line is; I am in danger of losing a 38-year supporter of \$400/month if Cru doesn't realize the heretical nature of these hyphenated justice movements.

She started off with a simple question and gave a link to a video compilation on the *Reformation Charlotte* website. These video excerpts came from our Cru19 event and are totally indefensible.

After a long discussion back and forth, the donor closed the conversation with:

"We have supported your ministry for nearly 40 years and the Lord has enabled us to continue that through our job losses, moves, college expenses and a multitude of illnesses. We know that your work is important to the Lord as sometimes this financial support came out of nowhere. We will continue your support. However, we will now pay more attention to Cru's direction."

Julie Levy

After seeing some of the Lenses Twitter posts called out on a widely viewed video by John Harris, a donor contacted the Levy's with concerns about Cru's drift. He wasn't sure he should continue supporting her and the ministry. They called a staff friend for counsel, only

to find out he had already lost a supporter over this issue. Julie reached out to Lenses leadership and got no response.

Finally she researched what Cru felt about the social justice issue, and called her donor. "We had a good conversation," she says, "but his MAIN question to us at the end was "Do I still continue to give to Cru?"

"I think he was just wondering if he should give to us personally," says Julie. "We reassured him by explaining about the 12% and how it goes to our account. HOW SAD IS THIS? I have been so proud to tell people that they are giving to Cru, now we have to reassure our ministry partners that it is ok to give to us?"

Ted Edwards—Southeast Valor Field Coach

Last year I worked with the Development Coordinator for the President of Cru to present a partnering church with the Cru Milestone Award. This is an award given when a church, organization, or person gives Cru a million dollars. My pastor friend declined the gift because he had concerns over the direction Cru was heading in regards to social justice issues becoming the primary mission of Cru. He even said the church may stop all support of Cru in the future if changes aren't made.

We personally lost at least two ministry partners due to the mission drift of Cru.

I know of two high quality people who attended Cru17 who did not come on staff because of what they heard at the conference.

SILENCING/REBUKE FOR QUESTIONING CURRENT TRENDS

Staff Person #1

In Sept 2020 I was notified by one of my financial supporters that Lenses had some awful cussing on their Twitter site, including other political statements that were anti-police and very political. She was concerned and called me.

Embarrassed and concerned I apologized and tried to defend Cru as best I could but it was hard, to say the least. I then went to the Twitter site for Lenses Institute to investigate and sure enough, the administrator had retweeted dozens of posts from other accounts. Some said "Defund the Police." Some contained the "F" word and other cussing. Some contained political stands. All of which are against Cru policy and brought reproach upon the name of Christ and upon Cru and our staff.

I was appalled. So I tried to find a way to contact the administrator for the Lenses Twitter account to no avail. So, to get their attention, I commented on three different posts asking questions like "Has Cru gone liberal? Why are you retweeting cuss words? Isn't Cru a Christian organization?" I figured Lenses would know I was a staff member. but I wanted to make sure out-

siders couldn't identify me as anything more than just another Twitter follower. I was very careful to not allow outsiders to see that Cru had division among its staff.

Apparently I finally got the attention of Lenses or some other staff who saw my posts and decided I needed to be talked to. Because a few days later, my HR director called me to ask "What were you thinking?" He alluded that I had embarrassed Cru and aired some dirty laundry that should have been handled internally. I refused to apologize and said I was really concerned that he (and the person who reported me) was more upset about my questions than they were about removing the offensive posts. It was very "upside-down" to me.

At the time of our call, several tweets were still up on the Twitter account and had not been removed. I felt shut down and targeted. The HR director had not spent the time to gather all the facts before calling me, and rather unprofessionally, came to me with assumptions that I was in the wrong. He never apologized for that but said he'd pass my comments on to the other party and get back to me. But he made no mention of passing the other party's comments on to me.

The HR director told me he was fairly certain the problem with Lenses was being handled on an organizational level (i.e. by upper-level leaders) implying it was not an issue with which I should get involved. Then he asked how I felt about Steve Sellers being our new President. This was inappropriate and off-topic. It was a weird question.

I hung up feeling victimized and unable to ask hard questions of Lenses and Cru when anti-Christian actions are displayed.

Minority Staff #19

A Latino immigrant is told that despite his family's sacrifice and working day and night, their success in America is due to "white privilege."

I come from a family of Cuban immigrants. When my family arrived in the States, they had nothing, and my dad walked several miles to the airport each day to load planes. At night my parents sold vacuum cleaners to make ends meet. Eventually my father started a landscaping business and was able to send us kids to college.

About a year ago I attended a minority culture luncheon, open only to minority staff. I went in with an open mind, and I wanted to hear what they were saying. I was on board with them in the beginning—of course I'm against racism. They were basically saying "if you're not white, you can't participate in the American culture," which I think is not true.

Then she went on to talk about how America had created race to keep people down, a narrative that I think is false. It's as if slavery and racism started with America, and America was the first country to do these things. I'm not saying that racism is right, but America didn't create these things. I see that as a way to degrade our culture.

They also mentioned at the outset they were not going to get political, but towards the end insinuated that if you support Trump....they tried to connect that with racism, and said the church shouldn't support this.

A few days later they came back and met with me and another team member with similar views. I said "Yes, there is still racism in America, but to claim that it is an inherent systematic racist country, I think is false." And I told them the story of my dad coming to America.

"Let me ask you a question," one person said. "Is your dad is as white as you are?"

I told them that my dad has a landscaping business where he worked out in the sun and was very tan and has a heavy accent.

And they said, "well, your dad is just an outlier and I'll bet you he's been told many times to learn English and to go back to his country."

I told them that my dad never experienced that, and that I had never experienced prejudice or racism in the States. And they said the only reason is because you're white.

Well, I thought that if that is how the conversation is starting then you're disqualifying all of my points from here on out. Which is what they do. They're going to claim that I'm white they're black thus I don't have a valid voice or opinion. So the rest of the conversation felt a little hostile because of this underlying narrative. Anytime I made a point they couldn't refute or if I brought up statistics they either went to anecdotes or brought up the fact that I was white.

They talked a lot about generational wealth which I thought was odd because you're in a conversation with people who are Christians and this is supposed to be a conversation about bringing unity within Christ. But the source of their examples of inequality and injustice is wealth, which from a Biblical point of view is not how Jesus taught us to measure our lives.

It's not like in Cuba, but it is scary. I've already been in meetings where I don't feel free to speak my mind about these things, because I feel I could actually get fired.

At the end of the conversation they looked at me and said I was naïve and have a lot to learn. They asked me to name 10 black CEO's. I asked "how is this relevant? I can't name 10 white CEOs."

They asked if I had any issue with the fact that the majority of Cru's leadership is white. When I said, "no," one person almost fell off her chair, and said "I can't believe you don't have an issue with that!" I told her that I don't care about diversity when it comes to skin color, gender or age. I'm more concerned about diversity of thought. I don't ascribe a certain set of values or beliefs to a person solely based on the color of their skin. To do so is racist.

Racism is not an inherently American principle or ideology, rather it is sin in the heart of man, and we need to recognize who we are in Christ. But I believe today that our laws and systems are such that people have the opportunity to work hard and progress in this country regardless of skin color, gender, or where you come from.

[Not accepting this] allows people to take every negative experience and failure in life and relate it back to racism somehow.

So that conversation ended. Basically they were hostile, and I felt personally offended that despite all the sacrifices my parents made, they just ascribed it all to white privilege. They just assumed that because my dad is white his business succeeded, which is insulting.

Minority Staff #30

A minority staff member is belittled and shamed for voicing opposition to Cru's new direction.

As a minority new staff member, I was encouraged that the ministry had desired to bring more minorities of color on staff. That really meant something to me at the beginning. But my encouragement was short-lived. After Cru17 I was shocked and alarmed at what I was being taught from the sessions and seminars. It was even more confusing since our leaders kept insisting we weren't deviating from scripture. Yet there was clearly a lot going wrong with the teaching at Cru17 (and later Cru19).

After Cru17, I had seven lunches/meetings with seven different leaders in this ministry. I went into these lunches ready to meet with fellow brothers in Christ to share my concerns and was hopeful they'd hear me out. Instead what transpired in nearly every meeting was overt dismissal, claims that I had "misunderstood everything," that I hadn't "done my homework" about social issues, that I was insensitive, that I was the one who was wrong and that I needed to be a staff member who "gets on board with Cru's big picture."

In one instance the conference leader I spoke to had a foul mouth and kept cussing while expressing his frustrations with my reactions to the conference. Other leaders remained calm and didn't raise their voices at me, but even the leaders who didn't get loud were condescending and explicitly belittled me.

The self-righteousness, arrogance, and pride from the vast majority of these leaders was unmistakable. Their actions and demeanor clearly communicated that I was the one in the wrong and my job was to shut up and listen to them.

I realized then that everything I'd heard about "caring for minorities of color" at Cru17 was hypocritical and did not actually matter to these leaders. Here I was a new staff minority of color being shamed. There was only ONE leader who expressed sympathies about my concerns and asked me if Cru should do anything different. One leader out of seven.

Since then I have done my homework, theologically and sociologically, and I am now fully convinced what we've seen inside Cru over the past several years is a brand new cult religion. I am heartbroken to see just how extensively this new religious cult has infiltrated Cru and its leadership. I am tired of hearing our leaders make excuses like "these conference speakers don't speak for us, they only speak to us." We see right through these false teachings and it pains me deeply to see our own leaders/teachers denying the very thing they are allowing to be pushed. I would rather they just be honest about their errors.

These leaders have shattered my trust in them. They ignore my emails asking for follow-ups. They turn their

eyes away from me when I pass them in person. They have made it clear with their actions that I am not their brother. They accuse me of "thinking white." There's nothing more ironic than telling me, a person of color, that you the leader know which race I "think."

They stand up on their conference platforms and claim they have the most compassion for minorities, yet when I, a minority of color, went to them in good faith trying to warn them of false doctrines, they immediately turned against me, even explicitly accusing me of being out of step with Christ. I have also spoken to several young staff members in my own age group, both white and minority, about my concerns and the reactions were just as bad if not worse than with the leaders I met with. Frankly I find it disgusting how our young staff feel entitled to shut me down and tell me, a person of color, that I don't care about or understand the bad things people of color go through. The arrogance of these young staff is sickening. The amount of stress and grief that this has all caused me was so bad I had to go to the doctor for ulcers back in 2019. And the heart pain this has caused me has been excruciating.

People need to wake up to what's really going on. There are now two religions inside the Christian church, and now inside Cru. One religion is the Christianity of old, but the second religion is a brand new religion of systemic racism, white privilege, and systems of power. Both religions are being taught side-by-side at the same time. The new faith labels all of Christian theology a racist oppressive ideology of whiteness. It shocks me to see the mental gymnastics our leaders have jumped through to claim there's nothing anti-Christian in these new beliefs.

And it is clear you're forbidden to disagree with the new beliefs or else suffer SEVERE backlash from people. We're naive to think it couldn't possibly be a new religion. But it definitely is. Leadership across this ministry seems to be oblivious or in denial that this is really the problem. Our staff seem split down the middle between these two faiths. As far as campus is concerned, most of our young staff seem completely deceived beyond the point of no return.

I admit I'm still hurt and jaded. But my trust and faith in our leaders and this ministry keeps falling apart more every day. I will be completely honest, I'm afraid I've already said too much. Which is also why I feel I need to remain anonymous. I and many others are DEEPLY afraid that if we come forward by name we'll either be attacked again or fired for doing so. The enemy IS inside the castle and our leaders refuse to admit the problem, let alone deliberately push the enemy out. They just keep saying we're on the right path and we need to be unified. But how can we be unified when there are now two different faiths inside the same camp?

My real prayer is that Cru will turn around back to the true biblical gospel rather than the new false gospel of “systemic power”, but I fear it’s already too late. This new religion has pretty much done its job from the inside.

High School Staff member #6

I got my hand indirectly slapped by the main man at Cru’s Lenses Institute last month. I had been compiling a list with “alternate” voices and “lenses” in dealing with racism, CRT, etc. Nearing the end of the training they were talking about “learning” and growing further and so I simply dropped the following text in the chat (to around 90 attendees):

“I have been “learning” for quite some time and gathering resources (articles/videos) that not only aid in my own [biblical, historical, political, etc.] discernment and understanding, but also aid in the desire towards having balanced “conversations.” Here is a document (pdf link below) with my current list of learning resources which include differing/alternate voices (lenses) in which to read, watch, listen, and consider. Seeking Truth. Striving for unity. For the sake of the Gospel.

Well, THAT was not received well by the powers-that-be! As we all came back together for the last session, the leader mentioned (without naming me directly) that it was very much frowned upon to add to their curricula by providing other resources to everyone else via the chat feature.

In his words, “...What is NOT appropriate and what is NOT protocol, is to drop information into the chat box on the way out the door...judging from what was shared, it was almost diametrically opposite to what we’ve been sharing with you this week.”

Yet here is another reference that the Lenses leaders encouraged us to read: [Elements-of-White-Middle-Class-Dominant-Culture.pdf](#). It appears that the author here is conveying that these characteristic elements are directly related to the “white, middle class, dominant culture.” Thus, these dangerous things must be removed. For other resources and next steps, the Lenses leader promoted: [www.andcampaign.org](#).

So basically, opposing/alternate voices/lenses are NOT welcome, at all (unless those suggested resources are first “vetted” by the Lenses leadership). This is very telling.

Also, I find the Lenses proprietary statement/“warning” a little concerning. To me, this “warning” is a red flag as it feels like someone in power telling someone being overpowered, “Now, you are prohibited from telling ANYONE what has occurred.”

And, quite frankly, the Lenses Institute training (that is detailed and explained on their website...which seems helpful and “safe”) is far from the “training” that actually occurred (i.e. predominantly focused on white, Chris-

tian, male, majority culture and America shaming and liberal/progressive talking points). Thus, I feel deceived.

Prison Ministry Staff #42

My team was asked to preview the Truth Project in order to see if content contained in them might be offensive to inner city pastors. When the topic of Michael Brown’s death came up I defended the officer’s decision. I was told ‘You can’t say that!’—even though Eric Holder also declared that the officer was justified in taking this action. As a result, I was ushered out of the Inner City ministry.

My wife and I joined staff in 1978. Side-by-side we served in the Prison Ministry, then Here’s Life America. When that ministry was decommissioned, I was invited to work with the International Leadership Academies (Eastern Europe and Latin America), and then The Inner City Ministry.

After 7 years (with) The Inner City Ministry I stepped down from my role as City Director and appointed my right-hand-man to fill that role. It didn’t take long to see that there was a significant change in ministry emphasis within the Inner City Ministry. Under the direction of the new city director we rapidly became closer to reflection of Critical Race Theory/Critical Theory.

Specifically, here is what happened to my wife and me: We started to notice emerging bias against older staff. We witnessed a departure from Cru teaching philosophy and materials, with a deepening emphasis on racial issues. On a specific occasion, the xxxx team was asked by the national office to preview the Truth Project video training tapes so as to screen them for topics or verbiage that could be seen as offensive to inner city pastors. Note: many inner city pastors have little doctrinal training, and the Inner City Ministry was making an effort to fortify accurate Biblical perspective in the inner city churches by utilizing the Truth Project videos as a learning tool for such pastors.

There were three of us critiquing the videos typically following our weekly staff meeting. The topic was Revisionist History. From there the conversation went to the actions of Michael Brown, who had been painted in the media as an innocent college student, but in reality, was a thief and had just accosted a police officer. They struggled and in so doing Michael gained some control of the officer’s weapon. The gun went off, but did not seriously wound the leg of the officer. Michael Brown ran off but turned and charged the officer. Note, Michael Brown had already disarmed the officer once. Then Brown turned and charged the officer. The officer was pressed to make the choice to shoot Michael Brown. I told the staff that if I were that officer, I would have done the same thing.

This is when my director told me “you can’t say that!”, several times. Remember, I was asked for my opinion, and there were three of us in this private meeting. I was not making a public statement. But this was the beginning of my wife and me being ushered out of the Inner City Ministry, just before my wife died (2015).

Let me add that the U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, also declared that the officer was justified in taking that action.

I think there is an underlying problem in this situation. I had no voice. There was no one to whom I could appeal this fast approaching dismissal from the Inner City Ministry. I remember Dr. Bright being adamant about heavy-handed leadership, saying that there is no place for such in this ministry. I don’t know if that policy died with him or what. But I do know that there was no avenue for rebuttal.

I left Cru 2015, and I now serve as a Police Chaplain for the Washington State Patrol.

Scott Moffatt

Scott Moffatt and his wife have been on staff 27 years. His tells of a lengthy public rebuke (concerning a private Facebook posting) from a staff member teaching on diversity.

About three years ago, we had a new team member on loan from Bridges to do some diversity training for our team. At first it didn’t seem like there was an underlying agenda behind it. But as she went through the year, it became obvious that she was very liberal on the social side, even though she was wanting to share the gospel....So we went through the LGBTQ position Cru had, through Black, Hispanic, Asian-America, Native American, gender stuff. On the surface it seemed like we’re just learning about different cultures, but the application of what we were discussing turned very political. The tone of our team began to break down over the year. It didn’t feel like a safe place to share.

The next year, at a staff meeting, she says across the room, “Scott, you need to take down that Facebook post because it’s very offensive.” And I said to her, “Okay, I’ll consider that. Thank for your sharing that.” And for the next few moments, she just goes off on me, shouting across the room, that my post was so offensive and why it needed to be taken down. She was just appalled that I wouldn’t immediately acquiesce to her request.

I remember looking across the table to one of my team leaders thinking, “Are you going to allow this type of discourse to happen in the public setting in front of your whole team, and let your team member just be kind of punched in the face by another team member?” But he just moved on to the next thing.

After a number of conversations, HR and Orlando came in and tried to mediate. I said, “I apologize that

my Facebook post offended you.” And then she said, “No, it didn’t offend me. It was just offensive.” I said, “We’ve been waiting 10 weeks to resolve this conflict, and you’re not even personally offended?” She said, “No, it was offensive and needed to be taken down.”

Before that happened, though, when HR got involved they went through all my personal Facebook posts and told me which things I had to take down that were political from a conservative perspective. So I deleted things. I asked them, “Are you guys monitoring all Cru staff to make sure that people are not saying things you don’t want them to say?” They said, “We’re not policing everybody’s Facebook page, but you need to take these two down, so I agreed to that.

Two things in particular frustrated me: First, there was never any reconciliation. The second was far more personal. The post she called offensive was simply a question about someone’s poster that I saw on the street, “I believe Dr. Ford” [the woman who accused Bret Kavanaugh during his Supreme Court hearings]. I simply asked a question, “I wonder if the person with the poster actually knows Dr. Ford personally. Otherwise, their source would just be the news like everyone else. My post was a question of how do you know things are true? I wasn’t making a comment that she was wrong or right. I was just questioning how they knew enough to say “I believe this person over that person.”

There’s probably a hundred other ways that it could have been handled besides just an outburst in front of the team. What she would have learned, had she talked to me, was that this is a very personal issue because my wife had been sexually abused. And so was my daughter. She didn’t even bother to ask questions. She just immediately thought I was taking the side of the man, which is not what I was doing at all.

Dave Pendleton

Dave attended an Impact Cultural competency conference, and was confronted with the reality that Impact seems to believe that true Christianity and CRT are not only compatible, but virtually synonymous.

I attended the Impact Cultural Competency conference in Atlanta almost a year ago. Actually I came home from that conference pretty emotionally charged up, but also emotionally drained. The gist of the conference was that a bunch of white people sat in a room and got the snot beat out of us by a black guy by the name of Al Vivian, whose dad was Martin Luther King’s pastor. Al Vivian has lived and breathed civil-rights-activism his entire life.

At the time I felt like I was swimming in a pool of ignorance regarding Critical Race Theory. I had casual conversations with several black Impact staff at the conference about what CRT is. I remember one conversation in particular where I asked, “What do the

critics of CRT say?” My question was basically spurned, suggesting that only racists and idiots would be critics of CRT.

The resource table at the conference contained only books that would support CRT. I bought several books there, including *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, *White Awake* by Daniel Hill, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo, and *How to be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi.

The bottom line is that the Impact Cultural Competency Conference makes no apology regarding their recognition that CRT is the foundation of their conference’s content. In their minds, there is no contradiction between CRT and Christianity. I would even go so far as to say that they seem to be teaching that there is a contradiction between what the critics of CRT teach and Christianity.

In other words, they seem to suggest that the term “Christian CRT Critic” is a contradiction in terms. You cannot be a critic of CRT and truly a Christian at the same time. At best, they may conclude that someone who is a CRT critic is simply ignorant and needs to be enlightened (in essence: woke). The entire aim of the Impact Cultural Competency Conference is to turn people into “antiracists” according to their definition.

Campus Staff #39

A campus staff woman describes the impact of Cru’s new emphasis on her personally and on her ministry, to the point where a Great Commission focus began to feel subversive.

In the Campus Ministry, we had all been told to make racial issues a part of staff team discussion/training. In August 2018, I went to the Cultural Competency group of Workplace and posted a link to a book by Thomas Sowell called “Discrimination and Disparities, then asked if anyone had read it. It began a conversation which is available to view on Workplace.

In that exchange, a staff person wrote to another staff man, “I think you make a good point on exposing ourselves to a variety of viewpoints. As members of the dominant culture however, we should caution ourselves from falling into “whitesplaining” when our brother takes the time to give the gift of his friend’s

perspective, even if it was a challenging one....” Nate responded that he could see how he had unintentionally belittled the comments from the initial man’s post.

I posted the following response: “I know we all want to move forward toward Christ-likeness in our thoughts, words and actions, and I appreciate honest discussion of topics like these. However, after reading the ‘whitesplaining’ comment last night I’ll admit I sobbed for an hour. I’m assuming it came from a well-intentioned and compassionate place...but the idea that some ideas/arguments/thoughts are less valid or are best left unshared because of skin color is abhorrent. I thought we had moved beyond judging people’s ideas (or their ability to have an opinion) based on race.

Cru has been such a huge part our lives and our walk with God for many, many years and I don’t know what else to say except I’m grieving. I’ll be getting off of Workplace for a while, because this type of conversation has become toxic for me.”

As you can see, I was very upset. I had already been considering whether I could stay on staff in good conscience, with all of this unhealthy preoccupation with race. At that time I deleted Workplace from my phone and desktop and would not open it for over a year. We began praying about our options...We’ve remained where we are because, at least for now, we can continue to do evangelism and discipleship.

But to remain focused on fulfilling the Great Commission (and not cultural stuff) is beginning to feel like insubordination.

And there is another result. We used to be best friends with another staff couple. The guys were best man for each other’s wedding. Our kids were best friends. Now that couple has embraced the ‘woke’ teachings from recent staff conferences. We tried to have honest discussions and talk through these CRT ideas, but ultimately that friendship is lost. It’s sad, since we were so close in the past and our families would even vacation together. It was a 20-year friendship! Our husbands are still somewhat close, but they carefully avoid conversation about these issues.

This is just one example of division caused by this thinking, not even along racial lines, just ideological.

INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

International staff member #7

An American staff member in Francophone Africa is told he probably can’t lead a black STINTER well, despite having spent many years as the only white international staff person on black teams in two different countries. He was also told that the US missions teams is talking to many STINT leaders around the world, and even

national leaders, and telling them how to lead STINTERS of color.

When I received an invitation to meet with two US missions leaders, I was blindsided with a discussion on diversity and whether or not I, as a white leader of white team members, would be able to receive a black STINTER. Yes, I knew that “Jasmine” was Haitian American and we eagerly awaited her arrival.

I thought, “Hold on now, I am receiving a STINTer as I do every year. Why would I not receive this STINTer with love and respect as I have every other STINTer for the past 12 years?” However, I found myself on the defense and defending the fact that I grew up in New Mexico and had many multiethnic friends. Not to mention the fact that that we sold everything to learn from, spend time with and love the people of first Cameroon, then Côte d’Ivoire and now, as a leader on the Area Team, the rest of Francophone Africa

They shared how STINTers of color have returned hurt, betrayed, and unloved, and they are making sure that doesn’t happen any more. They asked if I have ever had a black person on my team. I told them yes and that we have a great relationship with “Kayla” to this day. Then they said that often the white person thinks that they had a good

relationship with the STINTer, but when questions have been asked of the POC they often said that they were not treated well because they were not white.

How often, they didn’t say, what percentage, they didn’t say, but they were sure that that could have been the case with our relationship with Kayla. They were communicating as if this whole time she deceived us (is that not creating dissension?).

Then they seemed to assume we didn’t lead Kayla well, for they asked how I was going to make sure that Jasmine would feel loved and cared for and returns saying she had a great experience.

This is treading on thin ice to me. Not everyone who comes on STINT has a great experience. Though we do our best to provide a secure, safe and healthy environment, ultimately we are not God. The reality

is that many many people hated their STINT experience, many of whom were white. What we learn from it all is that STINT is hard, extremely hard.

After this, they said they are calling all the different countries receiving STINTERS because of their desire to put a stop to the ways that leaders are poorly leading people of color. They said that in some countries they are having to even correct the national leaders in the ways that they lead, for they are not leading people of color as they should.

The assumptions being conveyed are demeaning to me and to our organization. The fact that they are informing other cultures how they should be leading our American STINTers of Color concerns me also. Years ago, I learned from our excellent X-Track cross cultural that we must step into another culture as humble learners. This seems to oppose that thought.

COMPELLED BY LOVE

Cru City Staff #14: Compelled by Love

Why I joined the Clarity and Unity Team

My Dad has always been an easy going, mind mannered, ‘man of few words’ kind of guy. That is, until the night he bolted from his easy chair, gun in hand (We ARE from the South) to the screams of terror coming from the carport. What caused him to rush without hesitation into the unknown darkness of the night? Love. The one he loved, who happened to be me, was in danger. My little 8-year-old self had gone out into the carport to get a schoolbook from the car. Unbeknownst to me, several neighborhood dogs had gathered in the darkness of the carport. The dogs got a whiff of my dog’s scent when I came out of the door and a full-scale fur fight ensued complete with snarling, barking, lunging in my direction. Shrieking in horror, I jumped onto the hood of the car

and screamed with all my might for the one person who I knew would come – my Dad.

This story still causes my eyes to moisten, not because the scenario still scares me, but because of the protective love demonstrated by my Dad. A love that pulled him out of his easy chair and easy temperament. A love that drew out the warrior in him in a rare and tender moment. **A love that caused him to powerfully come after whatever was coming after me.**

We see that same love at work in the heart of the Father from Genesis to Revelation. In the garden, we see the Father God pursuing the children He loves. At the Red Sea, we see Father God again coming against the Egyptians who were hell-bent on recapturing the newly freed Hebrews. Finally, we see Jesus coming against Satan on the cross, destroying the devil’s scheme to destroy us once and for all. **Our**

good Father comes after whatever is coming against us.

Like my Dad, I am content to live a quiet life, tending my garden and walking my dog. Loving my Cru team, loving my neighbors and leading neighborhood Bible studies. What has roused me from my comfort to care deeply about the issues of clarity and unity for Cru? Quite simply, it is the same thing that roused my Dad from his comfortable spot so many years ago – Love.

I have the honor and privilege to not only be in community but also lead with several women of various ethnic backgrounds. As I consider the responsibility God has given me to be a shepherd, I cannot stand silent while they struggle to swim against a current of worldly false doctrine. Our lives are very much intertwined. We share meals at each other’s houses, we pray together on a regular basis. We have heard many of each other’s stories

and dreams and wept at each other's hurts. As the events of 2020 have unfolded, I have seen them wrestle with how to respond as a believer to the tragic events unfolding around them, while at the same time dealing with their own fears and re-opened wounds.

As I see the winds of the world subtly blow the deadly poison of critical race theory ideology in their direction, it stirs up my mamma bear maternal instincts such that I say **"I am coming after whatever is coming after them!"**

Fortunately, most of them know Christ and hope in His name. Those who do know Christ have a strong, incredible faith. Yet, the human heart still asks, 'How long, O Lord?' In the same way that my parents watched me struggle to clear hurdles during high-school track meets, I also watch from the sidelines, as my friends struggle to rise above each challenge in the power of the Holy Spirit. At times, like Jesus, they choose healing and forgiveness for past hurts. Other times, I sense lies of hopelessness creeping in. I often sense the Holy Spirit telling me to remind them that they are dearly loved, powerful children of God! A message clearly NOT offered from fatalistic critical race theory messages.

Tearfully, I watch many of my black friends struggle the most. The world offers a narrative to the black community that involves not strength and forgiveness but outbursts of angry rioting leading to destruction of life, property, and themselves. The world tells the black community, through a carefully wrapped critical race theory package, that they are oppressed, will always be oppressed and can never be free. This stands in complete opposition to God's truth, which says "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" Galatians 3:26,28. And John 8:36

which says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

The critical race theory does not offer such hope but on the contrary, seeks to lock minority communities into an oppressed victim mindset through a strong emphasis on power structures, rather than rising to the freedom, beauty and strength of their identity as image bearers of God.

In closing, it is my hope that all believers will rise above the deadly critical race theory narrative and step into their identity in Christ. Could it be that as we all lock arms together and walk in our identity in Christ, the next great spiritual awakening will happen in this country. Like Pentecost, that day will be an obvious manifestation of nothing but God's power!

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 1:18-20, "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places". ■

APPENDIX 3: THEOLOGY

EVALUATION OF THE “THRIVE” PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

“Made To Thrive” Gospel Tool Link

Preamble

Let me begin by being very clear. This presentation of the gospel is not overtly wrong or heretical. Because of the profound depth and multifaceted nature of the gospel, virtually every presentation of it is, in some way, limited in nature. This is often part of the problem we run into when trying to answer the very simple but incredibly profound and eternally important question, “What is the gospel?” and “How can I (or anyone else, for that matter) be saved?”

To borrow Roland Muller’s three very broad cultural categories, the gospel includes facets of honor and shame (e.g., Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 12:1-2), fear and power (e.g., Hebrews 2:13-15; 1 John 3:8), as well as guilt and innocence (e.g., Romans 4:1-8). All three motifs are combined in Colossians 2:13-15.

I bring all of this up before addressing this specific presentation of the gospel because it helps set the stage for answering a number of questions that should keep being asked when we seek to create and communicate a gospel presentation. These questions include (but are certainly not limited to) the following concerns: 1) Adequacy—does it share enough of the biblical gospel to really be the gospel, 2) Accuracy—does it share the genuinely biblical message of salvation and not some other kind of limited, distorted, or even false message, 3) Clarity—is the message shared in language that is relevant and simple enough to be understood by most, 4) Succinctness—can the message be shared in a reasonable time-frame, 5) Transferability—can the message easily be taught to others such that they can share it with and train others to do the same, and 6) Sensibility—is the message coherent and does the flow of the presenta-

tion make reasonable sense to the average person?

I suspect and admit that part of the problem for me, anyway, is an issue of familiarity. I am so familiar with other types of gospel presentations, it’s a little upsetting when a new form of the message is brought to the fore, especially when that form is couched in such a different set of terms and traces a very different kind of theme and pathway.

What I’m getting at here is that when you look at various popular mass-produced forms of gospel presentations, you will notice that inevitably, certain themes and aspects of the gospel are emphasized whereas other facets are often missing. Thus, “Steps to Peace with God” emphasizes having peace with God and eternal life as the goal, stating that sin, by separating us from God, is the barrier to us experiencing and obtaining them. Of course, that is correct, but if you look at the steps, they do not say anything about Christ’s victory over Satan and death, nor do they talk about our shame being taken away. This was a popular tract because peace was a major concern at the time it was created in the 1950’s after World War II when the cold war and the threats of communism were very much on everyone’s minds. In short, it connected with an existential problem (i.e., it was contextualized), but it did so biblically and theologically in a way that kept the basic message of the Bible concerning salvation clear and intact (a lack of peace and eternal life due to sin), coupling it with the right solution—the death of Jesus Christ for sin on the cross.

To use another example, the “Four Spiritual Laws,” written in the mid-1960’s, connected scientific laws

governing nature to spiritual laws governing our relationship with God. This was an era where the importance and triumph of science was often assumed, so it made sense to make this connection and analogy. The same was true regarding the 1988 edition entitled, “Would You Like to Know God Personally?” The content was largely (although not totally) the same as the Four Laws, but the aspect that sought to connect the listener to that content was clearly different, focusing on a personal relationship or connection with God, something that has become very important to American life and society at the time, namely personal relationships. Add in the Navigator “Bridge” gospel presentation as a side note, and you have very similar basic points within the presentation, but again, a different way of transitioning to that very similar information/message.

All of these contextual presentations still focus on the issue of sin and how it has destroyed our relationship with God. Very little is said about our relationships with others or with creation (for example), which may well be one of their shortcomings, since sin certainly impacts more than just our relationship with God. But it is also one of the strengths, because it keeps the problem simple, emphasizing the primary source of our alienation from ourselves, others, and creation in general, namely alienation from God. In short, alienation from God is our first and biggest problem, and that primary problem becomes the source of many secondary problems—like alienation from ourselves, others, and creation. These secondary consequences matter, of course, but they stem from a step-back problem that must be solved first

before these other derivative issues can be adequately addressed.

These mass-marketed gospel presentations succeed because while they do sacrifice some comprehensiveness in order to preserve clarity and simplicity, they still share core facets of the gospel without leaving too much out. Again, a survey of scripture and its treatment of the gospel in various places shows that the biblical authors do this all the time. They share aspects of the gospel specific to their audience and purpose—see, for example, Paul’s presentations of the gospel to Jews in Pisidia Antioch (Acts 13) as well as his presentation of it in Acts 17 to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill. So, there is no problem in doing this so long as the facet (or facets) shared remains true to the essential aspects of the gospel message. In other words, there are certain core elements that should never be removed from a presentation of the gospel in order for that message to actually be the gospel.

This, of course, again leads us back to try and answer this crucial question: What exactly is the gospel? What are the parameters surrounding this message that demarcate its boundaries as well as its core? In other words, when does what we share cross over the line and fail to be the gospel and deserve to be labelled a “different” gospel (cf., Galatians 1:6)?

First and foremost, the biblical gospel must include a clear and accurate explanation of the basic problem everyone everywhere faces. We all face many problems and struggles, but these are merely manifestations of this more basic and universal problem. That problem and

its results are variously described in scripture, but over and over again, the authors of scripture describe the primary problem humans have (in a very incomplete list) as “sin and falling short” (Romans 3:23 in context of God’s perfect standards), “unrighteousness” (Romans 1:29), “unfaithfulness” (Romans 3:3), “rebellion” (Hebrews 3:13-15), “enmity,” (James 4:4), “separation/alienation” (Isaiah 59:2), “hardness of heart” (Hebrews 3:15), and “death” (Romans 6:23) with respect to our relationship with God. This multifaceted but unified notion is the source of all other problems and is the primary issue that needs to be rectified if the many problems stemming from this one problem can be solved, or at least allayed.

The second central aspect of the gospel involves God’s initiative to solve this basic and primary problem. The Bible is clear that He set the parameters and initiated the only solution to the problem, namely, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Of course, there are numerous debates about what this simple statement actually means and entails, but it’s pretty clear that sin is the fundamental problem and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the sole solution (1 Timothy 2:5). As such, removing from any gospel presentation the notions of our problem of sin and the radical substitutionary solution God provided through Jesus Christ dying on the cross in our place has failed to retain a core and unremovable aspect of that message.

The third core aspect involves our response to this basic problem. What do we do in light of our sit-

uation and God’s offered solution? Human beings move in a lot of different (and sometimes remarkably creative) directions at this point—denial, ignoring, bargaining, distorting, adding, etc., but the Bible makes it very clear there is only one response that results in a real solution, namely faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ to forgive sin through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. There is a debate as to whether repentance is also a prerequisite to this trust and how much surrender is involved (something I will not delve into here!), but one thing is crystal clear: Jesus Christ alone was qualified to take the blame for something we deserved to die for, namely sin, and we must trust in Him to remove that penalty/consequence with respect to our relationship with God. Only then can we have forgiveness and eternal life.

Notice something very important here: The framing of the solution always depends on the framing of the problem. Is it sin (falling short of a perfect mark)? Is it rebellion? Is it weakness? Is it a lack of satisfaction? Is it ignorance? Is it gullibility? The list could go on, and it could be a combination of factors, but the main point is that the way you frame the problem always leads you to frame the solution in order to show how the basic problem is connected to and solved by the solution.

All of this is a very long preamble to my critique of this gospel presentation because I think it will help clarify some of the big and little concerns I have with it.

Specific Criticisms and Concerns

When the presentation begins, it would have us believe that the reason God created us was so that we could thrive through loving relationships with God, others, and creation. In one sense, of course, this is correct. God did make us in His image to reflect (image) Him

in the world, and this is manifest through right/loving relationships with Him (as Father, Son and Spirit), with others (as male and female), and with creation (as stewards and under-lords).

At this point, however, the presentation moves in a curious direc-

tion. Instead of describing God’s purpose for our lives in the light of this creational reality (notice how law one in the Four Laws presentation talks about it, for example), it focuses on the satisfaction of our “deepest longings.” In other words, the focus of the gospel is sudden-

ly shifted onto the fulfilment of our greatest longings and desires.

Before I go any further here, I do not deny that deep and ultimate satisfaction will be the result of God's salvation. As Augustine suggested, there is a restlessness in our lives until we find the true rest of Jesus Christ. But this is essentially a byproduct of a totally reoriented life. The way it is worded here, makes it seem like God's basic plan is to satisfy our deepest longings and desires. If, however, as unbelievers our lives are still bound in sin, our deepest desires will very often be deeply ungodly. Yes, for the most part, God's image prevents us from going completely off the rails in this regard, but when we are sinners, our deepest desires can become significantly skewed and demonic without us even knowing it.

To help illustrate what I mean, let me start with an extreme example and then move more towards the center. If I am a psychopath, for example, my deepest desires may revolve around things like rape and murder. But the problem is far more subtle than an extreme example like this. I may seem like a very normal person, but sin makes it such that my deepest desires are for people to like me, serve me, and meet my basic needs. That is to say, if I am selfish at the core of my being, my deepest desires will be essentially ungodly. When we come to Christ, one of the graces He gives us is a new nature and a new set of deep desires. But very often these desires are nearly absent prior to our conversion and they often have to be developed over time as we see ever more clearly the heart and values of God. Even if we long for a perfect world and perfectly loving relationships with other people, the motivations for those longings can be deeply selfish. For example, I want to live in a perfect world so that I will not have to struggle and suffer, or I want to have perfectly loving relationships because I want someone to love

me and fulfill all of my desires, not just my (perceived) needs.

The use of John 10:10b here betrays, in my opinion, a broader problem in evangelicalism with regard to the meaning of this verse in its context. First of all, it is not clear that the "life" Jesus is referring to here is primarily a life of satisfaction here on earth as much as it is the eternal life that fundamentally transforms the kind of life we pursue here in the light of the eternal life we have been given in Christ. But in many ways, this is a smaller issue. In context, the life Jesus is talking about is a selflessly self-sacrificial one. It is not a life that's all about me and my satisfaction. It is a life that is all about the needs and wellbeing of others. This is why Jesus goes on in the verse that follows (11) to state that the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for others (the sheep). In this regard, we are much too quick to assume that what Jesus means here is that He offers us some great and wonderful life according to our deepest desires and satisfactions. No. The life He offers in context is the one that gives itself away for the sake of others, even and often at the expense of our own lives.

But the presentation sets things up right at the start to suggest this is exactly what God's purpose is for our lives, namely that we might have a satisfying life. As picky as it might sound, that is a fundamentally different focal point than (to again use law one of the Four Laws) God offering a wonderful plan for your life. Yes, you might misunderstand what "wonderful" according to God means, but it is still an offer that centers your attention on God's plan and not your own desire for your deepest personal longings to be satisfied.

Regarding the second point, although this self-focus continues, I would like to raise another issue. When it asks at the bottom, "In what ways have you seen this in

your life or in your community?", the inclusion of the community, whether intended or not, can easily throw the focus off of individual sin and my rebellion against God to the idea that the community is the real problem, not me. If it had said "in your life and in your community," I may have been less concerned, but use of "or" here distances me from the problem and makes it appear that "the community" might be the manifestation of the problem rather than something I have done.

The same can be said for the question in the next point: "How have you seen people dissatisfied . . ." It should be, "How have YOU been dissatisfied as YOU have attempted to fulfill your longing to thrive?" But even as this question is made more personal, it becomes easier to see that the pursuit of satisfaction can be easily couched in personalist terms such that people may become focused on how they have become dissatisfied rather than connecting this to their sin and rebellion against God.

Up until this point, I openly recognize that much of this critique could be seen as petty and simply picking at words. When we get to the point on "Reconnecting with God," however, I believe my concerns are more substantive. In the first paragraph we are told that God came to the world in the person of Jesus who "like us, experienced the pain of the world." While this is certainly true, the verse shared beneath (1 John 4:9) states that Jesus came so that we might live through Him but leaves off the next verse (10) which explains why and how—by being the propitiation for sin. In short, we get the impression that the primary purpose for Jesus coming was to experience the pain of the world. This was certainly one result of His coming into the world and an aspect of why He came—see Hebrews 2:10-18, for example, but this passage in Hebrews (verse 17) also makes it very clear that the primary purpose for His suffering

was “so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

The next paragraph in the presentation then says, “Through his (Jesus’) death in our place he provided a way for us to reconnect with God. In rising from the dead he began making all things whole and offers us the opportunity to thrive again.” I see no clear connection between Christ’s death and resurrection and a propitiatory problem here. The penalty is largely couched in terms of pain and lack of thriving, but it is not pointed at the desperate danger we are in with respect to God’s wrath and eternal death facing us because we have walked away from Him. Yes, the world is messed up and I’m messed up, but the way the problem is presented gives the impression that identification with a messed-up world (experiencing its pain) was the primary way in which Jesus was sent and sought to solve the problem. In this sense, the problem centers around dissatisfaction in this world and is solved by Jesus coming into the world, but what gets lost is any real sense of eternity or spiritual life beyond this shockingly brief material life.

Granted, the verse that follows (2 Corinthians 5:21) does bring this notion of a sin offering by Christ’s death into the equation, but without any clarity as to why it was necessary and mattered so much. Someone without any background in the Bible would not, in my view, have any notion of the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death for sin on my behalf. Yes, Jesus died for sin, but why? The question that immediately follows (“How might your life or your community be different if it were thriving?”) gives the impression that the goal of His death is not really satisfaction of a penalty incurred by sin, but to bring about the thriving of the self and the community in this life. These are derivative results, but not the primary reason Jesus died. The problem is not radical enough to really warrant death here. Not only that, but this question could be easily answered using very ungodly and worldly values. For example, someone might easily answer the question this way: “We would be thriving if we all accept and never judge one another,” or “We would thrive if we let people love (have sex with) whoever they want however they want.” The notion of “thriving” has been raised here but the biblically divine, and deeply counter-cultural, vision of what that really means has still not been explained in any meaningful or discernable way.

When Jesus’ invitation is given, it is an invitation largely, if not wholly, devoid of repentance or remorse. The salvation offered here is a promise of release from pain and dysfunction leading to thriving. It implies that it is done for personal (or perhaps communal and creational) benefit in the here and now and is not really oriented toward surrendering one’s life to God’s forgiveness or looking toward the reality of eternity and our standing with God regarding that.

In the “talking to him about it” portion, what we are supposed to tell Jesus is that we are “weary” of doing things our own way. I understand that this is an attempt to connect Matthew 11:28-29 to this part, but it gives the immediate impression that being sorry and remorseful is almost irrelevant. All that matters is my weariness with trying to thrive (as I define it) on my own. Now I want to let Jesus help me thrive.

Summary and Conclusion

To try and give a very concise summary, what this presentation ultimately suggests is that God came to earth through the person of Jesus so that we, our community, and creation could reconnect with God and “thrive” again in our lives. The reason we, our community, and creation are not thriving right now is because we walked away from God and tried to do things our own way. Instead, we need to trust and follow Jesus’ way in order to thrive.

Running this through the grid I shared above about the three essentials of an adequate gospel message, this presentation seems to describe a derivative reality (a lack of thriving) as the primary problem, rather than sin being the primary problem (the first aspect). Yes, it clarifies that the reason we do not thrive is because we decided to walk away from God (i.e., we sinned), but it never clearly links (so far as I can see) this walking away from God with the death of Jesus Christ as being a substitutionary atonement for this sin in any logical or meaningful way (the second aspect). It does not ignore this in that it shares verses like 2 Corinthians 5:21, but if I have little or no biblical literacy, I think I would be very hard-pressed to understand what that verse is even referring to and why Christ had to die in the first place.

When we get to the third aspect (our response), trust and turning are mentioned, but nowhere is the listener confronted with the need to express remorse or sorrow for being a central part of the problem. Instead, I get the impression (but again, this may just be me) that the listener is largely a victim of this lack of thriving rather than part of the reason we and the world around us fails to thrive.

In an attempt to trace a derivative result of sin (lack of thriving) as the theme for the gospel, I believe several important things are missing or diminished in terms of significance and clarity. While someone could certainly come to know Christ through this presentation because God is gracious and He ultimately takes our feeble

offerings and makes them much more than what they are, during follow-up they would likely need a lot of biblically-informed reorientation in terms of what it really means to follow Jesus Christ and how sin manifests itself in life, badly skewing and distorting their conception and vision of what we and all creation was actually made for—to know and glorify God forever through a life of humble repentance and submission. Instead, the person is subtly led to believe that God exists in order to make them and the rest of creation thrive in this life. But when the going gets tough with respect to following Jesus, as it always does, what would keep that person from deciding that it's no longer worth it? When thriving in Christ looks radically different than what they first expected based on this gospel message, they will be much more likely to feel like they have been sold a false bill of goods and look for another way to pursue a thriving life that is more attractive and far less arduous than the way of Jesus Christ. ■

ETHNICITY AS IDENTITY

There is a debate going on within evangelical Christianity in which some are claiming that ethnicity is “core to our identity in the kingdom of God.” In fact, it is claimed that “God sees every believer as an ethnic-specific Christian.” This leads to the conclusion that we all ought to do what we can to discover our ethnic identity, even if we as Americans have no idea what it is and why it matters. Why would people believe such a thing is true? There are, I think, two reasons.

1. Current arguments about race and ethnicity have landed on the affirmation of ethnicity (and sometimes race) as what is needed to empower oppressed people of color. In other words, the path to liberation of the oppressed is seen to be one in which the ethnicity of the oppressed is affirmed and elevated to a place of equality with the dominant white culture. The motivation behind this move can certainly be seen as legitimate. We as Christians certainly believe (or should believe!) that God loves all people equally, whatever their ethnicity. Any notions of racial or ethnic superiority of one group over the other ethnicities must be regarded, from a biblical point of view, as contemptible. Thus, efforts to affirm and even celebrate different ethnic identities, in general, deserve our approval.
2. The second reason people think this is true is, however, much less acceptable. Indeed, the reason for this view is given from Scripture. It is pointed out that Revelation 5:9 & 7:9 both describe the great congregation of the redeemed in heaven as being made up of “every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” Though this is indisputably true, the interpretation placed on these two verses is, hermeneutically, quite suspect. A cardinal rule of good biblical interpretation is that a passage must be interpreted according to the author's intention. It is true that postmodernist interpretation places the decision in the hands of the interpreter instead of the author, but such a move makes all interpretation totally subjective and undermines the very inspiration of Scripture. So, let us continue to seek to understand the message of Scripture according to what the author (ultimately the Holy Spirit, but always through a human instrument) intended to say. We discern the author's intended meaning by looking carefully at his choice of words, the grammar and the context surrounding the word, phrase or sentence we are considering. What is John telling us in these two passages? His point is that God's redemption of the peoples is inclusive, not exclusive. It includes all groupings of people that are common, i.e. tribes, language groups, people (a general term for humans in Greek) and nations (typically some kind of political or national unit). Looking at those groups, which one is “ethnicity?” All of them? So, our nationality is to be “eternally” preserved? Surely not! Think of all the nations that have existed that exist no longer. They have been completely absorbed by other nations or even died out and disappeared. Think of all the tribes. Think of all the languages, many of which no longer exist. Pressing these terms that John uses to emphasize inclusivity to refer instead to particularity is a hermeneutical move without justification. John simply wants us to know that the redemption achieved by the Lamb is

universal, inclusive of all of humanity. Of course, I don't mean every human being will be saved, but there will be those who come to faith from all segments of humanity and they will form one redeemed people. Yes, they will be individuals, and, in some way, their identity will be preserved in eternity. How we do not really know? There is no justification for believing that they will continue to be organized into ethnic groups and that those groups will be distinct from the other ethnic groups. The point here is inclusiveness and unity, not distinction and separateness.

What is the danger here? The danger is that a theology based on a misinterpretation of Scripture will lead to a focus on ethnicity that distracts us and leads us away from our call to proclaim the universal (i.e. for everybody) Gospel that brings people together who were at odds or even in conflict before. Jesus' call is for *all who are weary and burdened to come to Him and take His yoke upon themselves and learn from Him*, and His promise is rest for our souls (Matt. 11:28-30). Jesus' commission is to go make disciples of *all nations baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19-20)* In other words, His commission is to go to *everybody and to bring into a single fellowship all who believe.*

Considering all the divisions that exist within mankind, how is it even possible to imagine making such disparate people into a single body? Paul answers this question explicitly for us in 2 Cor. 5:16-20.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The portions of the text that I have underlined show the emphasis of the inclusiveness and unity contained within the Gospel. It changes our identity ("the flesh") and makes us a "new creation." This is the work of God and is accomplished by means of the work of Christ who died in our place (2 Cor. 5:21). This message is the message of reconciliation, that which we are to proclaim to a divided and sinful world. But it brings about reconciliation with God and makes a **new creation** out of those who believe!

Biblically speaking, there is every reason to focus on and emphasize this new identity believers have in Christ over all other identities we have. That is what the passages in Revelation 5 and 7 are really emphasizing. We are ONE people, redeemed by the Lamb. We are new creations. Let us say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) The point of the Christian life is the life of Christ brought to expression through His followers. It is not to focus on being an English Christian, or a German Christian or an Arab Christian or Maasai Christian or a Chinese Christian, etc., etc.! The focus needs to be on our unity because of our identity. Our identity is defined by Christ; we are new creations by means of the work of His Spirit.

Frankly, I find the shift in emphasis to ethnic identity disturbing because, in the end, it elevates our differences in a way that the Scriptures do not. The Scriptures elevate our shared humanity. That's the basis of our value in God's eyes. But the Scriptures also elevate (in importance!) **our shared sinfulness!** It is our value as

creations in His image and our utter need because of our fallenness that moved God to send a Redeemer. Romans 3:21-31 is of decisive importance here. We are ALL in the same boat, there is no distinction, all have sinned and fallen short and are justified by His grace as a gift (vs. 22-24). The Scriptural emphasis is that God so loved the **world**. That's all of us. And He loved us enough to die for us because... simply because He loves us, not because we are brown or black or white or yellow. That's where the emphasis belongs, not on our differences.

Paul did not deny his ethnicity. Indeed, he mentions it numerous times. But what did he say ultimately about that ethnicity? In Philippians 3 he outlines his pedigree detailing his identity as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" and a Pharisee but then followed that with one of the most powerful statements one can imagine on the insignificance of that. "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8). This attitude is very much the opposite from making a great deal out of his ethnicity. In fact, even as a man born a Jew—a really big deal—he discounts it. In fact, he is ready to say all such considerations for him belong on the rubbish heap. What really matters is that he is "in Christ." This position, the "in-Christ" position for believers is of decisive importance for Paul and his theology found throughout his epistles, particularly in Ephesians, Colossians and Romans.

Even though the Old Testament from Genesis 12 through the end is focused on God's plan and its realization through the covenant nation Israel, there are indications that this does not exclude or devalue other nations. This is powerfully communicated by the prophet Jonah, whose rejection of God's mercy toward the Ninevites is clearly condemned in this little gem. God loves the Ninevites and shows them His mercy. Then, of course, there are the prophecies about the nations coming to Jerusalem to worship the true God. A good example of this is Psalm 22:27.

***All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.***

This is but one example of many places where a future inclusion of the nations (the other "ethnicities") are included in God's plans for the world.

It is also of fundamental importance that the Bible begins with the creation account. In that account the beginning of humanity in the garden is the result of God's special creation of the first two human beings in His image. Gen. 1:26-27 places great stress on the fact that God created the first male and first female, both in His image. From these two people came the entire human race (Acts 17:26). Thus all people ultimately have the same human roots. Our first parents were God's special creation and we all descended from them. That assures our common humanity. That assures we are all God's image-bearers. As such, we are all equal in value and importance—no matter what our inherited ethnicity might be. Even if we have no idea what our ethnic background is and it doesn't matter to us, what does matter is that we are His image-bearers like all other human beings and are responsible to treat all other human beings with dignity and respect.

All of this is not meant in the least to underestimate the importance of one's personal identity. We are personal beings. God's love for each of us is personal. He loves us because He is love and because He made us in His image. He doesn't love me because I am a male or white or of European descent. Those things are undeniably a part of what makes me me in this world. But they have absolutely nothing to do with why God loves me. The cause of His love is rooted in who He is, not in what I am. The exact same thing is true of my wife, of my black brother, of my Asian sister, etc., etc. This means that our focus needs to be on reaching the world that Jesus commissioned us to take the Gospel to. And it also means that

we treat one another without regard to skin color or ethnicity with love and dignity and respect. That's the way God treats us and we are called to be like Him. ■

—Written by Dr. D. Trent Hyatt, November 4, 2020

COMMENTS ON ETHNIC IDENTITY ELEVATED OVER IDENTITY IN CHRIST

What follows is content presented by a Cru staff member who serves as a speaker at the Lenses Institute. Although there is no video recording of this talk, the speaker was directly quoted by a Lenses participant on September 23, 2020, as having said “Identity in Christ cannot be elevated above our ethnic identity.” That this is being taught at a regularly recurring Cru-sanctioned event is deeply troubling.

What follows was written by the speaker who gave the above quote at the Lenses Institute. A critique in bold italic font interspersed throughout the article seeks to point out the flawed hermeneutical methods and statements that are contrary to scripture. The desire is not to shame or divide but to seek agreement on what the Bible really says about ethnicity and unity. Undoubtedly many staff have heard this teaching and it seems important to discuss these ideas point by point.

Christians love talking about our identity being “in Christ.” I’ve particularly noticed that white Christians love talking about this. The spiritual truths applied to us by faith are wonderful, are they not? And understanding and internalizing them is key to discipleship. Justification, propitiation, adoption, transformation, glorification, and the like. Isn’t it peculiar though, that we talk about our identity “in Christ” in spiritual terms only, and rarely, if ever, talk about our identity being “in Christ, the brown-skinned ethnic-specific Jewish man from a marginalized town on the periphery of Israel’s capital city?”

By God’s grace, I’ve been walking with Jesus for over 20 years. Throughout my discipleship journey I’ve heard well-meaning people, white and people of color alike, say and teach things like:

- “My identity is in Christ. Nothing else matters.”

Ethnicity does matter, but the above statement is considered a figure of speech where one exaggerates the second statement in order to illustrate the primary importance (relatively speaking) of the first. Jesus does this, for example, in Luke 14:26 when he says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Jesus is not telling us to hate our father, mother, etc. He is using hyperbole to make a point about the importance of loving Jesus more than any other personal relationship, even those within the family. Granted, this statement is often misunderstood, but it does make an important point, which is what the author tries to refute.

- “My identity in Christ is most important. Ethnicity or race is secondary.”

This is a correct understanding according to passages like Galatians 3:28, which the author will later try to undermine. ESV—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- “My _____ (enter race or ethnicity,) doesn’t matter. What’s important is that I’m a Christian.”

The comparative use of language here applies as well.

- “At the foot of the Cross we are all the same.”

As Christians we are all the same with respect to our soteriological (saved) status. This is the point of verses like Galatians 3:28, so while that “sameness” is a soteriological reality (result of salvation), that does not mean we are all the same with respect to our spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, capacities, ethnicities, experiences, etc.

- “God is colorblind.”

God is not colorblind. He does see (and creates) our ethnicity. But again, for most of those who use this expression the intended meaning is one of racial equality before God, not ethnic denial.

- “Jesus came to save souls, not skin.”

This statement is theologically false. Our resurrection life in Christ will be an embodied one as 1 Corinthians 15 (for example) clearly shows.

I used to agree. These statements certainly sound spiritual. But I no longer agree with these ideologies. They exhibit a bifurcated theology that the Bible does not promote, and actually cause severe damage to us all. Here’s why I believe this:

Revelation 5:9 says, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every *tribe* and *tongue* and *people* and *nation*. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’” (emphasis mine)

Revelation 7:9 says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all *tribes* and *peoples* and *tongues*, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...” (emphasis mine)

Here In Revelation, Jesus’ closest disciple, John, gives us a window into the end of time when the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Sin is gone. Pain is gone. Tears are gone. Lies are gone. Satan’s work is fully destroyed. All is made new. We know that repetition is important in the Bible. Here we have two passages in Revelation pointing to this same observation: *One of the primary markers of believers in the new heavens and new earth is their ethnicity* (nation, tribe, people, tongue). God is noticing and highlighting that His Kingdom is full of people from every ethnicity. In fact, God is *ensuring* that His Kingdom will be filled with people from every ethnicity.

The last sentence is correct, but the point of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 is not to prove that our ethnicity is “One of the primary markers of believers in the new heavens and new earth...” (emphasis in the original). The point of these passages is to represent the scope of God’s plans and intentions for the gospel and the praise of His glory, that the gospel will go out and be preached and embraced in every corner of the earth. Christ’s death is for all, not just for certain special classes and races of people. The ethnic aspect is there, but not in order to make it “one of the primary markers” of Christians in heaven. Rather, the primary marker is illustrated by the notion of being clothed in “white robes” and having “palm branches” in their hands. The robes represent the purity given to them in Christ while the palm branches are symbols of victory over death. The author elevates an aspect of the text that is relevant to the purpose — the scope

of redemption — but not in the way he is depicting it, as a means of enshrining ethnicity as a primary identity marker.

This assumption serves as the basis for subsequent claims that God looks upon us ethnically rather than as mere Christians. God does see us ethnically, but the fact that this later serves as a means to elevate ethnicity in God’s economy of salvation is troubling and unbiblical. More on this below.

In the new heavens and new earth, God identifies us by our ethnicity. What this means is that I’m never “just a Christian”. To God there is no such thing as “regular or plain Christian”. *We are always seen by God as ethnic-specific Christians.* To be clear, we are also **one** family, a kingdom, and we all serve as priests together. There is no “us” and “them”. We are bought, as ethnic-specific individuals into a “We” family. This is all done through Jesus’ ethnic-specific Jewish blood. (Yes, God decided to put on brown skin and enter the world as an ethnic-specific Jewish man from a marginalized town.)

It’s okay to note Jesus’ specific ethnicity. He would inevitably have to be gendered and part of an ethnic community to be human, after all. But the concern is the implied attitude that His ethnicity is critical to His mission.

It is important insofar as He is a Jew and a descendant of David, because the Messiah necessarily had to be, but going beyond this goes beyond the biblical authors’ interest in Jesus’ ethnicity. Making too much of his “brown skin” could actually serve to limit His significance if we do not understand, along with the authors of scripture, that Jesus was not just a Jew for the Jews or a poor man for poor men, or a male for males.

When you begin to make His identity strictly tied to his ethnicity and gender rather than tying it to His nature, character, and life purpose, you inevitably limit the scope of His significance and ministry (whether intentionally or unintentional). In addition, it is the identity and character of Jesus as the God-man and as a perfectly godly and Spirit-filled human being that matter the most here. That is what all nations are invited into both in terms of salvation and in terms of sanctification.

The most helpful definition I’ve read for ethnicity is from author and activist Lisa Sharon Harper in her book *The Very Good Gospel*:

“Ethnicity is created by God as people groups move together through space and time. It is dynamic and developed over long periods of time. It is not about power. It is about group identity, heritage, language, place, and common group experience over time.”

Ms. Harper states that ethnicity “is not about power.” Actually, sometimes it is. But what is not said to clarify is that she has set up an ideological dichotomy between race and ethnicity that is followed by the author. Much of the literature on this subject now assumes that dichotomy, but this technical use of terms is not clarified here and so suggests that our ethnicity (a material reality) has nothing to do with power. Only race (a social construct) has to do with power. But that deceptively suggests that if I celebrate and recognize my ethnicity I am not exhibiting an attitude of power relations. This is patently false. Power is inherent in all demarcations of ethnic and classist distinctions. To deny ethnici-

ty has power, is to deny the reality of history and the way ethnic groups have used power for better and for worse. This taps into a broader discussion that does not need to be wrestled with here.

If in our discipleship we are telling people that their primary identity is in Christ, apart from their ethnicity, then we are making a distinction and separation that the Bible does not make.

The statement here that our “primary identity is in Christ, apart from . . . ethnicity,” again ignores what is really trying to be communicated by this statement — that we are no longer ethnically at odds with one another as we once were, just as the Jews were at odds with all other ethnic groups.

Ephesians 2:11-16 (mentioned nowhere in the article) eloquently makes this point loud and clear. The gospel brings ethnic diversity together — without obliterating it — in a way the world cannot. This is relevant because of what the author claims about the context of Galatians 3:28 below. He wants to claim that in context Paul’s statement in this verse (and presumably in Colossians 3:11 as well) is directed toward classism. That is partially true. The world does this, but the real thrust of these passages is that the gospel is for anyone and everyone who trusts in Jesus, regardless of who or what they are. It is certainly not making central claims about the primary and paramount value of ethnicity.

“Ephesians 2:11-16 ESV—Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

Our identity in Christ is *a/ways* as an ethnic-specific Christian. Many white people will disagree with me and will quote Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” They will claim that in Christ there are no distinctions. We have no differences. At the foot of the cross we are the same. Our identity is “just Christian”.

However, Paul is not saying there are no differences or distinctions and that in Christ we are melded into one body of *sameness*. Contextually, Paul is saying that the sinful world creates social hierarchies of value based on religion, ethnicity, culture, station, and gender. And in the Kingdom of God our differences do not connote value. There is no hierarchy for these things. So God sees every believer as an ethnic-specific Christian, with equal value, worth, and dignity. To deny or downplay my ethnicity is to cause damage to the Image of God in me, and in others. God gave me an ethnicity, God affirms and identifies me in heaven by this ethnicity. To deny or downplay it is to separate myself from myself. Some might call this losing one’s soul.

Again, Paul's point in this passage is not to deny these aspects of our lives. That misunderstands what he is trying to do here. Paul is "leveling" these social and ethnic and gendered aspects precisely because they ARE the problem in many people's minds. The Jews certainly saw themselves as superior as God's chosen people and descendants of Abraham as verse 29 in Galatians 3 goes on to highlight. Paul is saying these do not matter with respect to salvation. He is not thereby denying they are important in no other respects.

Additionally, we white Christians love to talk about our identity in Christ, apart from ethnicity, because we have no ethnicity to lose, and most of us are unaware we lost anything to begin with.

One is at a loss to know what to make of these broad-sweeping, over-generalized and unsubstantiated statements. As if emphasizing and glorying in our identity in Christ serves to deny, obliterate, or denigrate our ethnic backgrounds. In addition, the claim that "we white Christians . . . have no ethnicity to lose, and . . . are unaware we lost anything to begin with" seems loaded with unsubstantiated assumptions and baggage, so much so that it is difficult to understand apart from a major exploration of the ideological bases that would lead to and support such a statement. This language may spring from a commitment to certain views of "ethnicity, whiteness and race" and requires a journey into several other assumptions and claims. Suffice it to say the premise of "whiteness" and the way he is using it, and other types of classifications, is rejected here.

But many of our brothers and sisters of color have deep, meaningful, even soulful connections with their ethnicity, as they should. At times white Christians disciple and spiritually lead people of color. We don't realize it, but telling a person of color their identity is in Christ alone can easily (and often) be interpreted that their ethnicity will have to die and they will need to assimilate into whiteness in order to grow spiritually. Well-meaning as it might be, this nonetheless is a form of spiritual abuse and theological colonization.

Does he truly believe that teaching someone their position and identity as a believer in Christ is a form of assimilation into "whiteness" and "a form of spiritual abuse and theological colonization"? His real claim is that ethnic people are being wrongly taught that their identity in Christ is all that matters and that their ethnic identity matters not at all. I honestly do not believe that this is what most Christians—"white" Christians included—mean.

They mean that our identity in Christ transcends ethnic, cultural, gendered, socioeconomic and political boundaries. It even transcends time and space altogether. And the reason they teach this is because this is precisely what Paul teaches us, that our identity in Christ transcends these categories such that they no longer form the basis for godly Christian life and growth. Our Christian identity informs all other identities in a transformative way such that we are no longer just those things. We are still those things, but we are no longer those things in a divisive and derogatory way.

Many Christians of color sadly believe this lie, lose touch with their ethnicity and culture, and assimilate into whiteness. And it all sounds great because they talk about how their identity is "in Christ alone", which sounds right. When people of color assimilate into white Christianity it also makes the white people around them

feel comfortable. The room, organization, or church looks diverse, but the identity is sameness. This is another tragedy that Jesus will one day undo.

The way this is worded makes it sound like teaching people what Paul talks about in his New Testament letters is equivalent to losing one's cultural and ethnic identity. The incredible irony is that history shows that when the gospel was brought to indigenous people groups, it actually empowered them to become independent and to contextualize their Christian faith in a way that celebrated the good aspects of their ethnicity, while simultaneously helping them discern aspects of their cultural heritage that are sinful and need to be repudiated, rejected and repented of. This reality debunks the inaccurate and mythical paradigm of contemporary secular sociology and anthropology.

Sameness is not the goal here at all. Instead, the goal is for all believers to comprehend and appropriate the spiritual resources that God offers in order that His children might become increasingly conformed to the image and character of Jesus Christ. We know from Paul that sameness is not the goal because he is very clear in passages like 1 Corinthians 12:14 the goal for all believers is to experience loving unity amidst diversity.

But the author seems to suggest that any teaching about our identity in Christ is done in an imperialistically "white" fashion. At worst he may believe it should not be taught at all because the danger of ethnic obliteration is just too great.

In the new heavens and new earth there will be no whiteness.

The author here means "an imperialistic colonial system that white males created and maintain" without reference to color per se. The use of color categories can be confusing without this clarification.

There *will* be fair peach-skinned people from every European or Caucasian ethnic group. But the lie and identity of whiteness will be no more. Jesus will not see us as white people. With this, the ideologies, values, assumptions, and unconscious beliefs and behaviors that drive whiteness will also be no more.

The statement about "ideologies, values, assumptions, and unconscious beliefs and behaviors that drive whiteness" needs to be explained in more detail and with more specificity, because it is central to his thesis. But he assumes the reader knows what he is talking about.

Some white Christians may say, "I can't trace my ethnicity. It's too far gone. It's not that important. It's a lost cause." Interestingly enough we don't say this about abortion, a new Stage 1 cancer diagnosis, sex-trafficking, or a fresh rift in an important relationship. Anywhere in life where we see the image of God broken, we seek to restore it, even if it's fullness doesn't come in this lifetime. We may not fully restore our ethnic identity this side of heaven, but we must work to restore it as much as we can. And we certainly must work to be become "less white"; to dismantle whiteness as our identity (more on this below).

Has our quest for Christian identity now become grounded in a discovery and restoration of ethnic identity? Is a DNA test and extensive historical and genealogical research to determine one's nation of origin now a necessity? That has some curiosity value and may even have some medical and conversational value, but

how does this empower and clarify one's identity as a Christ follower?

It seems of greater value to explore and identify the ways my family and cultural background and life experiences have impacted (for better or for worse) my capacity to comprehend and appropriate who I am in Christ, such that my national and familial ethnicity might be fully transformed to become the kind of Christian I should increasingly become for such a time and place as this.

THE ETHNICITY-LESS NATION

In response to hearing that our ethnicity will be core to our identity in the Kingdom of God,

I am assuming he believes that Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 support this massive supposition, but the critique already stated they do not. One's "core identity" includes ethnicity but it hangs upon and is grounded in a right relationship to God on the virtue of one's more fundamental position and identity in Christ. This leaves the author skating on thin ice.

many white Christians will say, "Well, my ethnicity is American." This is understandable since it is the political nation we live in. However our ethnicity cannot be simply "American", because the United States of America was founded as an *ethnicity-less nation*. At the founding of this country, the removal of ethnicities was intentional and codified into law in order to protect the white race and racism. By removing ethnicity as the guiding identity of community, a hierarchy based on race and access to power could take its place. In the 1751 publication *America as a Land of Opportunity*, Benjamin Franklin argued to the British Ministry that America should be kept an exclusively Anglo-Saxon colony to protect the race. And that is exactly what happened.

I learned from author and activist Mark Charles that on Line 33 of the Declaration of Independence the native peoples of this land are referred to as "merciless Indian Savages" with a capital "S" (identity). Today there are over 500 Native nations (ethnicities) residing in the U.S. The "Founding Fathers" did not identify the native peoples of this land as image bearers with God-given tribal nation ethnicities such as Creek, Cherokee, Iroquois, and Wampanoag. Instead, the "Founding Fathers" stripped natives of their God-given ethnic identity (though God and many of the people knew it remained) and put every nation, codified by law, into *one* group: the man-made race called "Indian Savage", while making it clear that this race was less than human.

Similarly Article I, Section 2, of The Constitution of 1787 details how enslaved people would be counted as three-fifths of a person (some say 3 out of every 5 would be counted as a person). Regardless, the Imago Dei was stripped away. Additionally the God-given ethnicities of enslaved Africans were stripped away (though God and many of the people knew it remained). Enslaved Africans were no longer identified by their God-given African ethnic tribe and nation. They were now identified by the man-made race called "Slave". The "Founding Fathers" knew that stripping people of their ethnicity was a key way to conglomerate power in the hands of white people. Giving those who are being colonized a new name and identity, along with separating them from their family, tribe, and clan is essential to effective colonization.

In this "new" ethnicity-less nation, white people were also be stripped of their image bearing ethnicity as well. With ethnicities stripped away, the U.S. was founded on a racial hierarchy of White, Indian Savage, and Slave. Yes, actual ethnicities have been added to the census over time, but "White" remains the first category. Even in the 2020 census, when you could add in an ethnic identity to your whiteness, "White" was still the defining identity (which is why I didn't check that box). By

keeping a white majority, and working hard to keep white people segregated, our nation ensures that the most resources are given to white communities.

More than claims are needed here; proof and hard data are required.

Essential to our work here is the reality that the United States was founded upon the lie of race. It was founded upon the destruction of the image of God and the construction of the lie of race, particularly the lie of whiteness. The other races were created to prop up and bring value to whiteness. We know this lie continues to this day. We can be tempted to say, “Well that was hundreds of years ago.” Or “Civil Rights in the 1960s changed all that.” Yes it is true that many changes have taken place. However, an evil seed was planted at the birth of this nation. An evil seed cannot be reformed. It must be dug up and replaced. We cannot expect different fruit if we have not dealt with the seed.

Granting the highly debatable premise here, what is the real solution? How does one dig up and replace the evil seed? The author fails to point to sharing the gospel and calling people to repentance and recognition of how we all contributed to the problem of evil both past and present. He makes no declaration of our desperate need for God in Christ to give us a completely new nature and identity that includes our ethnic history but reforms and transforms it in the light of biblical truth. If “whiteness” is evil, then why not call out and rebuke the evil found in other identity constructs based upon racial groupings and ideological commitments? Rather, the solution appears first and foremost investigation into one’s ethnic roots, then using that as a basis to affirm the ethnicities of all human beings.

Additionally, isn’t it peculiar how people of color don’t exactly get the option to be “just be American”? If we are all “just American” what’s with all the hyphens? African-American. Asian-American. Mexican-American. Native-American. We white people are not called European-American. I’m not called German-American. We are just “American”. This is because the United States was founded to promote and protect whiteness, not for God-glorifying ethnicities.

Part of my journey of recovering my ethnicity is to start giving myself a hyphen. I have German, British, Austrian, and Scottish-Irish heritage that I know next to nothing about. I’ve also been raised and socialized in the U.S., so I can’t ignore I am American. Perhaps God is creating a new ethnicity: German-British-Austrian-Scottish-Irish-American, where the uniquenesses of these various fair-skinned people groups are combined into something new? Is He not?

What could the richness of possibilities be if I dig through the roots and begin affirming and celebrating how and who God has made me to be? I may or may not find much depending on what oral, written, or DNA history I can find. But could it be that in attempting to restore my own ethnic dignity, I would be in a better position to affirm and celebrate the Imago Dei in my brothers and sisters of color? Could it be that in becoming human again, I can affirm and celebrate the humanity in another? Could it be that as I recognize my uniqueness I can recognize the uniqueness in another? Could it be that as I let go of my race, I can help dismantle racism in me and in the world?

A WORD OF CAUTIOUS WISDOM

Race is a lie that Satan has implanted into the heart of humanity. Race is not biologically true. Race is not theologically true. White is *not* an ethnicity. With this, we know lies can be very powerful and create the illusion of truth. In fact, this lie, and the lies that protect it, have created a reality. Race traumatizes us all deeply. With this, knowing race is a lie both biologically and theologically does not mean we can pretend it doesn’t exist as a reality. This means that while I seek to restore my ethnicity and dismantle whiteness, I have to recognize that while God doesn’t

see me as white, **the world does**. I cannot pretend that my impact and presence in the world is neutral. *In our racialized society I am white, and my impact on the world is as a white man.*

In her book *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo (a white woman), gives us a word of cautious wisdom: “This does not mean that we should stop identifying as white and start claiming only to be Italian or Irish. To do so is to deny the reality of racism in the here and now, and this denial would simply be color-blind racism. Rather, I strive to be ‘less white.’ To be less white is to be less racially oppressive. This requires me to be more racially aware, to be better educated about racism, and to continually challenge racial certitude and arrogance.”

“To be less white is to be open to, interested in, and compassionate toward the racial realities of people of color. I can build a wide range of authentic and sustained relationships across race and accept that I have racist patterns. And rather than be defensive about those patterns, I can be interested in seeing them more clearly so that I might ameliorate them. To be less white is to break with white silence and white solidarity, to stop privileging the comfort of white people over the pain of racism for people of color, to move past guilt and into action. These less oppressive patterns are active, not passive. Ultimately, I strive for a less white identity for my own liberation and sense of justice, not to save people of color.”

This book requires extensive and serious critique as it is ideologically dangerous and theologically blasphemous.

As we journey down this road of dismantling our whiteness, restoring our ethnic identity, and working to become allies in the fight for racial justice,

The piece begins by denigrating the practice of teaching Christians that their identity in Christ is a primary aspect of their new identity as a believer. And it ends by suggesting that the solution to life’s deepest problems lies in “dismantling our whiteness, restoring our ethnic identity and working to become allies in the fight for racial justice.”

This article completely loses sight of the radical nature of the problem (sin) and our tendency, even after we become believers, to ground our identity in numerous other things rather than Jesus Christ. Paul’s goal (along with other NT writers) was precisely to point believers to their new Christian nature and identity and not hold on to previous ethnic commitments that would likely result in Christian division. Sadly, this article moves us in the opposite direction.

The author has chosen ethnicity as the construct to which we must turn our hearts and minds, claiming this will move us and society toward what God intended. However, this is not a biblical focal point, but rather a popular ideological focal point in our contemporary North American society (not so much, by the way, in other parts of the world). Despite the author’s claims to the contrary, ethnicity is not, and never has been, the solution offered in scripture.

all sorts of difficult and unpleasant feelings almost automatically rise up in inside of us. What are these feelings and what are we supposed to do with them? Why do our feelings often leave us paralyzed? It is to these questions we now turn.

—JUNE 15, 2020 ■

THE NEW HERMENEUTIC METHODOLOGY

One of the most foundational issues facing Cru and the church today is the subtle return of a relativistic approach to understanding the Bible. Traditionally the protestant approach to interpreting the Bible (hermeneutics) has been to understand the meaning of a particular Bible text in the historical context in which it was written and then applying those truths to the current culture. This approach comes from the conviction that God communicated transcendent truth in a historical/cultural context. Thus, understanding what God is saying requires us to understand that context before we can properly apply any principle to our current historical/cultural context. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the church was especially damaged by ignoring the importance of the original historical/cultural context (e.g. Kant's epistemology and Barth's understanding of inspiration) which led to an overemphasis on human perspectives of the scripture to the point that practically speaking the Bible meant whatever the reader wanted it to mean.

The current subtle form of relativism is being pushed via a re-examination of hermeneutics. The fundamental foundation of the original historical/cultural context has been replaced by the interpreter's current historical/cultural context. The method now is to understand a person's current culture as most important and then read the scripture through that lens. This subtly attacks the very idea that God communicated His transcendent truth in a particular context and thus the need to understand that original context. The particularly dangerous aspect of this form of hermeneutics is that it allows the believer to say that they view the Bible as inerrant because they believe God has spoken through it, yet at the same time ignore traditional protestant/orthodox interpretations of texts because it is a "European" interpretation of the text. A Cru staff member who spoke at a recent Lenses Institute verbalized this in a session where she noted that addressing

race/ethnicity feels like a "threat to orthodoxy" even though it's just a "different hermeneutic".

Anonymous Attendee 01:53 PM

The problem is that anyone's "biblical worldview" is an interpretation. It is an interpretation. As a white heterosexual male I have a particular context to interpret the Scriptures. If I am a black male I may have a very different interpretation of the Scriptures. So who is Biblical? I think we need to be very careful on this point. Who is saying it is Biblical? If one is of the majority culture then that view can be weaponized against non-majority people. History shows us this is true. This can be true within Cru. It can silence BIPOC. Do we teach in our IBS classes and theological schools non-European theologies? If not why not? If we do, why do we do that? This needs to be explored.

In the image included, this idea underlies the question that was asked by an anonymous Cru staff person during Steve Seller's leadership transition talk Oct 22, 2020. While there is value in different perspectives on the Bible, the questioner never appeals to the need to have a better understanding of the original text. Their main desire is for a biblical worldview to be taught from a non-European culture.

Their idea that the Bible can be 'weaponized' is a valid concern. However, the problem is that the relativistic approach to interpreting the Bible that they desire can lead people to ignore biblical truths that are difficult or unpleasant. In order to share and defend the gospel properly and to love one another according to the Great Commandment we have to first and foremost understand what God is teaching us through the transcendent truths of scripture. This "different hermeneutic" is a significant danger to us fulfilling God's call for our ministry. While it may make some people feel good, it ultimately replaces the most trustworthy method of interpreting the scriptures that the church has used for 2000 years, with a relativistic method that relies on the ever changing cultural values and attitudes of sinful men. ■

BIBLICAL SHEPHERDING, TRUTH, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

It is our belief that Cru leaders hold a special responsibility, even accountability before God for their shepherding and leading of our staff. Our goal Biblically is to love people. Loving them involves care and speaking truth, but not tickling ears. Cru must be committed to promoting speakers, books, materials, etc. that are in line with the Word of God. We cannot compromise on this. To do otherwise is to neglect our roles as shepherd leaders. It is no exaggeration to say that this is an existential threat to our organization.

1. The concept of leadership is found throughout the Scriptures. It is exemplified in various roles (e.g., kings, prophets, priests, apostles, elders, parents, etc.) and it is communicated through various metaphors (e.g., shepherd, servant, steward).
2. In his classic book *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders described leadership with a very simple sentence. "Leadership is influence." Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980. p. 31
3. Inherent in the very idea of "leading" or "influencing" is guiding others in a particular direction, orientation, or heading. And in Christian leadership we, of course, must use the Scriptures as our primary source of how to know in which direction we should lead.
4. Some common themes emerge as the concept of leadership is examined in the Bible as a whole. One of the most significant is the emphasis that leaders know, proclaim, teach, and endorse the Word of God.
 - a) God is our ultimate leader and He always speaks truth. (Isa 45:19; Titus 1:2)
 - b) "Central to Moses' many roles was the word of God. As a prophet he was YHWH's unique spokesman to the community (Exod. 33:11; cf. Deut. 18:18), an extension of God's guiding, nurturing presence for Israel. Moses was the means by which God led and fed his people in the wilderness." (See Psalm 77:20) Laniak, Timothy S. *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Vol. 20. *New Studies in Biblical Theology*. England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2006. p. 88
 - c) Prophets were leaders in Israel and Judah, and they were God's mouthpiece. They spoke the words of God - the truth. And the test of whether they were a true or false prophet was simply whether or not their words came to pass. (Deut 18:20-22) They also consistently called people to knowledge and understanding. (Isa 1:3; 28:9; 32:4; 40:21; 41:20; 43:10; 44:18-19; Jeremiah 3:15; 4:22; 9:24)
 - d) Kings were the political leaders, and the law required that they write a copy of the Torah and that it be with them and that they read it all the days of their lives. (Deut 17:18-20)
 - e) Priests were the religious leaders, and they "taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them." (2 Chron 17:8-9; Ezra 7:10)
 - f) The apostles devoted themselves to the ministry of the Word. (Acts 6:2-4)
 - g) Elders lead the church and should preach and teach. (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17)
 - h) Leaders of the church speak the Word of God; leaders keep watch over souls and have to give an account. (Heb 13:7, 17)
 - i) Parents lead their families, and they are to teach their kids the Word of God. (Deut 6:6-9)
5. This brief survey shows the importance of the Word of God in relation to leadership. Leaders must lead from truth. As leaders lead/influence others the Scriptures must be the North Star pointing the way. Christian leaders must be uncompromising in this regard.
6. This survey also shows that this principle applies to leadership in a broad sense. While Cru is not a church, we have seen that this is a biblical principle that is in no way limited to the church.
7. "This theological motif is readily evident in the role of the shepherd leader. Two important roles exist in the office of the shepherd: Shepherds exist to protect and provide. This is important and it reveals to us one of the major themes of Christian leadership. Shepherds protect the sheep from evil and provide life-giving resources for the sheep." (emphasis original) Forrest, Benjamin K. *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader*. Edited by Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Roden. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017. p. 516
8. Shepherd leaders protect the sheep from false teaching and provide the life-giving truth of the Word of God
9. Unfortunately church history (and "parachurch history") is littered with tragic stories where doctrinal drift led to the church/organization going radically off course. Groups like YMCA, Red Cross, and the Student Volunteer Movement, are examples of this tragic drift.
10. The apostle Paul was very clear in his letters about the connection between leadership and truth. In the Pastoral Epistles he repeatedly instructs Timothy and Titus about 'protecting' the church from

false teaching and 'providing' the church with sound doctrine.

11. 1 Tim 4:16 - Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. There is an unbreakable connection between life and doctrine. Paul also states this in Romans 12:2 when he says that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. What we believe is the primary determinant of how we will live. Paul demonstrates this in the way he structures many of his epistles. For example, chapters 1-11 of Romans are primarily doctrinal. Then chapter 12 begins with 'therefore' and the rest of the book addresses how we should live because of the truths of 1-11. The same is true with the structure of Ephesians. Chapters 1-3 are primarily doctrinal. Then chapter 4 begins with 'therefore' and the rest of the book addresses how we should live because of the truths of 1-3.
12. A quote from an article in a Bible dictionary on Ethics - "A more valuable approach, and perhaps one that has stood the test of time, is the connection made between the 'indicative and imperative' in the New Testament (with special emphasis on the letters of Paul)—referring to what texts state as 'true,' and how that truth leads to action (see Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1.203-10)." Gupta, Nijay K. "Ethics, Christian." Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.
13. Francis Schaeffer notes this same pattern even within smaller sections of Paul's letters. In his study of Romans 1 he writes, "In Romans 1:22-29, we find an order established...Notice the order: first there was an idea in their thought-life, and then came the outward result of the idea...Look now at 1:28: 'And even as they did not like to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind (that is, a mind void of judgment), to do those things which are not seemly.' Here again is the same order. Beginning with 1:29 we go through an awful list of the outward things. We can say two things about the external act: the external follows the internal, and the external is a product of the internal. Thoughts are first, and they produce the external. This is the order." Schaeffer, Francis A. *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*. Vol. 3. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982. pp. 299-300.
14. This crucial fact that 'thoughts are first, and they produce the external' is why Paul emphasizes doctrine and the Scriptures in the Pastoral Epistles. He is writing to church leaders (Timothy and Titus) and about church leaders. He is writing about the need to protect the sheep from false teaching and provide the life-giving truth of the Word of God. 1 Timothy 1:3, 10; 3:3; 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:3
2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:2, 15, 24; 3:15-17; 4:2-3
Titus 1:9, 11; 2:1, 3; 3:8
15. 2 Timothy is especially instructive since it is essentially Paul's final words to his beloved disciple Timothy. As his final words we can assume that Paul has chosen to write about what he considers to be of utmost importance. And the common theme through all four chapters is the centrality of the Word of God and doctrine. It needs to be guarded, passed on, and anything contrary to it must be countered. (It is reliably said that a top leader in Cru acknowledged that - with some of the conference speakers staff need to "eat the meat and spit out the bones". Paul would never take that approach.)
16. Eph 4:15 - speak the truth in love
17. **Our goal should be to Biblically love people. Loving them involves speaking truth, not tickling ears.**
18. **Cru must be committed to promoting speakers, books, materials, etc. that are in line with the Word of God. We cannot compromise on this. To do otherwise is to neglect our roles as shepherd leaders. It is no exaggeration to say that this is an existential threat to our organization.**
19. **Shepherd leaders protect the sheep from false teaching and provide the life-giving truth of the word of God. ■**

THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE

The following thoughts were written down after a meeting of Cru staff in 2020. Toward the end of the meeting, someone made statements about the gospel, calling it a message, and then clearly shared that message. There seemed to be some disagreement from a few others about what he said, particularly about what the gospel is, but time did not allow for further discussion.

The Gospel is a Message

A phrase heard frequently in recent years is “This is a gospel issue.” D.A. Carson has stated, “Because of the complex entanglements of theology, with a little imagination one might argue that almost any topic is a gospel issue ... everything in any theology that is worth the name is tied to everything else, so it is possible to tie everything to the gospel. In that sense, well-nigh everything is a gospel issue.” With so many “gospel issues,” the actual gospel itself can become muddled. Everything is tied to the gospel, but what exactly is the gospel in nature and in specifics.

As one reads through the 92 instances of the word “gospel” in the New Testament, it is abundantly clear: the gospel is a message. (See all 92 instances below.) The Greek word translated as “gospel,” euangelion, is used 76 times as a noun in the New Testament. The verb, euangelizo is used 54 times. Both words are derived from the Greek, angelos, which is a messenger, then added to it is the Greek prefix eu, meaning good. This is one of the most familiar Greek words in Evangelicalism. The gospel is good news. In ancient Greece the euangelos delivered a victorious message that led to joy. Whether political or personal news, the euangelion is good news of victory. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states that, categorically, euangelion is a technical term for “news of victory.” The euangelion is not an action, not a service, not an ethic, nor is it how someone lives; it is a message which brings joy.

The content of the good news is found in passages like John 3:16; Romans 5:8-11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14; and Titus 2:11-14. (See passages below.) The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia summarizes the gospel message: “The central truth of the gospel is that God has provided a way of salvation for men through the gift of His son to the world. He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, overcame death, and now offers a share in His triumph to all who will accept it. The gospel is good news because it is a gift of God, not something that must be earned by penance or by self-improvement.”

“Gospel” is sometimes used with a modifier, as in the “gospel of His Son” or the “gospel of grace”, which emphasize one element of the news. A modifier clarifies who the message is from or highlights some aspect of the message, but the various modifiers of “gospel” in the New Testament never change its nature as a message. One can think in terms of living out the gospel and its ethical and social implications, but that does not change the basic fact that, according to the Bible, the gospel is a message.

The gospel itself should not be conflated with the commands revealed in the Bible, or the transformation that happens as a result of the gospel. In social justice conversations there is rightly a focus on loving our neighbor as ourselves and calling special attention to the most marginalized. (See Matthew 22:36-40 and James 1:27.) The Old and New Testaments both make it abundantly clear that special attention must be given to the most needy and vulnerable in any society. However, meeting needs, caring for others, and advocating for the marginalized are outworkings of the gospel and not the gospel itself. Working for change on behalf of the needy reflects God’s mercy to a spiritually lost world and enables relationships to be built in which we can share the gospel, but we are not sharing the gospel unless specific content is communicated. When a Christian helps rescue a woman out of the sex trade, they display a picture of the redemption that

Jesus offers. But to share the gospel and have any hope of seeing the woman's eternal destiny changed, they must share the particular gospel message of Jesus the redeemer. In the same way, when someone says, "I love Jesus and He has changed my life in such and such way," they bear witness to the impact of the gospel. Yet unless certain specific content is given, they are not sharing the gospel itself. Significance is not demeaned in categorizing an action as an outworking of the gospel. If we are not clear in our wording, history teaches us that there will be attempts to redefine the gospel.

Historically, Christians have often had to fight against efforts from within the church to change the gospel. Acts 15 records that additions were made by some to the gospel as early as AD 48. Not long after, Paul was astonished that the Galatians were turning to a different gospel, which was really not good news at all. Some 2000 years later, history has provided us with continual examples of efforts to change the message of grace to one of works or to ignore the need for the good news at all. Even within an evangelical organization, we must be careful to keep the nature and content of the gospel crystal clear. The progression of gospel transformation to gospel outworking is explained in 2 Corinthians 5:14-18. Jesus died for sinners so that those who follow him would no longer live for themselves, but live for him. This is made possible because followers of Jesus are now new creations. The old has gone the new has come, allowing Christians to live and minister in a new way. The gospel content leads to inevitable transformation. Absence of transformation indicates a need for reformation, or in some cases self-examination to see if gospel transformation (salvation) has truly occurred, as in the case of the church of Corinth.

Every generation since the resurrection of Jesus has wrestled to keep the gospel pure from additions, subtractions, or alterations. The most current gospel wrestling revolves around the sentiment that "The social gospel is the gospel." This quote was actually an off-the-cuff statement from a high-level Cru leader connecting social justice to the gospel. Many of Christians have engaged in dialogs to understand the relationship between social justice and the gospel. It seems evident that many theologically conservative churches that are also predominantly white have not focused enough attention on a wide variety of social justice concerns, particularly along racial lines, and have neglected large swaths of Old and New Testament teachings. However, this does not mean that the purity of the gospel should be compromised as penance for other sins. In Romans 1:16 Paul explains, "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe, first for the Jew then for the gentile." The gospel spiritually saves people. Those people, in turn, may change systems and structures, but the gospel is intended to give salvation to those who believe. The purpose of this power is to save the soul, then to work its way out to the world. It is a message that, once received through faith, is explosive. Personal and social change will happen, but not always in ways we might expect.

Jesus' lack of social advocacy in the New Testament is striking. In three years he did almost nothing to confront oppressors and deconstruct unrighteous social structures. He ministered to the oppressed more than to the powerful for sure, but he did not criticize Roman rule or attempt to overthrow the oppressive government or religious leaders of the day. In three years he twice overturned tables in the temple and twice fed the multitudes, but as far as the Bible tells us, he did not regularly feed the hungry or put roofs over impoverished heads. He freed some demon oppressed and healed some, but he did not heal all, though he could have. In Matthew 1:38, he seems intent to move on to the next town that the gospel will be preached everywhere, rather than stay and finish healing all the impaired. This does not diminish the value of caring for the physical needs of the marginalized. God's value of this is obvious with how many passages discuss feeding the hungry or caring for the widow, orphan, and alien. Jesus had a larger purpose, which he often verbalized, that individuals would receive forgiveness and sonship through his sacrifice. He came to give his life as a ransom (Matthew 10:45), to seek and save

the lost (Luke 19:10), to verbally preach the good news (Luke 1:43-44), to do God's will, namely provide eternal life (John 6:38-40). Moments before his arrest, Jesus rested in the fact he had completed the work his Father had given to him (John 17:4). Despite leaving a broken world behind, he was about to secure our eternal.

Amos perfectly demonstrates that the primary concern of God is our worship of Him, while evil actions and a lack of justice, reveal the idolatrous nature of our heart. Both our worship and our actions are important, but they are not one in the same. Amos reads as a list of indictments that show a heart separated from God. What does it look like to give oneself over to idolatry, in their case to Baalism? Trampling on the poor, denying justice to the oppressed, and drunken lusts. Chapter 3 reads as a witness list against Israel as chapter 4 recounts judgements meant to rectify the underlying issue. Five times Amos states the central problem: "You have not returned to me declares the Lord" (Amos 4:6,8,9,10,11). The core issue was the location of their faith, their trust, in other words what or whom they worshipped. Chapter 5 moves to the solution. Does God desire them to feed the poor, give justice, and live reverently? Absolutely. But the call to repentance in chapter 5 again shows the foundational issue, "Seek me and live ... Seek the LORD and live ... Seek good not evil that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you" (Amos 5:4,6,14). Only a return to the Lord with true repentance will produce fruit of justice rolling on like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream.

As the gospel takes root in our hearts, we influence the culture with our spiritual transformation, individually and collectively. There is value and dignity in all of God's creation, so believers seek to share the love and mercy of God with all. These outworkings of our faith may protect lives from violence, comfort the traumatized, or provide healthcare, all of which instill a sense of dignity in the recipient, knowing their lives are worth the effort. Saving a human's life is an honorable and a valuable pursuit, whether it be directly done in a career or indirectly through social advocacy. But as valuable as all of these things are, they are not the gospel that saves the soul. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Romans 10:16) "... for you are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:9).

The NIV uses the word "gospel" 92 times. Each of those instances is listed below.

Matthew 24:14

And this **gospel** of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 26:13

Truly I tell you, wherever this **gospel** is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Mark 8:35

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the **gospel** will save it.

Mark 10:29

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the **gospel**

Mark 13:10

And the **gospel** must first be preached to all nations.

Mark 14:9

Truly I tell you, wherever the **gospel** is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Mark 16:15

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the **gospel** to all creation.

John 20:30

The Purpose of John's **Gospel**

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

Acts 8:25

After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to

Jerusalem, preaching the **gospel** in many Samaritan villages.

Acts 8:40

Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the **gospel** in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Acts 14:7

where they continued to preach the **gospel**.

Acts 14:21

They preached the **gospel** in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

Acts 15:7

After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips

the message of the **gospel** and believe.

Acts 16:10

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the **gospel** to them.

Romans 1:1

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the **gospel** of God—

Romans 1:2

the **gospel** he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures

Romans 1:9

God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the **gospel** of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you

Romans 1:15

That is why I am so eager to preach the **gospel** also to you who are in Rome.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Romans 1:17

For in the **gospel** the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 2:16

This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my **gospel** declares.

Romans 11:28

As far as the **gospel** is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,

Romans 15:16

to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the **gospel** of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:19

by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the **gospel** of Christ.

Romans 15:20

It has always been my ambition to preach the **gospel** where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.

Romans 16:25

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my **gospel**, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the **gospel**—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 4:15

Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the **gospel**.

1 Corinthians 9:12

If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the **gospel** of Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:14

In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the **gospel** should receive their living from the **gospel**.

1 Corinthians 9:16

For when I preach the **gospel**, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the **gospel**!

1 Corinthians 9:18

What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the **gospel** I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the **gospel**.

1 Corinthians 9:23

I do all this for the sake of the **gospel**, that I may share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 15:1

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

1 Corinthians 15:2

By this **gospel** you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

2 Corinthians 2:12

Now when I went to Troas to preach the **gospel** of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me,

2 Corinthians 4:3

And even if our **gospel** is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

2 Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the **gospel** that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 8:18

And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the **gospel**.

2 Corinthians 9:13

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the **gospel** of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

2 Corinthians 10:14

We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the **gospel** of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:16

so that we can preach the **gospel** in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else’s territory.

2 Corinthians 11:4

For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive

a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different **gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

2 Corinthians 11:7

Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the **gospel** of God to you free of charge?

Galatians 1:6

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different **gospel**—

Galatians 1:7

which is really no **gospel** at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the **gospel** of Christ.

Galatians 1:8

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a **gospel** other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

Galatians 1:9

As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a **gospel** other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

Galatians 1:11

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the **gospel** I preached is not of human origin.

Galatians 2:2

I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the **gospel** that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

Galatians 2:5

We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the **gospel** might be preserved for you.

Galatians 2:7

On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the **gospel** to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised.

Galatians 2:14

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the **gospel**, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

Galatians 3:8

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the **gospel** in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."

Galatians 4:13

As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the **gospel** to you,

Ephesians 1:13

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the **gospel** of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that through the **gospel** the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:7

I became a servant of this **gospel** by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

Ephesians 6:15

and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the **gospel** of peace.

Ephesians 6:19

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the **gospel**,

Philippians 1:5

because of your partnership in the **gospel** from the first day until now,

Philippians 1:7

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming

the **gospel**, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Philippians 1:12

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the **gospel**.

Philippians 1:14

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the **gospel** without fear.

Philippians 1:16

The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the **gospel**.

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the **gospel** of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the **gospel**

Philippians 2:22

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the **gospel**.

Philippians 4:3

Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the **gospel**, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Philippians 4:15

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the **gospel**, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;

Colossians 1:5

the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the **gospel**

Colossians 1:6

that has come to you. In the same way, the **gospel** is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.

Colossians 1:23

if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the **gospel**. This is the **gospel** that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

because our **gospel** came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

1 Thessalonians 2:2

We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his **gospel** in the face of strong opposition.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the **gospel**. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the **gospel** of God but our lives as well.

1 Thessalonians 2:9

Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the **gospel** of God to you.

1 Thessalonians 3:2

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God’s service in spreading the **gospel** of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,

2 Thessalonians 1:8

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the **gospel** of our Lord Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 2:14

He called you to this through our **gospel**, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:11

that conforms to the **gospel** concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

2 Timothy 1:6

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 1:8

So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the **gospel**, by the power of God.

2 Timothy 1:10

but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the **gospel**.

2 Timothy 1:11

And of this **gospel** I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

2 Timothy 2:8

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my **gospel**,

Titus 2:1

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

Philemon 1:13

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the **gospel**.

1 Peter 1:12

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the **gospel** to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

1 Peter 4:6

For this is the reason the **gospel** was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

1 Peter 4:17

For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the **gospel** of God?

Revelation 14:6

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal **gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.

Gospel-Good News content

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8-11

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this **gospel** you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day accord-

ing to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, up-

right and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. ■

AN APPEAL TO UPHOLD CRU'S STATEMENT OF FAITH

THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF CRU'S STATEMENT OF FAITH READS:

"We accept those areas of doctrinal teaching on which historically there has been general agreement among all true Christians. Because of the specialized calling of our movement, we desire to allow for freedom of conviction on other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon the Bible alone, and that no such interpretation shall become an issue which hinders the ministry to which God has called us."

In recent years an emphasis on social justice has brought an ideology into Cru which comes from a victim-oppressor worldview.

We contend that the propagation of the ideologies contributing to this victim-oppressor worldview are extra-Biblical (going beyond the worldview and teachings of the Bible) and that they have also significantly hindered the mission of Cru. If either or both of these contentions are valid, then it is a violation of Cru's Statement of Faith, second paragraph.

The propagation of this victim-oppressor worldview has resulted in the polarization of staff, a culture of fear, and a spirit or perception of unforgiveness among Cru staff. A culture that suppresses diverse thinking has taken root within Cru.

We do not want to deny or minimize the existence of racism, or ignore the pain that some ethnic minorities have experienced. We too want racial reconciliation and to reach every ethnic with the gospel. But we have a different perspective on how to get there.

VICTIM-OPPRESSOR CONTENT VIOLATES CRU'S STATEMENT OF FAITH IN TWO WAYS:

20. Freedom of personally held conviction on doctrinal* matters must be *"based upon the Bible alone."*
 - a) The victim-oppressor worldview is a different worldview than God's Word puts forth. Rather than identifying humanity's main problem as sin...Jesus being the solution...resulting in reconciliation between God and humans, as well as between humans and other humans - this ideology identifies the problem in terms of power dynamics. It pits the oppressed against the oppressor. The solution is the redistribution of power and dismantling systems and structures.
21. The infiltration of a victim-oppressor worldview into many parts of Cru has caused tremendous hindrance to the mission to which God has called us.
 - a) This topic has caused polarization of our staff. Where there used to be solidarity and a commonly held vision, there now exists distrust and separation. There is a decreased feeling of "us," and an increased feeling of "us" and "them." Some staff have already resigned over this issue, and more are now contemplating resignation.
 - b) Morale is low. Staff who joined Cru out of a passion to help fulfill the Great Commission are now experiencing tension as they have to respond to questions and concerns from their ministry partners while they themselves have some of the same concerns. It is becoming increasingly difficult to answer the questions honestly while also trying to put Cru in a good light.
 - c) Mission Drift. Cru's stated Purpose is: helping to fulfill the Great Commission in the power of the Holy Spirit by winning people to faith in Jesus Christ, building them in their faith and sending them to win and build others, and helping the body of Christ to do evangelism and discipleship through

a variety of creative ways. A victim-oppressor worldview is taking energy and focus away from this original calling.

SUMMARY:

It seems obvious that Cru's Statement of Faith is being violated by the propagation of the victim-oppressor worldview. These teachings are not "based on the Bible alone" and they have definitely "hindered the ministry to which God has called us," causing enormous polarization among our staff. Let us again affirm - *we don't want to minimize the need for racial reconciliation nor the hurts that our ethnic minority brothers and sisters have endured. We too have a desire to reach every ethnic group with the gospel. But we do differ on how to work toward those goals.*

PROPOSAL:

Regarding the teachings and ideologies of what has been referred to as a victim-oppressor worldview, it is recommended that these extra-biblical concepts be treated in a similar manner to Cru's treatment of other controversial issues, for example, speaking in tongues. Cru's policy is similar to "don't ask, don't tell." That is, Cru respects that individual staff members have their own views and opinions on the topic of social justice, but the ministry itself doesn't propagate a one sided view of it, nor weave it into Cru's training and materials. ■

CRITICAL THEORY AND CRU'S CORE TRAINING 4.2 - AN ANALYSIS

The purpose of Cru's new staff Core Training curriculum is to train new staff in ministry skills, encourage their walks with the Lord, and help them to build necessary relationships. Cru created an article containing a list of working definitions for culture, ethnicity, and race and selected the article "Making Sense of Race" by Marque Mathias Jensen to wrestle with the complexity of racial reconciliation. Both of these articles are seen in Cru's Core Training section 4.2. These articles seek to arm the new staff with helpful definitions and provide a common vocabulary to encourage more intimate conversations between individuals and groups. This mutual understanding is increasingly important given America's checkered past and tumultuous present. While these articles provide some helpful delineations and definitions for crucial vocabulary, the articles promote an oppressor/victim worldview as seen in Critical Theory that is not compatible with scripture. Over the course of this essay there will be a brief summary of Critical Theory and how it relates to the Gospel, a few examples of Critical Theory in Cru's Core Training 4.2, and a short conclusion on how to move forward.

CRITICAL THEORY AND THE GOSPEL

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a subset of the larger ideology of Critical Theory (CT). Neil Shenvi, in his article "Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity: Are They Compatible?"[1], admits to having a difficult time defining critical theory. When looking at the philosophers Shenvi calls "Contemporary Critical Theorists" he concludes three basic premises of CT:

- Premise #1-- Society is divided into oppressed and oppressor groups.
- Premise #2-- Oppression exists through Hegemonic power. "Hegemony refers to the control of the ideology of society. The dominant group maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone."- Robyn Diangelo
- Premise #3-- 'Lived Experience' gives oppressed groups privileged access to truth.

While the premises Shenvi highlights seem simple, some of the logical conclusions that we see in our culture are antithetical to the Gospel. First, CT is a competing worldview with Christianity. CT replaces the "creation, fall, redemption, and restoration" seen in the scripture with a narrative hinging on "oppression, activism, and liberation."

Critical theory also functions as a worldview. But it tells a different comprehensive, overarching story about reality. The story of critical theory begins not with creation, but with oppression. The omission of a creation element is very important because it changes our answer to the question: "who are we?" There is no transcendent Creator who has a purpose and a design for our lives and our identities. We don't primarily exist in relation to God, but in relation to other people and to other groups. Our identity is not defined primarily in terms of who we are as God's creatures. Instead, we define ourselves in terms of race, class, sexuality, and gender identity. Oppression, not sin, is our fundamental problem. What is the solution? Activism. Changing structures. Raising awareness. We work to overthrow and dismantle hegemonic power. That is our primary moral duty. What is our purpose in life? To work for the liberation of all oppressed groups so that we can achieve a state of equity.

Secondly, CT is antithetical to the Gospel from an epistemological perspective. CT defines truth in relation to an individual's group identity. Truth claims are only verified through an oppressed group or individual's experience. The truth claim of the oppressor group is defined as the hegemonic power. Therefore, an alleged

oppressor's truth claim is discounted purely based on his or her identification with an oppressor group. This worldview throws out facts and logic in lieu of experience. From a CT perspective, scripture is an extremely powerful hegemonic power. The blending of a Biblical worldview and a CT worldview is seen by Union Theological Seminary noted by Shenvi:

“To provide just one illustration, on Sept. 5, 2018, Union Theological Seminary posted a Twitter thread in response to the Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel. Their very first statement was “we deny the Bible is inerrant or infallible” because it “reflects both God’s truth and human sin & prejudice.” But how do you determine which is which? They explain: “biblical scholarship and critical theory help us to discern which messages are God’s.”

“Even if we grant that this approach to truth is a problem, is it really one of the most dangerous conflicts between critical theory and Christianity? Yes, because it undermines any appeal to the Bible. One of the driving forces behind the Reformation was the idea that our theology has to be reformed to and brought under the authority of Scripture. To do that, we need to be able to test theological claims against the Bible. Unfortunately, critical theory short-circuits this process.”

Determining scriptural truth based on identity and power is incorrect and fallible. Truth is determined based on what is found in scripture regardless of the group identity of the reader. This is not to discount the potential for a group to see the Gospel from a particular perspective but two conflicting truth claims can't both be true. As Shenvi says, “we should be committed to determining which theological beliefs are objectively true because they are taught by Scripture, regardless of their origin.”

Finally, CT claims that ALL power imbalances are immoral, oppressive, and need to be dismantled. In reality, there is an immense power imbalance between God and humanity. Is this a problem? No. “[T]his claim is incorrect because God’s infinite power is not only unassailable but unequivocally good.” When applied to the functioning of a ministry or church there will always be a power imbalance.

But if we accept this idea [that all power imbalances are bad], what is our response to the following claims? Should we reject capitalism because it perpetuates economic privilege? Should we reject male eldership because it perpetuates male privilege? Should we reject traditional marriage because it perpetuates heteronormativity? Should we reject the connection between sex and gender because it perpetuates cisgender privilege? Should we stop preaching about biblical morality or about the exclusivity of Christ, so that non-Christians aren’t marginalized? Insisting that all power imbalances are bad will have serious repercussions for our theology.

In conclusion CT is a pervasive ideology that many well intentioned people use without realizing its radical anti-biblical conclusions. For a deeper understanding of CT, read Neil Shenvi’s article where he elaborates on many of the premises I have highlighted here. Also, he teases out some valid and positive conclusions that CT uncovers. When CT is applied through the lens of race it is called Critical Race Theory (CRT). This subset of CT is seen heavily in two Core Training articles “Culture, Ethnicity and Race: Working Definitions” and “Making Sense of Race.”

CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN CRU’S CORE TRAINING 4.2

As aforementioned, Cru chose these two articles to wrestle with the complexity of racial issues in our culture. The need for a common set of working definitions

is obvious, whereas the undertones of CT's oppressor vs. victim ideology found in these definitions are subtle. While some of the other definitions in the article may still be problematic, Cru's definition of "Power", "Privilege", and "Racism" are most steeped in a CT worldview. Jensen's article "Making Sense of Race" expounds on the complexities of identity in America but does so in a way that assumes some of the same premises Shenvi highlights.

- Premise #1-- Society is divided into oppressed and oppressor groups.
- Premise #2-- Oppression exists through Hegemonic power. "Hegemony refers to the control of the ideology of society. The dominant group maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone."- Robyn Diangelo
- Premise #3-- 'Lived Experience' gives oppressed groups privileged access to truth.

Along with many other definitions, Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines Power as "the ability to act or produce an effect." This definition is simple and could apply to any individual in any given situation. It can refer to a pastor's winsomeness over his congregation, a mother threatening rowdy children with a switch, or team leaders' voice in his or her staff meeting. In all of these scenarios there is not necessarily a dynamic between dominant and subdominant cultures. Cru's definition of Power is stated as "The ability to influence change (positively or negatively). The dynamic between those from majority or dominant culture and those from minority or subdominant culture." The definition starts by staying true to the dictionary definition but branches off making a statement about the world. Reading between the lines, this definition immediately connects power with group identity. Suddenly, if one knows what group a person identifies with then he or she will know how much power the person has.

In the ideology of CT, Power and Privilege work hand-in-hand. Cru's working definition highlights the connection-- "Having systemic or inherited advantages in a society without earning them. Often privilege has a positive association with power (meaning more power brings more privilege)." In the core training, Cru makes a point that privilege is always unearned. Definitionally, privilege is either something inherited through your family or due to some advantage in the system. There is no room for the individual with no ties to power, such as a stutter that rises through the ranks of academia to enjoy the privileges of a tenured professor. Notice in Cru's definition that power and privilege have a positive relationship meaning that if privilege is inherited and/or systemic then so is Power. This makes it seem that Power and privilege are unchangeable-- some groups are always in power and other groups are always oppressed. This fits Shenvi's first premise that the world is divided into oppressor and oppressed groups. The dominant group is always holding fast to the system that keeps them in power while the subdominant group is being constantly belittled and oppressed. When Cru borrows these definitions from the worldview of CT then the organization is perpetuating the idea that power, privilege, and oppression are unchangeable.

In the article, "Making Sense of Race" Jensen comes to obvious conclusions of this flawed view of power and privilege. Jensen makes note of four reasons that derail conversations regarding racial issues. Point #2 is this,

"[the person] fails to see how personal perspectives are a result of power and privilege; which impact our ability to openly discuss and dismantle the systemic racism and inequalities we have inherited."

So now, by combining Cru's working definition and Jensen's note, we are able to draw some conclusions. Personal perspectives are always the result of the unchangeable nature of power and privilege and, therefore, can not be objective. Since no individual person can be objective, their perspective can be relegated to whether or not they are in the dominant or subdominant culture. This gives individuals from the subdominant group privileged access to truth as noted in Shenvi's third premise of CT.

Furthermore, Jensen asserts that understanding personal perspectives allows a person to openly discuss and dismantle systemic racism and inequalities. It should be an obvious goal for any Christian to dismantle all systems of injustice-- specifically racism-- what is unclear in Jensen's wording is if all forms of inequality are inherently unjust. Shenvi makes it a point in his third premise that contemporary critical theorists see ALL inequalities as "inherently bad" and in need of being "dismantled." From the worldview of CT, these inequalities represent power imbalances and all power imbalances are inherently oppressive. It is a logical leap that Jensen encourages his readers- i.e., Cru Staff-- to dismantle all systems that lead to inequality and power imbalances. As if rebutting Jensen, Shenvi notes:

"But if we accept this idea, what is our response to the following claims? Should we reject capitalism because it perpetuates economic privilege? Should we reject male eldership because it perpetuates male privilege? Should we reject traditional marriage because it perpetuates heteronormativity? Should we reject the connection between sex and gender because it perpetuates cis-gender privilege? Should we stop preaching about the biblical morality or about the exclusivity of Christ, so that non-Christians aren't marginalized? Insisting that all power imbalances are bad will have serious repercussions for our theology. Is this a direct quote, if so it needs to have " "

Jensen's article Part 3: Class is steeped in the oppressor vs. oppressed worldview. Jensen correctly points out that race is a socially constructed hierarchy used to oppress all ethnicities that aren't white. Jensen quotes Rev. Thandeka to make the point that the racial hierarchy was created not to protect a race but to protect a class and that blacks and lower class whites were oppressed by the same system. Jensen claims, "there were *rulers* and *workers*, those that controlled the natural resources and those that just survived off of them. (emphasis mine)" This delineation between two classes of people has been seen before in modern discourse. Oftentimes, people riled against CT are quick to castigate all proponents of CT as Marxists. This is not the intent intended by this example. However, it is obvious that Jensen uses the separation of "rulers" and "workers" as a representation of Marx. The below quote is a short representation of the beliefs of Karl Marx as noted by SparkNotes:

"Karl Marx based his conflict theory on the idea that modern society has only two classes of people: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The Bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production: the factories, businesses, and equipment needed to produce wealth. The Proletariat are the workers."

Yet again, it is not the intent of this article to paint Jensen as a communist but merely to point out that the author has clearly been influenced by Marxist ideals. A hallmark of Marx's principles is to call for a labor revolution amongst the workers. Ironically, this is exactly what we see here when Jensen claims if "all the poor united they were greatly outnumbered." The connection between Marxist Communist philosophy and CT is to be expected as CT was fleshed out of Marxist principles in the Frankfurt school as noted by Shenvi.

As a final example of this oppressor/victim mentality in Cru's Core Training material 4.2 we see a heavy handed definition of racism. Racism has been defined as animosity toward a person because of his or her race. Merriam-Webster still holds fast to this conclusion-- along with a few other definitions racism is, "a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." Cru takes their working definition, from Core 4.2, one step further by adding the component of power. Racism is:

“The collective misuse of power that results in diminished life opportunities for some racial groups. Racial prejudice plus power—the power of systems and institutions equals racism.”

This definition lends itself to an obvious conclusion, that black people can not be racist. Racism is unique to people with power and since black people have less power than white people then the individual can't be racist. This is to disregard power dynamics at a micro level. For example, when Damire Canell Palmer mercilessly beat a white Macy's clerk in June of 2020 it is obvious that he, a black man, had all the power. Was he racist? Did he seek out the Macy's clerk because of his race? If it was known that he had, would that have made him racist? Many would say no. The Netflix original "Dear White People" made this statement in one of their episodes.

“Black people can't be racist, prejudice, yes, but not racist. Racism describes a system of disadvantage based on race. Black people can't be racist since we don't stand to benefit from such a system.”

By redefining racism and making it a primarily white phenomenon Cru has watered down the sin of racism. Shenvi notes in his article "The Antiracism Glossary-- Racism" what this redefinition can do.

“[T]he use of different terminology to characterize the racial prejudice of whites versus people of color is problematic, especially from a Christian perspective. Imagine if someone defined ‘adultery’ to refer to a husband’s marital unfaithfulness towards his wife, but used the less pejorative term ‘cheating’ to refer to a wife’s marital unfaithfulness towards her husband. We’d recoil from this redefinition of terms, and rightly so. This asymmetric usage undermines a Christian conception of sin, which regards marital infidelity as equally sinful whether it is committed by a man or a woman. In the same way, because racism is a sin, its sinfulness does not depend on the racial characteristics of the person who commits it. While the racism of a white person towards a person of color might be more quantitatively harmful than the reverse, it is not qualitatively more sinful.”

Why does the culture and Cru seek to change from a generic definition of racism that applies to all groups to the group specific version seen in the Core Training? It is due to the hegemonic power that oppresses people of color. People of color can't be racist because they don't stand to benefit from the system. Yet again, this fits the second premise of CT that Shenvi mentions in his article-- oppression exists through Hegemonic power.

CONCLUSION

By simply defining the three premises of CT it is easy to see that Cru's Core Training 4.2 has obviously been influenced by this ideology. Cru has put forth a worldview of oppression between dominant and subdominant cultures by the way their articles define crucial words and by the articles they chose to let their new staff work through. To the credit of Cru, a platform has been offered to wrestle with the complexity of race and ethnicity in the culture. However, it remains imperative that these issues are answered from a strong Biblical perspective rather than a sociological theory. ■

[Social Stratification and Inequality - article link](#)

[Man charged in Flint Twp. attack on Macy's employee - news report link](#)

CAN I BELIEVE IN CRT AND NOT KNOW WHAT CRT IS?

PREFACE

Have you ever gone to Starbucks, ordered a latte, and pondered how the Second Law of Thermodynamics impacts your decision to use a thermal cup to keep it warm? I'm guessing you never gave it even a fleeting thought.

But just like the Second Law impacts many aspects of life without us even thinking or knowing about it – like causing two items at different temperatures to achieve balance – so too, we live life accepting many ideas without giving them a second thought. One may not consciously know they believe and live according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and yet they do. We are bombarded with so much information from social media, podcasts, formal education, books, newspapers and television that we unknowingly accept ideologies or worldviews, and even adapt our lives according to ideologies and worldviews of which we are not even cognizant.

Over the last several years our culture has had necessary and important discussions surrounding race. For decades prior, academic institutions have discussed race and power, particularly in dialog over Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Many of these more academic discussions of CRT have now reached popular culture, as well as evangelical culture, and are finding ready acceptance, even though the culture at large is not aware of the ideologies academic origins. Those who have never heard of CRT may have, in fact, accepted the most common key elements of CRT, simply through the influence of thought leaders. Social Media, podcasts, books, and formal education may not have identified their historical roots in CRT, but they have communicated the beliefs effectively.

This document is intended to provide an objective, unbiased summary regarding the ideology of CT and CRT and the ways in which they may align with and contradict historical, and orthodox biblical truth. Even if the term Critical Race Theory is new to you, the substance of CRT will most likely be extremely familiar to you. I hope you find this information valuable and clarifying in terms of your relationship with God, in your relationships with believers, and with those whom you desire to reach with the Gospel of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Race Theory is a subset of a larger worldview known as Critical Theory which was developed at the Frankfurt School in the 1920's by several Marxist philosophers and sociologists who were dissatisfied with the slow establishment of communism throughout the world. While classical Marxism expressed a dialectic of economic disparities between the "proletariat" and the "bourgeoisie", Critical Theory "worked to promote freedom and liberation not just from physical or eco-

nomie bondage, but from oppressive cultural ideas and values." (Dr. Neil Shenvi)

Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory attempt to define and understand human relationships in terms of power. To accomplish this, they divide humanity into two fundamental categories – Oppressors (those with power) and Oppressed (those without power). Individuals are then classified as oppressors or oppressed based upon membership in various groups: race, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, age, weight, and many other classifications.

Racism, sexism, classism, ableism, capitalism, heteronormativity (the belief that hetero-sexuality is the norm) and cisgender (gender = birth-sex) privilege are all viewed as forms of oppression. Individuals are not viewed as oppressors because they have actually or personally engaged in oppressive behavior, but simply because they are members of an oppressive group.

The goal of these ideologies, therefore, is to actively advocate and work for the liberation of oppressed groups by "deconstructing" those societal systems which are deemed "hegemonic", ruling or dominant, and which allow oppressor groups to maintain and justify the continuance of those oppressive systems. Because CT and CRT have certain connotations associated with those terms, in order to avoid those connotations this document will refer to these ideologies as "*Oppressed/Oppressor Worldviews*" (OOW).

The following chart may assist in understanding how these ideologies generally categorize people as Oppressed or Oppressor based upon the group(s) to which they belong:

	OPPRESSED	OPPRESSOR
RACE	People of Color	Those with "Whiteness"
CLASS	Poor	Wealthy
SEX	Females	Males
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	LGBTQ+	Heterosexual
GENDER IDENTITY	Transgender / Gender Choice	Cisgender Males & Females
PHYSICAL ABILITY	Disabled	Able-bodied

TERMINOLOGY

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to define some essential terms associated with the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* because these terms carry in-

tentional meanings that are quite different from what most people commonly understand:

- **Blackness** – anything identifying with an oppressed people group that does not have power because they are part of an oppressed class, regardless of whether or not they have dark skin or are of African descent. One can have “blackness” as long as they identify with an oppressed people group.
- **Whiteness** – anything identifying with power or privilege as it relates to the “majority class” (usually those who hold ethnic, religious, or economic power), or have a cultural standing that is better than the average. People can be classified as having “whiteness” regardless of whether or not they are Caucasian, have light skin, or are of European descent.
- **Intersectionality** – the convergence, overlap or intersection of multiple classifications of group memberships by an individual.

EXAMPLES:

- › a black, transgender, female “intersects” with 3 oppressed groups
- › a white, heterosexual, female “intersects” with 2 oppressor groups and 1 oppressed group
- **Racism** – the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* defines racism thus: “Racism = Bigotry + Power.” Therefore, a person with power who holds firm convictions is racist, *by definition*. Conversely, because members of an oppressed class lack power, they cannot be racist, *by definition*. Therefore, all those who have “whiteness” suffer from racism and those who have “blackness” cannot be racist.
- **Systemic** – all-pervasive, ever-present attitudes, policies and administrative systems that perpetuate hegemony or “oppressor” behavior, regardless of whether they are intentionally or unintentionally oppressive.
- **Equity** – equality of outcome and/or resources, not of opportunity; it is not equitable for some to have more and some to have less, regardless of circumstance or merit, and certainly not for anyone of an oppressed group.
- **Justice** – “*social justice*” is defined significantly differently from “*biblical justice*”.
 - › **Biblical justice** has always been the unbiased application of God’s moral standard as expressed in Scripture, showing no partiality based upon personal status.
 - › **Social justice** has come to mean “the tearing down of traditional social structures and systems deemed to be oppressive, and the redistribution of power and resources from oppressors to victims in pursuit of equality

of outcome” (Scott David Allen, “Why Social Justice is Not Biblical Justice”).

- **Lived Experience** – the personal life-experiences of the oppressed, specifically identifying their situations, circumstances and painful experiences of oppression.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE OPPRESSED/OPPRESSOR WORLDVIEW

IDENTITY

- Personal identity is inextricably bound to group identity rather than to individual attributes such as character, personality, or the Imago Dei.
- “Oppression” is understood in terms of “hegemonic power” – the systems, norms and attitudes that enable oppressors to maintain their oppressive position.
- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* views racism, sexism, classism, ableism, capitalism, heteronormativity, and cisgender as forms of oppression.
- Members of oppressor groups are not seen as morally neutral, even if their individual behavior has been impeccable. They are guilty of various forms of oppression merely by membership in oppressive groups.

LIBERATION

- A major element of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* is its emphasis on liberation.
- “Liberation of oppressed groups” is the meaning that the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* gives to the popular term “social justice”.
- Liberation of oppressed groups is what passionately motivates many people to become actively involved in resolving social injustice.

ACCESS TO TRUTH

- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* holds that social location (membership in dominant or subordinate groups) either impedes or enables one’s perception of truth.
- **A person’s social location has three fundamental implications:**
 - › Oppressors’ perception of reality and their ability to comprehend truth is **distorted** by their participation in structures of power.
 - › Oppressed persons’ perception of reality and apprehension of truth is **enhanced** by their social location in oppressed groups.
 - › Oppressed people therefore have an advantage over oppressors in understanding reality because of their “lived experience.” This advantage is multiplied by “intersectionality.”
 - › Members of dominant groups need to defer to subordinate groups because “objective ev-

idence” and reason are “Western constructs” that must be deconstructed and made subservient to “lived experience.”

WORLDVIEW

- *Humans are members of social groups* eternally locked in a struggle for power.
- *Our primary identity comes from* our relationship to those groups.
- *Suffering is caused by* hegemonic systems of oppression.
- *Purpose in life is found by* fighting against dominant groups and helping the oppressed achieve “equity.”

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE OPPRESSED/OPPRESSOR WORLDVIEW AND CHRISTIANITY

- A primary similarity between the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity is in their common recognition that *oppression* is sin.
 - › However, the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* defines oppression as participation in hegemonic narratives, while the Bible defines oppression as specific acts of violence, cruelty, enslavement, etc.
 - › Christianity’s concern to secure biblical justice and correct injustice, however, should be a fruit of the gospel, not the gospel message *itself*.
- Another similarity between the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity is the recognition that power can corrupt one’s perception of reality.
 - › Theologically, the doctrine of depravity explains this corruption, however...
 - › The Bible defines sin, not *privilege*, as the cause of this misperception of reality.
- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* correctly identifies “hegemonic power” as a real phenomenon. Systems and institutions do indeed enshrine values and expectations that strongly influence people, consciously or unconsciously.
- Both the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity condemn *racism* – and this is the primary reason why so many Christians are attracted to social justice movements that battle racism and similar forms of oppression.
- The allure of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* – to Christians and non-Christians alike – can partially be explained by some of the following similarities:
 - › Just as Christianity teaches that all human beings are stained by original sin, so the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* teaches that

all (or almost all) people are stained by their membership in oppressor groups.

- › Just as Christianity teaches that we must confess and repent of our sin, so the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* teaches that we must confess and repent of our participation in hegemony and structures of power and privilege.
- › Just as Christianity teaches that sin must be atoned for, so the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* teaches that “whiteness” and “privilege” must be atoned for.
- › Just as Christianity looks forward to a kingdom of perfect justice and righteousness, the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* looks forward to a utopian society of perfect justice and equity on earth.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE OPPRESSED/OPPRESSOR WORLDVIEW AND CHRISTIANITY

EPISTEMOLOGY – The first way in which the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity are at odds is in their epistemologies – how they claim we come to know truth.

- Christians believe we understand truth through applying reason and logic to God’s revelation through Scripture and nature.
- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* holds that members of oppressor groups are blinded by their privilege and members of oppressed groups have special access to truth through “lived experience” that should not be challenged.
- *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* adherents believe they need not to justify their claims through reason, evidence, debate, or even Scripture – because “lived experience” supersedes empirical data and allows them to dismiss all objections as “privilege” or “internalized oppression.”

IDENTITY – The second conflict between the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity is in their respective understandings of identity.

- Christians believe that fundamental identity derives from our relationship with God.
 - › All human beings are created in God’s image – in *Imago Dei*.
 - › All human beings are sinful.
 - › All human beings need redemption and restoration through Jesus Christ.
 - › These identity markers unite all people of race, class, gender, etc...
- The humanistic *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* provides no “vertical” element to identity.
 - › Individual humans’ identity is defined solely by their “horizontal” relationship to groups.

- › Because we do not share fundamental identity markers with all human beings, group membership becomes all-important.

- This view of identity is clearly antithetical to biblical truth because Scripture teaches that God has placed His image in all people, and Christ has broken down all barriers that divide human beings from one another.

HEGEMONY – A third conflict exists in our understanding of the story of humanity.

- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* defines hegemonic discourse as a story or narrative which oppressors use to justify and maintain their political, economic, social and even psychological power.
- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* teaches that Christianity is one colossal hegemonic discourse from Genesis to Revelation because it tells one singular narrative about God, humankind and redemption.
- Therefore, from the perspective of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview*, God is the ultimate oppressor!

MORAL ASYMMETRY – The ethics of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* are rooted in power dynamics, therefore, oppressed people can engage in behavior that would be wrong or sinful if exercised by oppressors. Biblical ethics diverge from this in two ways...

- The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* maintains that certain people are morally tainted by their membership in oppressor groups – irrespective of their actual deeds or thoughts – therefore they have no moral authority to judge or condemn behavior of the oppressed.
- Scripture maintains that humans are guilty only for sins they have personally committed (Ezekiel 18:14-20; Deuteronomy 24:16; Jeremiah 31:27-34).
- While individuals can sin through active injustice or passive neglect of moral duty, they cannot be held guilty of sins they did not commit, nor are they morally tainted by merely belonging to a particular demographic group.

SALVATION – the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Christianity are diametrical opposites regarding salvation:

- Christianity offers a salvation that is entirely free, based not upon what we have done, but upon what Jesus Christ has already done on our behalf.
- “Salvation” in the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* is achieved by “works” – lamentation, repentance, reparation, service, apology, mission trips, or anything else that demonstrates one is “trying hard” to be an ally to marginalized groups.

- Ironically, this works-based “salvation” is one of the main appeals of the social justice movement because it provides people with a sense of pride that they are doing “good” for their fellow humans.

- This Worldview allows no forgiveness of sin for oppressors, but condemns them to perpetual repentance.

IMPLICATIONS – The basic tenets of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* can emerge subtly through seemingly harmless or laudable slogans that are not to be contested...

- Such as...
 - › “We should accept the claims of oppressed people.”
 - › “We should never challenge someone’s ‘lived experience.’”
 - › “We need to ‘decolonize’ our theology.”
- However...
 - › Should all claims be accepted, without question?
 - › Should “lived experience” never be challenged, even if the experience is clearly in contrast with demonstrable reality?
 - › Must we reject all teachings of the Protestant Reformation simply because they were formulated by European white men?
- Christians are intrinsically motivated to oppose oppression and privilege, but they are often naïve to the fact that those terms have been re-defined by the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview*.
- If we follow these ideologies to their logical conclusions, we must conclude that the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* is diametrically antithetical to biblical truth. It is a self-contained alternative worldview, and a false gospel.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE OPPRESSED/OPPRESSOR WORLDVIEW

The practical implementation of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* has been making an increasing impact upon the Christian church and parachurch organizations like Cru and InterVarsity over the past 10-15 years, manifesting itself in many of the following ways:

LAMENTATION

There has been an acceleration in demands for those with “whiteness” to enter into the emotional pain of those who have suffered injustice and oppression. Lamentation over sin, injustice and oppression is certainly a biblical principle since Scripture calls on all sinners to lament, but not just those who are defined as “oppressors.” Demands for lamentation lead to demands for those with “whiteness” to participate in...

REPENTANCE

Those in the majority culture or with “whiteness” are requested – and often coerced or shamed – to “repent” of the sins of their forbearers who committed the sins of oppression against the forbearers of today’s “oppressed” groups. This is based upon the belief that members of oppressor groups are morally tainted and therefore responsible for the sins of their oppressive ancestors.

Scripture is clear that – apart from the sin of Adam – each person is guilty only for sins they have personally committed. Deuteronomy 24:16; II Kings 12:20-21; II Kings 14:5-6, and Ezekiel 18:1-32 explicitly deny that either wickedness or righteousness will be imputed from father to son, let alone from one person to another unrelated person.

While humans can sin through actively engaging in injustice or through passively neglecting moral duties, people cannot be held guilty of sins they do not actually commit, nor are they morally tainted by merely belonging to a particular demographic group. Certainly, people are impacted by the sins of previous generations, but God does not hold people culpable for others’ unrighteousness.

These demands for repentance often lead to demands for...

REPARATIONS

Since the goal of social justice is *equity* – equality of *outcome* and equality of *resources* rather than equality of *opportunity* – it is incumbent upon oppressors and those with “whiteness” to repair the sins of their forbearers by redistributing their financial and social resources – which are almost always deemed to have been ill-gotten – to current members of oppressed groups.

The Biblical response to ill-gotten resources is *restitution* to the persons from whom those resources were taken – sometimes as much as four-fold – and is distinctly different from reparation. Restitution is to be made by the offender *directly* to those offended. In social justice, reparations are to be made by *descendants* of offenders to descendants of the offended.

IRRECONCILABILITY

Because one can never be rid of one’s intersectional group identity, there will always be oppression and violation of those in oppressed groups. Because that oppression is unceasing, the solution that the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* insists upon is “continual repentance” by those in oppressor groups. Unfortunately, “how much” repentance for the sins of one’s forbearers is never made clear. Those with “whiteness” are regularly expected to *continue* repenting as often as the oppressed deem it necessary, therefore, *permanent reconciliation* is not possible.

LIMITED OR PROSCRIBED DIALOGUE

The *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* holds that logic, reason, rationality, Scripture and even modern medicine are “Western constructs” that are part of the “hegemonic discourse.” They are therefore irrelevant and to be rejected in favor of “lived experience.” Oppressors must be silent and simply *listen* because their oppressor identity has tainted their ability to perceive, think and speak clearly.

INABILITY TO ADDRESS HOMOSEXUALITY AS SIN

Just as CRT is a subset of CT within the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview*, so also is “Queer Theory.” Accepting the foundation for one (CRT) opens the door to the other (QT). Just like those with “whiteness,” cisgender people and those who believe that heterosexuality is the “norm” are part of an oppressor group.

Therefore, they cannot correctly see truth and have no moral standing by which to declare that homosexual behavior is sin. They are therefore bigoted and must submit themselves to those who identify as LGBTQ+ because they are more oppressed due to their “lived experience” and therefore have more access to truth.

From the perspective of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* and Queer Theory, to state that homosexual behavior is sin, equates to saying the gay person is morally defective, because what a person does is not separate from who they are as a member of an oppressed group. Rejection of gay and lesbian behavior is therefore rejection of *persons* and confirms the bigotry of the oppressor.

INTIMIDATION

Finally, a very serious and painful practical application of the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* is the way this ideology is used to either intimidate or shame members of “oppressor” groups into silence if they differ in opinion from the accepted viewpoint – or worse yet, if they dare to defend their position or beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Are there oppressors in our world today? Absolutely! Are there people who have been and continue to be oppressed? Absolutely! My intention is not to dispute that reality. But as I mentioned in the preface, oftentimes we do not realize how the ideologies and philosophies of our current culture impact us unknowingly, or how they have crept into our collective discourse and thinking so gradually that we accept them as the norm.

My intent has simply been to provide an objective, unbiased summary of critical race theory and its attendant oppressor/oppressed worldview. Hopefully this will enable Christians to evaluate if, where, and how significantly this worldview may have influenced their life and ministry, based upon the ultimate authority of Scripture rather than upon sociology, psychology and other philosophies of the day.

ATTRIBUTION

While this document has not been footnoted as in a formal document, the author expresses gratitude to these and other individuals for their insight, articulation, and biblical exegesis which contributed significantly to his understanding of Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory and the *Oppressed/Oppressor Worldview* in general:

- **Critical Race Theory: An Introduction** - Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic
- **Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement** - Dr. Neil Shenvi & Dr. Pat Sawyer
- **Why Social Justice is Not Biblical Justice** - Scott David Allen
- **Who We Are - Our Vision and Mission** - The Lenses Institute
- **This Is Our Awakening** - Amethyst Holmes, Athletes In Action website
- **What is the Path to Racial Reconciliation?** - Dr. Neil Shenvi interviewed by Monique Duson & Krista Bonteger
- **Ethnic Gnosticism** - Dr. Voddie Baucham
- **The Unexpected Enemy of Justice** -Bill Gothard, Institute for Basic Youth Conflicts

By Craig Harriman ■

APPENDIX 4: MISSION DRIFT

A DEFINITION OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AND RELATED TERMS

Since 2015, new themes have been emphasized in Cru, along with new terminology. Here it will be helpful to define terms and concepts that have become common within our organization:

1. Critical Race Theory -- CRT is a system of thought based on a **victim-oppressor worldview**. It proposes that western civilization is dominated by white men who subjugate all other ethnic and racial minorities for their own advantage. CRT can best be understood by its tenets:

- “Racism” is unconquerable and ubiquitous; it is a unique form of evil that permeates all of western society, and particularly America. It is colloquially “the stain that will never be removed.”
- “Systemic racism” and “unconscious bias” are built into the current structure of western society. This cannot be remedied apart from the wholesale **dis-mantling and rebuilding** of organizations, political mechanisms, economic policies, moral standards, and other social norms.
- White people are members of the world’s most privileged ethnic group. “White privilege” is not only one of the main proofs of systemic racism; it is also a subtle but sinister injustice to other people groups.
- The term **racism** describes a uniquely white pathology. Members of less privileged ethnic groups are victims, not perpetrators, of social injustice — and it is therefore legitimate for them, in some cases, to retaliate with retributive violence or expressions of ethnic contempt. This is not “racism,” but an appropriate response to the oppression they suffer.
- White supremacy so permeates our institutions, policies, practices, and ways of knowing that it is nearly impossible to think outside it.
- All white people are racists, whether they want to be or not.
- “Whiteness” is therefore an evil that must be confessed and repudiated, but without any promise of forgiveness.
- Members of privileged ethnic groups who deny being racists are guilty of perpetuating racism.

This is not an exhaustive list of CRT tenets, but the anti-biblical and disunifying nature of its claims should be self-evident. (Source: The DailyWire.com <https://www.dailywire.com/news/macarthur-a-sickness-that-cannot-be-allowed-to-continue>)

2. Intersectionality – a system which segregates individuals into identity categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and gender preference in order to determine their level of disadvantage in society. (Advantaged categories include whites, men, Christians, the wealthy, the able-bodied, and more. Disadvantaged categories include African Americans and all People of Color, women, those who identify as LGBTQ+, the poor, the disabled, and more.) The more one’s identity crosses the “intersection” of disadvantage, the more likely they are to endure oppression and discrimination – according to this concept.

Intersectionality is the view that every person exists somewhere on a continuum of oppression. The end of the line or continuum is the oppressor category. The continuum extends into ever-increasing levels of oppression. These levels of oppression are defined by social and/or ethnic categories and can overlap. The levels of oppression that an individual experiences in society is correlated to the number of levels of oppression in which that person exists. (author: Harvey Spears)

3. Racism – a. the notion that one’s own ethnic stock is superior. b. discrimination or prejudice based on race (American Heritage Dictionary)

Merriam Webster Dictionary recently changed its definition of “racism.” Formerly, MW defined it as follows:

- The **individually held belief** that race accounts for differences in human character or ability, and that a particular race is superior (or inferior) to others.
- Discrimination or prejudice based on race.
- The belief that each race has distinct and intrinsic attributes.

The definition of racism was changed from a focus on individual beliefs to matters of “system” and “power.”

Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power

Racism = a system of advantage based on race

Racism = a system of oppression based on race

Racism = a white supremacy system

A key implication for Cru: Staff may have trouble hearing and understanding one another because one set of staff interpret the term “racism” by the former definition, and other staff understand the same term by the latter definition.

4. Justice – This term is commonly used in Scripture and by proponents of CRT. Justinian, an early church father, defines justice as “the constant and perpetual will to render to each what is due him.” Biblically, the term has two facets: a) legal/civil “Maintain justice in the courts.” Amos 5:15 b) individual righteousness, personal morality, integrity. Micah 6:8

5. Social Justice – is a general and fluid term for a range of causes often including racism, immigration, economics, environmentalism, feminism / abortion rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and more. Advocates for social justice seek to reconcile disparities between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, the oppressed and oppressors – usually as defined by modern Progressive political ideology. Social justice proponents seek fairness via equity of outcomes, not just equity of opportunity.

6. “Woke” -- one who has “awakened” to the reality of perceived injustice in society. A key feature of **wokeness** in white people is a sense of perpetual guilt (personal ownership of their own white-complicity in racism past and present). Woke individuals must accept that they will never be able to see issues of racism objectively. Only oppressed people can see oppression objectively and accurately. Woke individuals assent to the notions that advocacy is solidarity, and silence is complicity. ■

POLITICAL ACTIVITY REMINDER

By Dennis Kasper, General Counsel - 01 August 2020

In the U.S., we are now well into the Presidential and Congressional Election campaign season for this year. In addition, there are many Legislative seats as well as state and local races that will be contested. Because of this, I thought it would be wise to reiterate Cru's policies regarding political activity.

As an organization, we want to encourage your interest and participation in supporting the causes and candidates that attract you.

At a minimum, everyone should be informed about the candidates and issues and should be sure to vote. However, it is important to remember that Cru, itself, does not get involved in political campaigns. In addition, you should evaluate any personal involvement by how that involvement will impact your witness and ministry.

Why Cru does not get involved in political campaigns

First, and most important, the Board and the leadership believe that if Cru engages in the political process it will damage its ability to effectively communicate the gospel. Our mission of connecting people to Jesus is compromised if some of the people we most want to reach will not listen because they disagree with perceived organizational political stands.

Second, the law prohibits religious charities from endorsing political candidates and strictly limits their involvement in campaigns for propositions or ballot initiatives. If the ministry violates that law it risks losing its tax exempt [501 (c)(3)] status, and its ability to receive tax-deductible contributions.

What this means for our staff family

For both of these reasons, Cru has adopted some strict rules that it requires all of its employees to observe. These rules apply equally to campaigns supporting or opposing candidates running for elective office and to campaigns supporting or opposing propositions or ballot initiatives. Because the consequences to the ministry for violations to these rules can be severe, it is the ministry's policy to address violations both by taking prompt, public steps to distance itself from the action that violated the policy, and, in appropriate cases, to engage in a disciplinary process with those who engaged in the violation.

Immediately below is a list of the specific policies. The term "campaign" in this policy includes direct or indirect support for, or opposition to, a candidate or proposition or ballot initiative.

- Cru's letterhead, trademarks and other identifying marks may not be used in connection with any campaign.
- Individual Cru employees may participate on their own time in particular campaigns when doing so

does not damage their ministry with Cru. However, they may not identify themselves by their position or title at Cru in any public appearance, letters, advertisements, or other documents or electronic media produced in any campaign.

- Cru facilities, including, among other things, offices, phones, computers, copy equipment, fax equipment, websites, email, mailing lists, email contact lists and donor lists, may not be used to assist or oppose any campaign.
- The Cru email system, including your individual Cru related email address (@cru.org), may not be used in connection with any campaign. The same rule applies to other Cru related email addresses (for example, @AthletesInAction; @FamilyLife; @ccci, etc.) Nor may they be used to discuss anything about any political campaign.
- Cru websites, both ministry sites and personal staff sites that are associated with the ministry, may not be used in connection with any campaign. This includes such indirect activity as adding information about particular campaigns to a site without expressing an overt opinion.
- It also includes adding links to particular campaign websites and links to other sites that are designed to evaluate or provide information about campaigns.
- It also includes the use of forums, blogs (on your own website, or a commercial blog site), social network sites (for example: Workplace; Facebook; Twitter; Instagram; and other similar programs), and other media used in connection with a campaign or to discuss a campaign, where the forum, blog or site, or your participation in them, is associated in any way with Cru.
- "Association", for charities, includes use of company email addresses on social networking sites as well as listing the name of your employer.
- Candidates and supporters or opponents of particular propositions may not be invited to visit the Lake Hart property, or other Cru offices or properties, in connection with their campaigns.
- Voter Guides, even if they appear to be non-partisan, may not be distributed at Lake Hart or other Cru offices or properties, or on any website, or linked to any website, without the prior approval from the General Counsel's Office.

The Internal Revenue Service has established very strict guidelines for religious charities to use to determine if a Voter Guide is non-partisan for IRS purposes. Only the General Counsel's Office can determine, on behalf of Cru, if a guide meets the IRS test.

The points above are intended to provide you with clear guidance regarding the ministry's policy on political activity. It is impossible to be completely inclusive of every possibility in a policy of this type.

Please keep the underlying principles in mind and use them to guide your conduct. Also, the ministry leadership recognizes that in some respects its policy may be stricter than IRS guidance requires. Where that is the case, it is intended to better protect the ministry.

The ministry leadership understands, too, that there are some activities that are by their nature educational, or encourage electoral participation, without being partisan. While there are times when such activities may benefit the Cru community, or its mission, as a matter of policy, the decision to engage in such activities must be approved by the U.S. Director, and the activity itself must be cleared by the General Counsel's Office as being truly nonpartisan.

For more information

We recognize that there may be situations where it is difficult to apply this policy precisely. If you face such a case, please contact the General Counsel's Office before you take any action on your own. The legal team can help you determine what is appropriate and what is not. ■

Contact the General Counsel's Office:

Cru
General Counsel's Office,#3500
100 Lake Hart Dr.
Orlando, FL 32832
(407) 826-2047
legal@cru.org

THE LENSES INSTITUTE TWEETS REGARDING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The following re-tweets came directly from the Lenses Institute. See documents in this Appendix which detail Cru's policy regarding individual and ministry connection to campaigns and politics. Violation of these policies put Cru in jeopardy of losing their tax exempt status.



The Lenses Institute Retweeted

Mark Charles 2020 @wi... · 17 Mar 18

What does white supremacy look like? [@realDonaldTrump](#) is judged Presidential in spite of the content of his character. [@BarackObama](#) was judged un-Presidential because of the color of his skin.

15 retweets 54 likes

The Lenses Institute Retweeted

The Voices Project @J... · 10 May 18

"The United States is not racist and sexist in spite of our foundation. It is racist and sexist because of the foundation. Protest the foundation. Protest the system. We have to change the foundation" -Mark Charles

#thevoicesconference18

10 retweets 28 likes

The Lenses Institute Retweeted

DEFUND THE POLICE ... · 12 Aug 17

This happened today in Cleveland (Euclid) Ohio. How many videos do y'all fuckin need? How many????

1.9M views

1,326 comments 31.2K retweets 26.9K likes

The Lenses Institute Retweeted

Samuel Sinyangwe ... · 23 May 18

White supremacy is a helluvah drug. Straight brainwashing. Look how easily they convinced a large portion of the white population that:

- 1) the anthem should play every game
- 2) the anthem is about "troops"
- 3) kneeling is disrespecting "troops"
- 4) NFL policy should punish kneeling

53 comments 1,110 retweets 2,495 likes

We could have added dozens more. The Lenses Institute is featured prominently on our public web site with Michael Sylvester listed among Cru's top leadership. As such, Lenses Institute's public messages affect all of us.



2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

The upcoming presidential election marks a significant decision point for our nation. This moral moment requires principled conviction from politicians, but even more so from the American people. Christians have a particular obligation to provide this moral leadership. No candidate will be perfect, but Christians can hold both parties accountable to a vision for the common good that is not fully represented in either party platform.

While a misappropriation of the separation between Church and State has sometimes been used to suggest people of faith are the only people who can't consider their values when participating in politics, we know that both our faith and the demands of citizenship require that we bring our full selves to the project of self-governance.

Our Christian faith's call to recognize the image of God in every person and to love our neighbor as ourselves compels us to speak into the public square to promote social justice and moral order. We have a spiritual responsibility as followers of Jesus to seek common ground and the common good. We are obligated to protect the vulnerable and defend human dignity even of those with whom we disagree.

At its best, the church should be a beacon of light to our nation, illuminating the systemic and institutional injustices that must be removed for our Union to thrive, while also modeling the possibility of a more just way. It should also be a moral anchor that refuses to sacrifice virtue and righteousness at the altar of political expediency. We have seen this in our past: When the mechanisms of government failed to disassemble slavery and later Jim Crow, church-led movements shocked and recalibrated the conscience of a derelict nation. Conversely, when the church has failed to act or has imposed its own injustices, the nation and the promise of democracy suffered dearly.


We assert the following convictions to the candidates seeking the presidential nominations of their political party, so that they know what we believe to be some of the primary issues facing our country and that they might respond to these concerns. And we state these convictions to our fellow Christians—indeed, all Americans—so that they might inform the way we advocate and vote in the upcoming election.

THE HEALTH OF OUR DEMOCRACY

By disregarding standards of decency and good faith, the current administration has significantly lowered our nation's discourse and endangered the political process. This president's callousness—especially toward non-white Americans and vulnerable citizens—his fomenting of chaos as Commander-in-Chief, and his cavalier attitude toward rule of law and basic norms of civility all undermine social cohesion, civic trust, and our very democracy.

RACE AND VOTER RIGHTS

America was built by enslaved people and immigrant workers who brought the country closer to its founding ideals through their sacrifices and protests. And yet racial discrimination has pervaded American public policy and the law since our nation's inception, and its effects continue today. People of color still haven't fully recovered from the War on Drugs and a myriad of other government sanctioned efforts that devastated communities and weakened families. We must address racial disparities in education, poverty-

An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, showing a complex network of highways and buildings. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red color. The text is contained within a white rectangular box in the center.

levels, healthcare, environmental quality, and the criminal justice system head on. Central to that effort must be the vigilant protection of voting rights. Voting should be fair, accessible, and convenient for all eligible American citizens, and enfranchisement should extend to former felons who have paid their debt to society.

THE POOR AND PRO-FAMILY ECONOMIC POLICIES

America can't disregard poor people in policymaking. We need creative anti-poverty policies that work in tandem with, not in opposition to, other institutions, including the family and the church. We believe in the dignity of work, and that workers should receive a livable wage. Education should be accessible and equitable for all children. Paid family leave and enhanced child tax credits are both family-oriented policies that relieve the burden on hard working parents and create opportunities for them to invest more time and resources into their children and loved ones. In order for families—and indeed, the nation—to thrive, women must be free from discrimination, harassment and abuse.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND LGBTQ RIGHTS

All attempts to remove more traditional religious beliefs from the public square should be opposed. We, like many other Americans, affirm the historic Christian sexual ethic, and we also believe that religious freedom and LGBTQ civil rights are not necessarily in irreconcilable conflict. Faith-based charities, hospitals and colleges should not have to choose between surrendering their convictions and closing their doors. At the same time, LGBTQ people should not lose jobs and housing because of how they identify. We must pursue ways to disagree and live together without bullying or compromising our conscience. Towards that end, we encourage all 2020 candidates to support the Fairness for All Act, which will grant basic civil rights for LGBTQ people while also protecting religious freedom for all faiths.

IMMIGRATION

The Trump administration has failed to treat undocumented immigrants with dignity and care, especially at the U.S.-Mexico border. In light of God's special concern for the immigrant and the sojourner, we are deeply dissatisfied with the federal government's continued negligence when it comes to passing comprehensive immigration reform. The current administration's willingness to use draconian, manipulative measures to stoke fear in immigrant communities and pit family members against one another is reprehensible. Our government must seek to be both just and compassionate regarding immigration policy, especially in protecting Dreamers and upholding longstanding laws regarding refugees fleeing violence, lawlessness and oppression.

HEALTHCARE AND ABORTION

We believe in building a society that respects human dignity at all stages of life, including the unborn. This includes accessible and affordable health care for everyone. Americans should not go bankrupt because they get sick or die because their medication is exorbitantly expensive. This includes policies that support maternal health and address our nation's high rate of maternal mortality, especially among Black and Native American women. It includes vigilant prosecution of pregnancy discrimination in education and the workplace. It is essential that the sanctity of human life at every stage, in particular in the womb, is defended vigorously. Abortion is a tragedy, not a social good, that should be vehemently discouraged rather than promoted.

CONCLUSION

Our nation desperately needs Christians to live out their faith in this political sphere for the good of all Americans, and the 2020 presidential candidates need to hear, respond to, and respect our voice and earn our vote. Through advocacy and protest, we are committed to supporting candidates, no matter their political affiliation, when they promote civility and human dignity, and we will actively oppose politicians, policies, and parties when they undermine these values.

Rev. Joseph Darby
Nichols Chapel AME Church
Charleston, SC

Rev. Alvin Love
Lilydale First Baptist Church
Chicago, IL

Bishop Edward Peecher
Chicago Embassy Church
Chicago, IL

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner
Skinner Leadership Institute
Washington, D.C.

Dr. William E. Flippin, Sr.
Greater Piney Grove Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Walter A. McCray
NBEA
Chicago, IL

Dr. Jacqueline Rivers
Seymour Institute
Boston, MA

Pastor Lee Jenkins
Eagles Nest Church
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Richard Mouw
Fuller Seminary
Pasadena, CA

Dr. Ron Sider
Evangelicals for Social Action
Philadelphia, PA

Hannah Anderson
Author
Roanoke, VA

Rasool Berry
AND Campaign
Brooklyn, NY

Pastor Chris Butler
Chicago Embassy Church
Chicago, IL

Dr. Charlie Dates
Progressive Baptist Church
Chicago, IL

Pastor Darryl Ford
Ikon Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Oshebar Hardmen
2nd Mt. Vernon Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Vincent Bantu
Author
Houston, TX

Dr. Emory Berry, Jr.
Greenforest Community Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Erika Collier
AND Campaign
Atlanta, GA

Brian Dye
Legacy Disciple
Chicago, IL

Jerome Gay
Vision Church
Raleigh, NC

Pastor Christopher J. Harris
Crossover Church
Tampa, FL

Amisho Baraka
Artist
Atlanta, GA

Yvette Broughton
AND Campaign
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Leonce Crump
Renovation Church
Atlanta, GA

Lisa Fields
Jude 3 Project
Jacksonville, FL

Justin E. Giboney
AND Campaign
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Marlin Harris
New Life Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Michael C. Harris

Acts of Faith Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Demetrius Hunter

Social Worker
Flint, MI

Pastor Tommy Kyllonen

Crossover Church
Tampa, FL

Pastor Carlos Lollett

Church in the 305
Miami, FL

Dr. Bobby Manning

First Baptist Church of District Heights
District Heights, MD

Pastor John Onwuchekwa

Cornerstone Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Philip Pinckney

Radiant Church
Charleston, SC

Dr. C.J. Rhodes

Mt. Helm Baptist Church
Jackson, MS

Lisa Saunders

Author
Portland, OR

Pastor David Swanson

New Community Covenant Church
Chicago, IL

Michael Wear

AND Campaign
Reston, VA

Pastor D.A. Horton

Reach Church
Long Beach, CA

Krista Idowu

Ikon Community Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Cornelius Lindsey

Gathering Oasis Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Dameon Madison

The Life Community Fellowship Church
Dallas, TX

Dr. Esau McCaulley

Author
Wheaton, IL

Pastor Derrick Parks

Epiphany Church Delaware
Wilmington, DE

Kori Porter

AND Campaign
Princeton, NJ

Pastor James Roberson

Bridge Church
Brooklyn, NY

Pastor Phillip Spann

Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Rondell Trevino

The Immigration Coalition
Memphis, TN

Kyle Howard

AND Campaign
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Watson Jones III

Compassion Baptist Church
Chicago, IL

Pastor Derrick Lockwood

Power Truth Sanctuary Global Church Int'l
Macon, GA

Pastor Angel Maldonado

The Path Church
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Marcos Mercado

Delaware Christian Church
Wilmington, DE

Preston Perry

Artist
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Derrick Puckett

Renewal Baptist Church
Chicago, IL

Isaiah Robertson

Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church
Cartersville, GA

Stephanie Summers

Center for Public Justice
Washington, D.C.

Pastor Muche Ukegbu

The Brook Church
Miami, FL

STEVE SELLERS LETTER TO THE STAFF FOLLOWING CRU 17

We have responded in blue to the highlighted portions.

[View This Email Online »](#)



SEPTEMBER 5, 2017

Dear Chris,

I trust you are well and experiencing God's grace. The month following Cru17 was surprisingly busy for Christy and me. We did get a much-anticipated week to relax and regroup near the end of August. It was a great time to slow down, talk, read and think.

In the last several weeks I've been able to review the surveys and to interact with many of you, personally and by email, about Cru17. Your feedback was more passionate and more polarized than in any survey I can recall. **(Yes, we see this polarization too. As Steve notes there was polarization around the conference, not just to current events. And our concern is that the content of the recent conferences is stirring the polarization in a major way. It is concerning that this is the second conference with polarized feedback, but the same message and many of the same content planners were given leadership yet again for a third time.)** Comments ranged from "I've never been more proud of Cru" and "Thank you for hearing and caring for me" to, "I'm not sure who we are" and "I wonder if I can continue". If you're interested, here are the survey results, minus the individual comments.

Thank you for taking the time to respond. Your honest feedback is helpful for us to serve you well. As I've pondered and prayed through your input, I want to share a few thoughts, which can actually be pretty tricky. In a movement of our size, it's likely my broad conclusions won't cover all the issues or represent you accurately and may also raise questions. I ask that you'll read these with the spirit of grace in which they are offered.

First, I'm reminded again that God is doing a *good* work within Cru. More than at any time in our history, we are more diverse in our life journeys and our perspectives on culture. Cru is a broad mix of generations, ethnicities and cultures.

At the same time we are knit at a heart level in so many ways. **(This seems more like a desirable aim, than our present reality. Reviews of Cru 17 were "polarized" as already noted. Our BCWI scores indicate by objective measurements that trust within Cru has never been lower. Too many staff feel unsafe about sharing their perspective with one another - at staff meetings, on Workplace, and elsewhere because of the atmosphere we've created.)** We all share a common call from the God who transformed each of our

lives by his grace. Together, we care about a world that is lost and we share a commitment to go to every person in the world with the **gospel**. **(This is our earnest hope! However, the “gospel” is being redefined by our teachers, and in much of Cru’s material, as documented in this overall report. Within Cru the gospel of liberation from oppression is competing with our traditional understanding of the gospel.)** We also understand the priority of living in the power of the Holy Spirit as we live and work with each other. By God’s grace we are reaching the nations of the world and the cultures of the U.S. in greater numbers than ever. I love watching what God is doing in our midst.

I want to encourage each of us to lean into God’s good work. It really is incredible. But it isn’t easy. Differences produce faith challenges for everyone. But as we live by faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, God is making something new that reflects Jesus’ prayer “that they may be one as we are one”. He’s doing it for the sake of His name.

Second, many good things happened at Cru17. We worshipped together, we were challenged, we connected with friends and we launched a connection weekend. **Yet, even though good things happened, a significant number of you felt that we missed an opportunity to do what our staff conference does best – to encourage you.**

It’s true that many of you were encouraged and left with new hope that God can use you in Cru. But others felt that we **didn’t provide enough opportunity** to celebrate where God is leading and what He has done. **We missed an opportunity** to provide a kind of encouragement that can best be done when we’re all together. **(It wasn’t just that “an opportunity was missed.” Sadly, many staff felt attacked with racial guilt messages. Many of us were concerned about**

- 1. false teaching embedded with biblical truth related to racial issues.**
- 2. messages consistent with critical race theory**
- 3. strong emphasis on victim-oppressor themes.**
- 4. An over-arching message of blame and condemnation**

Many of us saw our primary mission fall by the wayside while message after message about racial injustice dominated the conference. The discouragement was palpable.)

Third, you wanted more balance.

Our goal for this staff conference was to focus on the idea of partnership, while also addressing our global scope, our oneness and diversity objective and our priority on the gospel. In the end, much of our interaction was about diversity. We are a complex and multifaceted movement and a large percentage of you wanted us to allocate time proportionately to other necessary topics without losing sight of our need to become more diverse.

I want to say this carefully. **Oneness and diversity is a very important focus for us as we believe God for our future.** If we do not follow Jesus as he prompts our hearts, we will miss the blessing that comes with obedience, and the world will miss the blessing of what we become. In the words of the psalmist, “our eyes are ever on the Lord” in this arena. Learning to become one in Jesus, across culture, is biblical, obedient and righteous, in and of itself, regardless of our mission. It is also mission critical since we cannot accomplish our mission without more diversity and greater unity. **(We agree Oneness and Diversity is crucial, yet our aim for Oneness and Diversity is directly contradicted and undermined by the teaching at our conference that vilifies majority culture, and places a heavy emphasis on oppression and victimhood according to race, ethnicity, gender... We see this destructive ideology tearing Cru apart. What’s more is that the same conference program team, inexplicably, has remained in place for Cru 15, Cru 17, and even Cru 19.)**

As I stated on our last night together, our calling has not changed. Our mission - the primary focus of Cru - is to win, build and send Christ-centered multiplying disciples. We want to give every person in the world the opportunity to hear and respond to God's offer of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. In the midst of proclaiming this good news everywhere, our efforts will be directed toward mobilizing followers of Jesus to become multiplying disciples. **(All of this is what we have always understood**

Cru to be about. And yet Cru 17 sounded like a long week of OTHER, except for Steve's closing remarks. That's not what our conference was about at all! While we hear STEVE say these things, the message we heard from the stage all week-long was a VERY different one.)

I understand that, in light of our mission, it would have been helpful to address a broader spectrum of topics surrounding our mission at Cru17. We could have also done a better job of connecting the numerous topics we covered to our mission.

Finally, how do we move forward this fall? We are back in the battle and the fields are white unto harvest. Let's move forward full of faith, trusting that God will use us to accomplish His Great Commission.

Since Cru17 I've thought often about Eugene Cho's mother. Do you remember the story? His proud Korean mother had planned for him to be a doctor. When he was called to the ministry the family rejected him for two years. Now, after months of unemployment, he lands a job as a janitor but is too ashamed to tell his mother. One morning he is forced to stop hiding and to come clean. In Dr. Cho's words, "My mom, gets up and slowly walks toward me... then she continues past me, walks to the closet and puts on her coat." "Turning to me she says, 'Let's go together, I will help you' ".

I cannot stop thinking how a moment of shame was turned into a gift of unconditional love by an act of humility and grace. I want to be like Eugene Cho's mother. I want to move toward another in the power of the Holy Spirit, full of compassion, in order to understand what others experience. I want to extend the love of Christ to my fellow believers and to a lost and dying world.

As we link arms together we are going to experience both joy and disappointment. But is it possible that each of us can roll up our sleeves, turn to one another and with supernatural sacrifice say, "Let's go together, I will help you"? **(This is Steve's heart! Godly, compassionate, empathetic. We have not lost sight of this.)**

It is a privilege to serve Jesus with you,



Steve Sellers
U.S. National Director



APPENDIX 5: RESOURCES

RESOURCES FOR BIBLICALLY ENGAGING CULTURE WITH GRACE AND TRUTH

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR / SPEAKER	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Is Critical Theory Biblical?	COLSON INSTITUTE: Joseph Backholm	VIDEO 5:48 min	Description of Critical Theory with a review of key points regarding the Biblical view of humanity, sin, and salvation. Excellent place to start for a quick overview of the basic points of Critical Theory contrasted with Biblical teaching.
Critical Theory is Practical	COLSON INSTITUTE: Joseph Backholm	VIDEO 7:37 min	Addresses if Critical Theory's practicality from a cultural perspective.
What is the Path to Racial Recognition?	Monique Dusan & Krista Bontrager interview Neil Shenvi	VIDEO 10:46 min	Addresses what Jamar Tisby wrote in The Color of Compromise. Provides a Biblical basis for the truth that the barrier has been removed. Includes a strong caution against abusing this truth by being dismissive toward those who have suffered abuse.
The Great Awakening: A Crash Course on Critical Race Theory	Krista Bontrager & Monique Dusan	VIDEO SERIES 9 videos	Crash course series of 9 conversations explaining the basics of Critical Race Theory. Includes a clear explanation of the Biblical worldview. CRT is discussed as a primary competitor to the Gospel in our culture. Gentle presentation from Monique, who comes from a Sociology background, and Krista as a Theologian. Includes steps to move forward to address racial unity in today's culture.
5 Ways Christians are Getting Swept into a Secular Worldview in This Cultural Moment	Natasha Crain	WEB PAGE	Natasha Crain addresses how we as Christians are neglecting opportunities to demonstrate how a secular worldview fails to what are we comparing the world when we say it is unjust?
What are the Cultural Signs of Progressive Christianity?	Alisa Childers	WEB PAGE	From their refusal to offer a pinch of incense in worship of Caesar to their views on marriage and abortion from the first century until now, Christians have been marked by their refusal to capitulate to the false ideas of culture. However, one of the hallmarks of progressive Christianity is its tendency to flow with societal norms.
Beyond Racial Gridlock	Dr. George Yancey	VIDEO 7:45 min	In this summary video, Dr. Yancey addresses the current race issue from a Christian perspective, recognizing that the starting point is admitting that the sin nature applies to all human beings.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR / SPEAKER	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Summary of Critical Race Theory	Craig Harriman	9 pages	Cru staff member Craig Harriman has compiled a very readable overview of the topic, addressing both the similarities and the differences between the Oppressed/Opressor worldview and Christianity.
The Caging of the American Conscience	Denise McAllister	WEB PAGE	Denise McAllister defines moral authority, which she holds is the basis of current cultural tension. She discusses loss of white moral authority, black power, white guilt and differing responses. Some are giving up positions of authority while others are becoming entrenched and driven into racism. She then discusses a better way: God’s moral authority.
Antiracism Glossary	Dr. Neil Shenvi	9 pages	Understanding the terminology being used is fundamental to communication. Antiracists frequently employ words in technical, nonstandard ways, which can lead to substantial confusion, even when both sides are committed to genuine dialogue. This glossary defines and discusses the following terms: <i>antiracism, colorblind, people of color, racism, white fragility, white privilege, white supremacy, whiteness</i>
Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth	Dr. Thaddeus Williams	VIDEO 1:26:04 min	Discussion of Biblical framework for justice. Many Christians are adopting a framework without inquiring whether the ideas fought for under the banner of “social justice” are actually biblical. Dr. Williams is introduced at 10:50 on the video.
Are Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity Compatible?	Dr. Neil Shenvi	VIDEO 57 min	Excellent overview of contemporary Critical Theory and the Gospel. Relevant to Christians and Christian leaders. Dr. Shenvi shows how seemingly disparate views fall into a common worldview. Includes transcript.
Beware of “Conversations”	Michael Littler	WEB PAGE	Discussion of the trend in Christian circles to have “conversations” on race. The idea around race conversations, however, is often about collective guilt—being blamed for something a group or individual did in the past. The conversation is often based on the assumption that America is inherently and systematically racist.
The Dangers of Critical Theory	Dr. William Lane Craig	VIDEO 22:23 min	Dr. William Lane Craig, one of the world’s foremost apologists and brilliant thinkers, and a friend of Cru, evaluates Critical Theory and how it relates to today’s social justice movement.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR / SPEAKER	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Ethnic Gnosticism	Dr. Voddie Baucham	50 min.	In recent years we have a growing concern about “social justice.” What is meant by that phrase, however, varies widely among those who use and promote it. What is too often missing—even in the calls for “social justice” coming from Christian leaders—is a clear understanding of Biblical justice. Ethnic Gnosticism is a term crafted by Dr. Voddie Baucham to explain the phenomenon of people believing that somehow because of one’s ethnicity that one is able to know when something or someone is racist. In this sermon, Dr. Baucham sheds light on the way this ideology is undermining the gospel and compromising genuine Christian relationships in the church today.

ADVANCED LEVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR / SPEAKER	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Can Christianity Teach Us Anything Unique about Race?	Dr. George Yancey	VIDEO 1:21:51	Based on research, Dr. Yancey discusses the contrast between the “Black Lives Matter” structural approach and the “All Lives Matter” colorblind approach. He points out the inherent lack of Christian truth with both approaches. He then presents a Christian Biblical approach of mutual responsibility as the third and only viable approach.
Beyond Racial Gridlock	Dr. George Yancey	BOOK 197 pp	Dr. Yancey’s vision offers hope that people of all races can walk together on a shared path--not as adversaries, but as partners. Yancey offers a Biblical pathway forward as Christians, giving hope for the future.
Diversity, Inclusion, Equity	Dr. James Lindsay	VIDEO 57:17 min	Dr. Lindsey addresses the progressive ideology of seeing the world through a lens of power instead of a worldview rooted in absolute truth. Words are often redefined, resulting in people being manipulated. Even though an atheist, Dr. Lindsay appeals to absolute truth because he sees the results of the relativistic victim/oppressor worldview which leads to the loss of personal freedom and a totalitarian “utopian” society.

APPENDIX 6: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF LOVING IN A DIVIDED WORLD AND REACHING ALL ETHNICITIES

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PROPOSAL ON REACHING DIVERSE PEOPLE WITH THE GOSPEL

Introduction

The previous section have sought to show both that a victim-oppressor worldview is an unhealthy, even dangerous, way to address diversity, inequality, and injustice issues in the body of Christ; and, also, to show that it must be actively addressed within Cru to avoid drift from our organizational mission as it has been historically understood and undertaken. The goal of this section is to offer biblical insights on the issues of diversity, equality, and justice in a way that might help move the organization forward in seeking to reach every person on the planet with the gospel.

Underlying this study was a commitment by the contributors to the inerrant authority of Scripture, which each has affirmed annually in signing the Cru/CCCI doctrinal statement. Each contributor has also chosen the grammatico-historical method as the preferred hermeneutic for interpreting the various passages below. In using this method, it has been important to distinguish what aspects of Scripture are descriptive and which are prescriptive, which has not always been kept clear by interpreters of the Bible. An example is Jephthah in Judges 11:29-40 who sacrificed his daughter unnecessarily. Scripture shows what occurred (the description) probably based on trying to keep the requirement of Numbers 30:2. However, other passages of Scripture reveal that he did not need to take this extreme measure. Had he correctly understood and applied the Law (the prescription), he would have both refrained from child sacrifice because it was forbidden (Dt 12:29-31, 18:10a) and provided the alternative sacrifice for a rash oath provided in the Law (Lv 5:4-6ff). Similarly, the sub-team has tried to distinguish diversity, equality, and justice-related passages described in Scripture from prescriptive ones. However, in addressing prescriptive passages, care has been taken to address that which is applicable today for those not under the unique national covenant between Israel and YHWH.

When using this method, post-modernism has rightly shown that absolute interpretive neutrality is impossible.¹ However, certain personal interpretive weaknesses have been buffered by working as a team, instead of as individuals; by avoiding looking at the findings of the other sections before or during the preparation of this section; and, by bringing to the interpretive task some personal experience on the issues involved.

CONTRIBUTOR QUALIFICATIONS

Regarding this last point, while none of the sub-team contributors belongs to a national minority group, which might mean insensitivity and/or blindness to the issues involved, the team believes it has sufficient individual and collective background to provide the adequate, minimal insight required for legitimate understanding and application on the related issues.

One contributor, from a single-parent and relatively low-income household, grew up visiting the homes of racially diverse people and interacting with their families, including the various dysfunctions that can come with them. Further exposure to people of minority cultures occurred through having ethnically diverse college and post-college roommates, attending a multi-racial church, working in the Cru Campus Ministry with undergrad and grad students from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, and serving for several years on an ethnically diverse team under a minority supervisor. All of these helped this member better understand both the lenses through which minority individuals operate in the world and the advantages

¹Gordon D. Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 31, 57.

majority individuals take for granted. It has also led to a heart for minority staff and those with which they seek to minister, to be loved and cared for, for their hardships and challenges to be acknowledged, and to work towards genuine unity in racial issues within Cru and in the areas we minister.

Another contributor's experience has included work in large northeast metropolitan areas where he ministered in the midst of a racially charged incident that garnered national attention. It has also included ministering to, and partnering with, a person from the Japanese American community; and, doing ministry to and with people on the margins in society.

The third contributor has had extensive adult experience working with diverse ethnic and culturally different people both in the U.S.A. and overseas, and is married to a minority person born in the U.S.A. This has led to the awareness that tensions regarding diversity, equality, and justice are not U.S. issues alone. Prejudice against dark skin is global. Even in cultures where white skin is not shared by the predominant ethnic group, darker skin is often viewed negatively with social disadvantages that occur because of it, which, in some countries, has led to disadvantaged people using various skin lightening techniques to look lighter. Discrimination globally also exist over tribal, language, religious, education, and economic differences. Reverse discrimination also occurs where white skin is associated with previous colonial powers or where cultures with a longer history see themselves as superior in various ways to younger ones. It also occurs with some more liberal individuals or organizations who promote tolerance are hypocritically intolerant toward conservative individuals or organizations.

Other contributors are individuals with racially, ethnically, and/or culturally diverse spouses and close friends they are dating with many of these relationships occurring through a Cru/CCCI context; or those who have lived and worked in a significantly distinct culture from the one in which they worked. All consider themselves people called and committed to Cru/CCCI and friends of it. Some came to Christ through a CCCI ministry or became involved with one early in their young-adult life.

It is problematic enough when such things occur among non-believers. It is even more so when they occur among those who associate themselves with Christ. However, sadly, each reference above was taken from within the believing community by personal observation of the contributors. These encounters have increased the team's personal awareness of relevant diversity, inequality, and justice issues when looking at the Scriptures as interpreters of it.

HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH AND CRITICAL DEFINITIONS

The sub-team has sought to avoid addressing orthodoxy apart from orthopraxy, for this distinction and modern division is unbiblical. Right belief must result in right behavior. Scripture does not allow one without an equally strong emphasis on the other. The Law of the Old Testament was built on theological assertions but tied righteous behavior to them. Similarly, the New Testament epistles often start with aspects of right belief but end with the type of right behavior that flows from it. This study, therefore, offers a foundation of right beliefs regarding diversity, equality, and justice but ties right behavior to them in its areas of application, which will deal with three critical areas that must be addressed within and by the organization: interpersonal relationships, team dynamics, and disparities.

Finally, for good communication to occur when differences of perspective exist, it helps for all participants to have clear definitions for critical terms being used. Many followers of Christ have been misled into following the teachings of the Mormon Church because their missionaries use familiar religious terms. Little do the unsuspecting hearers know that none of the terms have the same definition as found in orthodoxy. To avoid misunderstanding in the section below, the contributors have chosen to use certain terms in the following ways.

The term "majority" will refer to those with the most influence in the context. "Minority" will refer to those not in the majority and with lesser influence resulting

in identifiable disadvantages compared to what is experienced by the majority. Depending on the context, being in the minority can be as a result of skin color, ethnicity, location of birth, religion, economics, political identification, etc.

Two common definitions of racism according to Michael Emerson are “individualistic” and “structuralist.” Individualistic racism are acts of overt prejudice and discrimination. Most white evangelicals think of this definition when they think of “racism.” Structural racism, sometimes referred to as “disparities” within a structure, are prejudice with power. Most minorities tend toward this view, where they see an entire structure that needs to be changed because it has roots or is infected with systems based in racism, rather than simply seeing individual, overt acts. Majority culture is seen as the problem because they are the ones who hold the power.² The term “racism” below will be used when the individualistic definition is meant. The terms “disparity” or “disparities” will be used when the structural one is meant.

Two important terms “systemic oppression” and “systemic suppression” are used in this study. Because the former is an emotional term within the current culture and context, it needs careful qualification, and both need careful distinction. A simple dictionary search of each has the following results:

To “oppress” means:

- “to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority”³
- “to burden with cruel or unjust impositions or restraints; subject to a burdensome or harsh exercise of authority or power”⁴
- “to govern people in an unfair and cruel way and prevent them from having opportunities and freedom”⁵

To suppress means:

- “to keep from public knowledge”⁶
- “to put an end to the activities of (a person, body of persons, etc.)”⁷
- “to prevent something from being seen or expressed or from operating”⁸

The terms are closely related and overlap in ways; but their differences communicate a needed distinction. Oppression involves more authorities taking steps to keep people under some form of official restraint that burdens them. Suppression need not be as official and refers more to restricting activities to prevent them from happening or influencing others.

With these distinctions in mind, “systemic oppression” will be used where the context of a passage in the Bible involves activities causing disparity that were both oppressive, and systemically so. Therefore, this term will continue to be used in those contexts, though not with the cultural definition it has today that involves government policies and their execution in various institutions under its rules and regulations with an intentional result that creates inequality as individuals and groups are associated with separate identities such policies promote. On the other hand, “systemic suppression” will refer to where the context shows activity that attempts to hinder something advancing, and systemically so, without the additional burden of actual oppression being involved.

² Michael Emerson, “The Persistent Problem,” Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2010, p. 13, accessed October 3, 2020, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/110974>. An example of a structural disparity being considered within Cru is found in this “Workplace” article: <https://staffweb.workplace.com/groups/CruCity/permalink/2696024040719154/>.

³ Merriam-Webster; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁴ Dictionary.com; <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/oppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/oppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁶ Merriam-Webster; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/suppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁷ Dictionary.com; <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/suppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁸ Cambridge Dictionary; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/suppress>, accessed 4 November 2020.

One final note is necessary: in the following study, the word “Church” with a capital as the first letter will be used when referring to the body of believers globally and universally in time. The term “church” with a small first letter will refer to any local or regional group of believers.

Biblical Perspectives on Relevant Critical Issues

The difficult and contentious issues we find in society today are not new to humanity. They are seen in the earliest stories of the Bible and throughout its various books. The following are some examples, not a comprehensive list, related to topics relevant to this organizational discussion.⁹

The New Testament builds on these Old Testament insights as a foundation for followers of Christ. Sometimes the NT teachings are consistent with the principles of the Old Testament, sometimes additional to them, and other times different from them.¹⁰

In the early Church while the New Testament was still being written, its Scriptures were the writings that now comprise the Protestant Old Testament. Upon these books Jesus and the Apostles based their reflections and teachings when quoting, referring, or alluding to Scripture. Thus, when Paul wrote 2 Tim 3:16-17, he referred specifically to the books of the Old Testament, not just those books that today comprise the New Testament. Important for this discussion is not just the fact that the Scriptures, Old and New, are inspired but, also, that they tell the disciples of Jesus individually and corporately what they need to know as beliefs; additionally, their application to the ways they live (“teaching”), how they can go astray (“reproof”), how to change course in the right direction (“correction”), and how to move forward in becoming more Christlike (“training in righteousness”) so they are effective in advancing His Kingdom. Therefore, this section provides valuable insight into biblical ethics even where some aspects can only be applied contextually within the nation of ancient Israel due to its unique covenant with YHWH that no other nation in human history was ever offered.¹¹

DIVERSITY IN THE BIBLE

Human diversity is apparent from the book of Genesis through the book of Revelation. Gender diversity exists with the first couple being made male and female (Gen 1:27, 2:21-24) while vocational (Gen 4:2, 17, 21, 22) and generational differences (Genesis 5) come with the people who came afterwards. After the Flood, diversity continues developing through Noah’s descendants with their ethnic (Gen 9:18-19), national, linguistic, and tribal/clan distinctions (Gen 10:5, 20, 31, 32).

Diverse cultural traits are seen in the Bible as its story takes place in various ancient Near Eastern (ANE) and Mediterranean locations (e.g., Ur/Babylon, Canaan, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and later Asia Minor, and Greece). Those traits involve religious beliefs and practices, dietary practices, and aspects of personal appearance, some of which the Israelites were forbidden to adopt (Lev 19:20-28-31, 20:6, 21:5).¹² As history progresses, they learn in special revelation from Him ways they should remain holy (morally and in spiritual identity) when those among and around them are not.

The NT Jewish culture in Israel starts out under the OT Law but also under Roman rule after a period of Greek rule that influenced it for four hundred years. Roman and Greek cultural aspects in the NT can be seen in Rome’s military might (the various references to Roman rule and rulers throughout the Gospels and Acts) and

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes in this section are from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016); Logos Bible Software ed.

¹⁰ Information in this study from the Gospels will primarily be cited from Matthew except where the other synoptics and the Gospel of John provide significant additional clarification.

¹¹ Hermeneutical care is required in determining spiritual principles and their application from the Old Testament because of Israel’s unique covenant at Sinai with God that involved a land with borders, blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience, and both forgiveness and restoration for repentance that were not established with any other nation on earth before or since (Leviticus 26).

¹² Prostitution in this context probably refers to a religious, rather than a social, practice.

Greek extreme polytheism (Ac 17:16) and pride in their intellectualism (Ac 17:18, 21). These three major cultures are all represented in the Church by the end of the Book of Acts.

Spiritual diversity in the Church is seen in the various ministries given to some (Eph 4:11-12), like leadership positions (1 Tim 3:1, 8), and spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:27-28). Social diversity is seen in the NT with the twelve Apostles coming from different vocational backgrounds (Mt 4:18-22, 9:9, 10:2-4) and some believers coming from different statuses with both slaves and free people (Col 3:11), which included people both the poor and prominent (Jas 2:2), like leading women (Ac 17:4).

While the Apostles had significant ethnic and cultural similarities, the Church immediately became culturally and ethnically diverse on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11, 41). Even though the majority culture was still of Judah all Jews now believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah. At that time, anyone wanting to become a follower of Christ had to also become a Jew, which included circumcision. Ethnic and cultural diversity first expanded when the Church included the Samaritans (Ac 8:4-25) and an Ethiopian Jew (Ac 8:26-39). More significant diversity occurred when uncircumcised Gentiles in Caesarea (Ac 10:1-11:18), Antioch (Ac 11:19-26), and in various locations through the eastern Mediterranean were added to the Church. This growth followed Paul and his companions as they traveled on their various missionary journeys (Acts 13-27).

Diversity of personality is also noted in the Bible (Gen 25:27; Ac 17:11, 18:24, 28:2). This may be seen in the characteristics of the books of Scripture by its different authors with their different vocational, educational, and geographic backgrounds. Bible commentary and reference books cover this in greater detail than is needed here.¹³

UNITY AND ONENESS IN THE BIBLE

Unity and oneness are also biblical concepts. Human unity and oneness as a distinct species of creation is seen in the term “man” to refer to all human beings irrespective of an individual’s gender (Gen 1:26, 6:7, 8:21). It also shows in the covenant given to Noah between YHWH and all humanity (Gen 9:8-17). The covenant with Abraham has two levels of unity and oneness. First, there is familial unity through genetic identity as one of his descendants, whether through his sons Isaac (Gen 17:19, 21:3) or Ishmael (Gen 6:16). Second, there is spiritual unity and oneness through anyone believing God as he did (Gen 12:3, 15:6, Gal 3:8-9).

The NT also states that all people are united humanly in one person, Adam (Acts 17:26) created by God and, therefore, making people His offspring (Ac 17:29a). Jesus sought to bring unity by calling people to align themselves with the Kingdom of God and its principals (Mt 3:2, 5:2-10, 6:9-10, 33). He also referred to unity between Himself and all believers with the illustration of Him being the vine and them as the branches of it (Jn 15:5a). Paul saw oneness in his various illustrations of the Church being a body (1 Cor 12:14-27; Eph 3:6; Col 1:18), and a building (Eph 2:22).

UNION WITH CHRIST

The OT covenant was to create a national identity for the Israelites around their relationship with YHWH. While that provided a special relationship with them, YHWH had occasionally revealed that more was yet to come (Jl 2:28-32; Ac 2:16-21). On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers, it was an outward sign of an inward reality that had occurred. The new presence of the Holy Spirit provided the basis for union between Himself, the Father, the Son, and

¹³ An example is the difference in the quality of the Greek text between that written by John and the more complex use in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Another example is the focus of each of the four Gospels: Matthew primarily for a Jewish audience with an emphasis on Jesus being the promised Messiah; Mark, perhaps, for a Roman one emphasizing Him as the Son of God; Luke for Greeks emphasizing a more detailed chronological account; and, John more of a theological discourse that emphasizes Jesus’ deity, though other doctrines are contained in it (e.g., the nature and work of the Holy Spirit [Acts 14-16]).

believers (Jn 14:16-17, 20, 17:20-23, 26b). That reality is a special aspect of unity in the NT that involves a believer's union with Christ.

This reality is seen in the NT with the use of the following biblical terms: "In Christ," "in Him," "in Me," "in Us," and "in You." It is described in various illustrations: the sealing of the Spirit (Lk 11:13; Eph 1:13-14), which shows the believer's security in Christ; the divine Vine and branches (Jn 15:1-10), which shows the source of the believer's spiritual life (Eph 2:10); the foundation and the building (Eph 2:20-22),¹⁴ which shows that Christ is the foundation on which a believer's spiritual life is built; the divine Head and body (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22-23), which shows Christ's authority over believers; and marriage (Eph 6:32), which reveals the holiness of the relationship between Jesus and believers.

Much could easily be said about this topic but the discussion must be limited to a few critical areas related to unity and oneness to this study. The essence of these areas is that union with Christ both relates believers to the Godhead as the source of their corporate spiritual unity with Him (Jn 17:21) and it spiritually links them to one another (John 17:11; 1 Cor 12:12-27). Thus, it is seen in New Testament references such as, "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him" (Rom 10:12); both Jew and Gentile united and reconciled in Christ (Eph 2:11-22, 3:6); and "once not a people, now a people of God" (1 Pet 2:10). The benefits of this are seen in divine resources for spiritual life that are the result of this union for believers individually and corporately: Power to overcome sin (Rom 8:11; 1 Jn 4:4), divine guidance (Rom 8:14), and the availability of heavenly spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3).

CHALLENGES TO UNITY AND ONENESS

A believer's union with Christ cannot be broken because of having been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13) and kept by God (Rom 8:31-39). However, there are ways the unity of believers can and have been challenged. Jesus prayed for unity because it is the key to an effective gospel witness since there will be less reason to believe the message of the gospel if division exists within the Church (John 17:21). Therefore, whatever threatens unity or minimizes the importance of it is a threat to both the Body of Christ and to fulfilling the Great Commission. Since the opposite of unity is division, it has to be exposed, addressed, and overcome well.

Three significant challenges to Church unity and oneness are highlighted in the book of Acts, each involving ethical issues. The first focused on pastoral care; the other two on theology. Each one dealt with a type of equality that threatened fellowship.

The first challenge occurred in Jerusalem when Hellenistic believers objected that their widows were being ignored in food distribution by the Hebrew believers (Ac 6:1). This was an issue of equality within the spiritual community because it raised the question whether the Hellenistic widows were as important for care and provision as the Hebrew ones? This passage correctly shows the development of deacons within the early Church and their role in keeping the apostles/elders focused on other matters they were more qualified to do (Ac 6:2-6). However, for the purposes of this study, it shows that interpersonal and group tension existed in the early Church based on ethnicity and not always because of theological concerns. As Osborn points out:

"Hellenistic Jews differed sufficiently in their background and worship habits (especially in the use of Greek in the service) that there would be separate synagogues for them (there were seven such in Jerusalem alone). This created a potentially divisive situation for the early church, and the schism here was the result. The

¹⁴ Some passages have an application to a particular historical context but whose implications can carry over into current Cru contexts. For example, Ephesians 2:11-22 is a familiar passage to new US staff who wrestle with it in Bible Study Methods. Although the passage describes the new unity in Christ between Jew and Gentile, there are further implications that can be drawn from this passage to address the current issue facing and dividing the organization

“Hebrews” would naturally tend to allocate the common pool to those they knew, and so the very separation between the groups would add to the problem.”¹⁵

It is also important to note that the Apostles did not ignore the problem; but, dealt with it, and did so by creating a special ministry—not one that focused specifically on ethical issues but, rather, one that focused on better care by leadership for all in the growing community. Both effective pastoral care and addressing potential ethical prejudices are needs in a community that exists because of its Founder’s multicultural Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20; see more on this below).

In addition, while this passage is often shown to emphasize that these deacons were chosen because they were people “full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Ac 6:5a), it is also important to note the names are all Hellenistic. It is hard to know whether they were all Hellenists or Hebrews with Hellenistic names.¹⁶ If they were all Hellenists, it would show the Apostles make sure the needs of the concerned group were met by people who had a significant ethnical association with that group. In addition, as Bruce points out, they may have already been leaders in the Hellenistic spiritual community whom the Hellenists would appreciate and respect in dealing with them.¹⁷ On the other hand, if the deacons were a mix of Hellenistic and Hebrew individuals, the Apostles were wanting to make sure there was equality in the leadership team to minister to all in the community on this issue. Either way, it was a good solution that solved the problem, which both retained Church credibility in Jerusalem and helped add to their numerical growth.

The second ethical challenge to unity, and the first theological issue that threatened it, occurred as the result of Peter having a vision to take the gospel to a Roman Gentile, Cornelius, living in Caesarea and who was religiously a believer in YHWH as the true God (10:1-2, 22). Even though he had been with Jesus when He had interacted with Gentiles, Peter was still resistant to ministering to them himself due the Law’s requirements on cleanliness (Ac 10:10-12, 28a). On the day of Pentecost, he had presented the gospel to people of other countries (Ac 2:38-39); but they were all the Jews, which meant they had been circumcised, no matter where they lived among the nations. The first ethnical breakthrough in this narrative comes with Peter having been changed enough through eventually responding positively to the Lord’s command that he invited Cornelius’ Gentile emissaries to be his guests overnight (Ac 10:7-8, 17, 23-24). The second breakthrough occurs when Peter arrives at the house of Cornelius and humbly treats him as an equal (Ac 10:25-26).

The third ethnical breakthrough, and first part of his theological breakthrough, comes when Peter realizes that, in Christ, God is willing to include all people equally in the Church (Ac 10:34-35). This may have been his “Aha” moment understanding the “all nations” of the Great Commission. The second part of Peter’s theological breakthrough in this situation comes when he sees the Holy Spirit given to the Gentiles just as He had been to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Ac 10:44). As a result, he was now willing to baptize them as full followers of Jesus (Ac 10:47-48a).

His willingness then to stay with Cornelius for several days shows this ethnical barrier had clearly been broken (Ac 10:48b). Peter’s report on this incident to the church in Jerusalem created controversy because, like him before his trip to Caesarea, these Hebrew believers still considered affiliation with uncircumcised Gentiles as sin (Ac 11:3). He explained to them that he had only made this trip in obedience to special revelation from God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. He also reveals that, upon witnessing the Holy Spirit coming upon those Gentiles, he remembered Jesus’ words confirming the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual life (Ac

¹⁵ Grant R. Osborne, “Hellenists,” Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 961; Logos Bible Software ed.

¹⁶ Osborne points out that people in this context during this time often had Hebrew, Greek, and Roman names (Grant R. Osborne, “Hellenists,” Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 961; Logos Bible Software ed.)

¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 121; Logos Bible Software ed.

11:4-17; cf. Mt 3:11). Based on this evidence, the church in Jerusalem yielded and embraced the fact that salvation could come to the Gentiles, and to come without them first having been circumcised (Ac 11:18b). With the leaders in Jerusalem accepting the results of Peter's experience, the Church began to grow among the Gentiles starting in Antioch (Ac 11:19-26), which Paul made as his home church (Ac 11:25-26) and from which he began his missionary journeys to other Gentile locations (Ac 13:1-3, 15:35-36, 18:22-23).

A significant point regarding the importance of this breakthrough leading to the inclusion of Gentiles in the church is related to the prophecy of a coming famine (Ac 11:27-28). When the church in Antioch heard about this, it took a collection as a gift for the church in Jerusalem to help their fellow believers there as well as the other ones throughout Judea (Ac 11:29). It is hard to know for sure; but perhaps the need was greater in those locations because of the persecution they had endured with an accompanying significant loss of income. However, the reason for meeting the need is not as important as noticing that it was the ethnically diverse church in Antioch that felt enough unity and oneness in Christ with the believers in Jerusalem and Judea that they took the initiative to respond in care and kindness to them.

The third significant ethnic challenge to Church unity resulted in a Church council and a theological decision on whether the Gentile believers needed to be circumcised to be saved (Ac 15:1). For the Jewish believers raising this issue, it was not enough to believe in Jesus and have evidence of the Holy Spirit's personal presence; a true believer still needed to identify with Judaism by being circumcised. Paul and Barnabas debated these people, but the Antioch church decided to defer the decision on it to the Church leaders in Jerusalem (Ac 15:2-3). More insight into the importance of dealing with this theological error is the essence of Paul's letter to the Galatians when these kinds of teachers tried to influence the church there. His argument was that anything added to faith in Jesus negated true justification and put believers back under the Law, which they would then be obligated to keep in full (Gal 1:6-9, 2:16, 3:1-4, 7-14). The decision by the leaders in Jerusalem rejected requiring the Gentiles to become circumcised and, thus, join Judaism to be in the Church—they could stay Gentiles. The only request was that they abstain from certain activities to avoid offending and antagonizing the Jews where they lived (Ac 15:19-21, 28-29). After this decision was made, Paul required his new missionary partner, Timothy, to be circumcised (Acts 16:1-3), which looked hypocritical at first glance; but it was not. The issue of circumcision in Acts 15 and Galatians is theological related to what is required for justification. The issue in Act 16 is missiological in wanting to avoid hindering ministry among both Jews and Gentiles and being circumcised was fully voluntary on Timothy's part.

The issues above provided an ethnic foundation for the Church to move forward. However, opportunities for division continued to challenge Church oneness and unity. Space prohibits listing them. However, the NT epistles exist in big part to the simple fact that the apostles wrote to the churches to help them deal with the various problems they had. Paul's letter to the Corinthians is a good example since it is organized around specific issues either Paul has heard existed there or about which they had written him for guidance.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY TOGETHER

Unity and oneness together with diversity are also biblical concepts. Humanity is created in the image of God; but that image in humanity involves two genders—male and female (Gen 1:26-27). Israel was one nation; but that nation was composed of twelve tribes (Ac 7:8, 26:7). As explained above, there is one Church; but it is composed of all individual believers in many locations.

Church unity and diversity is also in Christ's Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. The basis for it is Christ's universal authority (Mt 28:18). Unity and diversity are found in His command to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19a). Unity occurs because they make His disciples, not disciples of other people (which was Paul's

point to the Corinthians when controversy arose over who was the better discipler—Paul, Apollos, or Peter [1 Cor 1:10-13, 30]). Diversity occurs as His disciples obey by going to all nations to lead people to Him with the result that the Church is composed of people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev 5:9-10) with one Lord, Jesus, and a common baptism, basic set of beliefs, and expected way of behavior (Eph 4:5-6).

This last passage also mentions the Father and the Spirit in addition to the Lord Jesus who is the divine Son. This points to the ultimate biblical example of unity and diversity--the Trinity. Again, space prohibits an extended explanation of this. It should be sufficient simply to state that an orthodox doctrine of this truth based on the teaching of the Bible is that God exists as one Being and three distinct co-equal, co-eternal, harmonious divine Persons. Neither Person is the other Person, nor are there three divine Beings; but all are the same divine Being.¹⁸

It is extremely important to emphasize at this point that union, unity, and oneness in the Church do not imply or require uniformity. In fact 1 Cor 12:4-6 argues against this point, for while they all have a spiritual connection to the same, Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God; through the use of their different spiritual gifts in different ministries they get different results as God does His work through them. As Snodgrass has pointed out:

“the individuality and independence of each person must be guarded. Unity does not mean sameness; in fact, unity is achieved through diversity. Nor does unity mean all Christians work under the same structure or always meet together. We must show mutual respect and be willing to engage in conversation, work, and occasions of worship. We all face the same problems in society and in our churches. Should not our common identity in Christ, our shared experience of Christ, our shared values, and mutual respect be given more attention than our differences—differences that in most cases are as much cultural as they are theological?”¹⁹

Finally on this topic, it is also important to note that Jesus did not expect unity at all costs for He taught that following Him would divide people (Mt 10:34-39).

INEQUALITY IN THE BIBLE

Diversity can also create situations of inequality, and the Old Testament reveals this in significant ways. Some of this is seen before and during the time of the Patriarchs; then when the Law is given at Mt. Sinai. Some areas of inequality were the same in the NT as that in the OT; others were new or distinctive to the developing Church context. Three distinct areas of inequality are helpful to note in studying the Scriptures for the purpose of this study.

INEQUALITY FROM HUMAN DECISIONS

In the OT

One area of inequality is the result of people making decisions that resulted in it. Certain areas of inequality are the result of Adam and Eve choosing to disobey the one command of God not to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16-17, 3:6, 16); Cain's punishment for murdering his brother (Gen 4:11-12); Noah's curse of Canaan for his sin and the blessing of his other two sons that put Canaan under them (Gen 9:24-27).

It is shown in Abraham who became rich in part by lying (Gen 13:2 cf. 12:16-20, 20:14-16) and in his decision to separate from Lot with the latter getting to the seemingly more advantageous location (Gen 13:5-11, 13), which they later needed to abandon when the sin of the people in that area came under judgment (Gen 19:29). It is also shown in political and military power that suppresses others to economic advantages (Gen 14:1-4, 11-12); Abraham favoring Isaac over Ishmael by allowing Sarah to send her away (Gen 21:14) and in favoring him again over the sons of Keturah by leaving his inheritance to Isaac and only giving gifts to her sons (Gen 25:5-6). In addition, parents could bless children differently (Gen 49:1-

¹⁸ For more on this if needed, check out any major systematic theology from a major evangelical publishing company.

¹⁹ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 221.

28), including where Judah receives a better blessing from Israel than his older siblings (Gen 49:8-12).

Inequality from poor decisions is found when Esau gave away his birthright for a meal because he was hungry (Gen 25:29-34), Isaac favoring Esau but Rebekah favoring Jacob (Gen 25:28), Jacob stealing Esau's blessing at his father's death (Gen 27:26-29, 34-40), Esau taking Hittite wives with one married in anger to spite his father (Gen 28:8-9), and Rachel being the more loved wife than Leah (Gen 29:30). In addition, it occurred with people gaining wealth through revengeful murdering and plundering (Gen 34:27-29), Israel loving Joseph more than the other brothers (Gen 37:3-4) with the result that Joseph was sold into slavery by them (Gen 37:25-28).

In the NT

Jesus taught some would enter the Kingdom because they were more prepared when He returned than others (Mt 24:40-25:13). He also taught better rewards in heaven from better stewardship on earth (Mt 25:14-30). From a more negative perspective, He also knew some people used dishonest gain to become wealthy (Lk 19:8b). Finally, while He loved all of His twelve disciples (Jn 13:34), He seems to have had more love for some than others (Jn 13:23, 19:26).

INEQUALITY IN HUMAN SOCIETY

In the OT

The early stories of the Old Testament also show aspects of inequality that existed in society apart from the type of human decisions listed above. For example, firstborn children had a special birthright, thought that birthright could be given away (Gen 25:34b), exchanged (Gen 48:8-20) or lost (Gen 49:3-4) through personal decisions or actions of the firstborn.²⁰

Inequality also occurred based on appearance with some considered more attractive because they were stronger (Gen 25:23c; Num 13:31; Lk 11:21-22) or more beautiful or handsome (Gen 12:11, 24:16a, 29:17, 39:6b; Dt 21:11; Jdg 15:2; 1 Sam 16:12). To the contrary, people with physical weaknesses had a disadvantage like Leah (Gen 29:16-18)—who culturally should have been given in marriage first (Gen 29:26)—and people with certain diseases were required to warn others and separate themselves from the community as a way of avoiding spreading it to others (Lev 13:45-46). Vocationally, some people were qualified for certain leadership positions and others were not (Ex 18:13-26).

One aspect of inequality in ancient society evident throughout the Bible, both OT and NT, is that of being a servant and a slave. The ESV translators point out that the same Hebrew words and the same Greek words can have a range of meaning from servant to slave, which makes translation difficult, especially where the context does not make the nuances clear. In addition, as they point out, use of the word “slave” is problematic in the modern context because of its emotional association with the “the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery” of recent centuries in America.²¹ For the purposes of this discussion, the term “slave” will refer to a person who could not normally gain their freedom and was considered property. The term “servant” will be used where the context indicates more of an employment situation—whether temporary or permanent—without clear ownership by another person. Where the context is ambiguous, “servant” will be used as the preferred term since that is the more common condition likely envisioned in the Law since, apart from the conquest of the promised land, Israel was generally not an aggressive people seeking to expand their territory in contrast to the practices of the surrounding nations. The verb “servitude” will apply to both nouns.

²⁰ YHWH also required the dedication of the firstborn in Israel (human and animal) as a reminder of their being spared the night of the last of the ten plagues that led to their freedom (Ex 12:29, 13:1-2, 12-15, 22:29b-30).

²¹ Preface, The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016); Logos Bible Software ed.

Servitude was a common part of the economy in the ANE with some people being sold by other people (Gen 37:36, 39:1) and some people selling themselves to others as a means of survival (Gen 47:15-26). Some in these situations had more status and advantages than others (Gen 39:4), with some able to return to freedom or relative freedom as did Joseph (Gen 39:4, 41:39-45).²² Others might avoid either situation as did the Egyptian priests who had special provision and exemptions that kept them from it unlike the rest of the nation (Gen 47:22, 26b).

In the Patriarchal narratives, Abraham was given political safety as a person recognized with favor from God (Gen 21:22-34) but he also received economic advantages as a person of power and affluence (Gen 23:3-20), which also included having servants (Gen 24:2).²³ Hagar was a servant to Sarai (Gen 16:1). As such, she was given as Abram's second, but lesser, wife (Gen 16:3). Sarai had authority over her to give her to Abram for childbearing as a surrogate (Gen 16:2-4). Hagar's ability to conceive led to Sarai's jealousy and mistreatment of her (Gen 16:6a, 9, 21:12), which led to Hagar's escape and exile (Gen 16:4, 16:6b, 21:10).

Both types of servitude existed within Israel and were addressed in the Law (Ex 21:2-11; Lev 25:44-46) with significant space given to rules regarding slaves, servants, and the poor. These rules appear primarily given to avoid abuse of these aspects of Israelite society once the nation was formed with the covenant at Mt. Sinai.

Sections given to proper treatment of the poor (e.g., Lev 25:35-55, Lev 27:1-8) included rules against charging them interest or increasing the price for personal gain in selling them food (Lev 25:35-38), and farmers required to leave some crops as food for the poor and sojourners (Lev 19:9-10, 23:22). However, poverty was then, as now, an issue in society that needed additional solutions for how could a financially broke person even have the money to pay back a loan even without interest or buy food at the normal price?

Slaves could be purchased but only from the surrounding nations or sojourners inhabiting Israel and were considered property that could be passed to heirs (Lev 25:44-46a). Sojourners in Israel were allowed to become rich and take Israelites as servants (Lev 25:47). When this occurred, these servants had the right of redemption by their Israelite clan (Lev 25:47-49a) or, because they could acquire wealth during their time of servitude, they could potentially pay for their freedom (Lev 25:49b).

Hebrews doing servitude in Israel were to be treated well (Lev 25:43, 53b) which included always being considered servants, not slaves, and allowed redemption and freedom on the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:39-43, 46b). If redemption was made, the cost was calculated based on a yearly wage in reference to how soon the Year of Jubilee would arrive and their freedom returned without additional payment (Lev 25:50-53a). If the Year of Jubilee was farther off than six years, they could only serve other Hebrews for a maximum of six years, then the debt was forgiven (Ex 21:2).

However, there were some additional conditions. First, if a Hebrew servant owner gave a male servant a wife and that couple had children, the woman and children remained the property of the Hebrew owner, not the servant when he gained his freedom. The only way the husband-father could retain them was to become a lifetime bond-slave (Ex 21:3-6). Second, if one Hebrew sold a daughter to a Hebrew man, that woman could not be freed automatically after six years but remained the property of the owner unless he allowed her to be purchased as an act of redemption, a sale that could only be to a Hebrew. If the owner gave her to his son, she became equal in status to one of his daughters with the same care and rights. However, if the owner did not maintain these rules, she could go free (Ex 21:7-11). Third, there was also a law of compensation for an injured person doing servitude

²² It is not certain which status he had at this point in the narrative. It is possible he was now a slave of Pharaoh; but, perhaps, Pharaoh had freed him in raising him to the position as a national leader.

²³ Whether these were slaves or employees is not always clear.

(Ex 21:32). Finally, any person given to YHWH by another person as an act of dedication could not be redeemed; that person was either retained by YHWH or was to be put to death (Lev 27:29), which was probably a requirement intended to make the Israelites take doing this seriously since there was no way to undo it.

Interestingly regarding inequality, the value of persons offered in a vow to God differed by gender and age with males more valuable than females and those age twenty to sixty more valuable than those older or younger (Lev 27:2-7). When these prices could not be afforded by the poor, the value was determined by a priest (Lev 27:8). In addition, while adultery normally required the death penalty, adultery with a female servant not yet redeemed or free did not require it (Lev 19:20-22). One additional note on age inequality, while the value of the elderly was lower than when in their prime, they were still to be honored (Lev 19:32).

In the NT

As in the OT, society in the NT was made up of both secular and religious authorities. Secular authorities included those representing the Roman conquerors, like Pilate, the governor (Mt 27:2, 11); and, those who provided cultural connections with the local community, like Herod, the local king (Mt 2:1; Lk 23:6-8).

Religious leaders included those on the religious council—the chief/high priest, scribes, and elders (Mt 27:1; Lk 22:66)—members of the chief priests family (Ac 4:6), other priests (Lk 1:5, 8-9) and temple officials (Lk 22:4, 52). The scribes were religious scholars who studied the Law (Mt 2:4, 7:29, 17:10; Mk 12:28-34, 38-39); the temple officials were likely Levites in charge of it (Jn 1:19).

The NT identifies some people as having higher status than others for whatever reason (Lk 19:12; Ac 8:10, 26:22) and some as wealthy (Mt 19:21-24; Lk 14:12, 16:1, 19, 19:2). Joseph of Arimathea is described both as “rich” (Mt 27:57) and a “respected member of the council” (Mk 15:43), which may indicate that his wealth earned him respect or *vi versa*. However, he is also described as “good and righteous” and was against the council’s decision to kill Jesus (Lk 23:50-41); so, his financial gain was unlikely through unlawful gain according to the Law’s standards for acquisition.

The poor are also mentioned significantly in the NT. Jesus said, the poor will be with you always (Mt 26:11a) that He specifically came to preach to the poor (Mt 11:5b; Lk 4:18), and that He expected His followers to care of them (Mt 6:2-4; Lk 16:19-31). Regarding the poor in the context of Jesus’ time, Green points out they are not those either lacking something spiritually or economically. Rather, he says, “one’s status in a community was not so much a function of economic realities, but depended on a number of elements, including education, gender, family heritage, religious purity, vocation, economics, and so on. Thus, lack of subsistence might account for one’s designation as “poor,” but so might other disadvantaged conditions, and “poor” would serve as a cipher for those of low status, for those excluded according to normal canons of status honor in Mediterranean world. Hence, although “poor” is hardly devoid of economic significance, for Luke this wider meaning of diminished status honor is paramount.”²⁴

The topic of servitude continues in the NT with a distinction between the use of the Greek terms δούλος (doulos) and διάκονος (diakonos). The latter simply refers to a person who provides service of some type. Often this is translated “servant.” As in the OT, the context, where it is clear, will determine whether the type of relationship with the person they serve—slave, temporary ownership, or more that of an employee. The Greek δούλος (doulos) can mean servant, slave, or bondservant but in the sense of “being completely controlled by someone or something.”²⁵ These options in translation are explained by the ESV translators in how they used them:

²⁴ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 210–211. Logos Bible Software ed.

²⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 471.

“In New Testament times, a *doulos* is often best described as a “bondservant”—that is, someone in the Roman Empire officially bound under contract to serve his master for seven years (except for those in Caesar’s household in Rome who were contracted for fourteen years). When the contract expired, the person was freed, given his wage that had been saved by the master, and officially declared a freedman. The ESV usage thus seeks to express the most fitting nuance of meaning in each context. Where absolute ownership by a master is envisaged (as in Romans 6), “slave” is used; where a more limited form of servitude is in view, “bondservant” is used (as in 1 Corinthians 7:21-24); where the context indicates a wide range of freedom (as in John 4:51), “servant” is preferred. . . . The issues involved in translating the Greek word *doulos* apply also to the Greek word *sun-doulos*, translated in the text as “fellow servant.”²⁶

The NT importance of servitude in its various forms is found in Jesus both recognizing it as common and, thus, using it as a social convention in His teaching (Mt 6:24, 10:24-25, 13:24-30, 18:23-35, 21:33-41, 24:45-51, 25:14-30). This included recognizing that servitude could be a thankless task (Lk 17:7-10).

Servitude was not forbidden to Christians and there are examples of it in the Acts narrative (Ac 12:13). However, the relationship was considered important enough for it to be addressed in the Epistolic house regulations (Eph 6:5-9, Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Pet 2:18) and the main focus of the book of Philemon. In addition, Paul makes significant use of it in his understanding of his relationship with Jesus (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:1; Tit 1:1).

The concept of servitude, while difficult to accept in modern society, had value if understood as a way societies in the Bible made provision to avoid being homeless and a status that provided more security for people than was found in day-laborers (Mt 20:1-8).²⁷ Where it was the result of conquest, it only had redeeming value when understood both as an aspect of divine judgment on some societies and in the context that both OT and NT prescriptive passages above teach it was to exist with boundaries that maintained dignity, respect, and honor given on both sides of the relationship. Today, those principles apply more to the employer-employee relationship. However, the time limitation involved may also have some application to providing relief against perpetual poverty and multi-generational economic disadvantage.

Beyond what has been explained above, it is helpful to understand for the purposes of this study that inequality has always existed in the Church with these areas being considered deficiencies that needed correction. Some disciples were identified as uneducated and common (Ac 4:13), while others were quite educated like the rabbi Paul (Ac 22:3, 23:6b, Phil 3:5-6) and the physician Luke (Col 4:14). Among the disciples/apostles, some were favored by Jesus more than others (Mt 17:1), which continued to show in Acts with Peter, James, and John’s roles as leaders. In addition, in the church, more people should be qualified to be elders and deacons (ready to fill the position and role with responsibilities) than actually serve in that position (1 Tim 3:1-13).

More importantly, inequality will not exist in eternity. In hell, some demons are stronger than others (Mk 9:29). Jesus taught there will be greater and lesser penalties for eternal judgment the Day of Judgment (Mt 8:12, 10:15, 11:20-24). Even inequality will exist in heaven. Jesus taught that some were greater and some lesser in the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 11:11). God is above all, then all others who exist differently. Among the angelic beings, there are the Cherubim (Gen 3:24) and Seraphim (Is 6:2), and others more human in appearance. These apparently have different levels of status and responsibilities for Michael is described as a chief prince, prince, and great prince who has a specific role related to helping Israel as a nation (Da 10:13, 21b, 12:1); and Gabriel, who specifically points out that

²⁶ Preface, The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016; Logos Bible Software).

²⁷ R. T. France, The Gospel of Matthew, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 748-749; Logos Bible Software ed.

he stands in the presence of God was entrusted to tell both Elizabeth and Mary about their coming special pregnancies (Lk 1:19, 26). In John's vision of heaven, he sees four living creatures and twenty-four elders (Rev 5:8, 19:4), as then do the martyrs (Rev 6:9, 17:6), and multitudes of others "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" who apparently died in the Great Tribulation (Rev 7:9-17).

Finally, Jesus taught there will be rewards in heaven with some receiving more than others (Mt 5:12, 19, 10:40-42, 19:28-30); and, even though the saints will have different rewards, Paul says they will be higher there than the angels (1 Cor 6:3).

SPIRITUAL INEQUALITY

In the OT

Some inequality is clearly tied to a person or people's spiritual standing before God. Noah was more righteous than others in his generation (Gen 6:1, 5, 7:1); Abram's descendants would be given the land after the Amorites were judged for their sins (Gen 15:16); and other nations were selected by God to be conquered and eradicated by the Hebrews as instruments of divine judgment against evil with blessing on the Hebrews for doing so in obedience to Him (Ex 23:23-33).

Abraham and his descendants would be blessed because of their willingness to believe YHWH (Gen 15:6) and trust Him (Gen 22:16-18). Their favor with YHWH was signified by the covenant of circumcision that gave special spiritual status with Him for both natural born and purchased people in Israel (Gen 17:9-14, 22-27). This status included the Hebrews and their circumcised servants being allowed to eat the Passover but not by uncircumcised foreigners (Ex 12:43-44).

In addition, even among the circumcised Israelites, some people had more spiritual privileges than others. Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders got to fellowship with YHWH while the rest of the congregation at Mt. Sinai did not (Ex 24:9-11). Even among these national leaders, Moses (and Joshua, the future replacement for Moses) had more access to God for the purposes of receiving continued special revelation than the rest (Ex 24:12-14, 33:7-11); Aaron and his sons (not the daughters) were chosen to be Israel's priests (Ex 28:1); the Levites were honored for their willingness to execute the Hebrews who committed spiritual adultery at Sinai (Ex 32:25-29) and given care of the Tabernacle (Ex 38:21); and, within certain conditions, the High Priest and the other priests were allowed to eat the offerings that other Israelites provided with their various sacrifices (Lev 6:14-7:36).

Other examples of spiritual inequality include the individuals designing and overseeing the making of the tabernacle and related things after being given a special filling of the Holy Spirit with those working on it being given special ability to do so (Ex 31:1-11, 35:10, 35:30-36:2); women being ritually unclean longer when giving birth to female children than to male ones (Lev 12:1-5); priests not being allowed to marry women who were not virgins (Lev 21:7, 13-15); and a priest's son who had certain physical abnormalities, whether from birth or not, restricted from serving in the priesthood (Lev 21:16-23).

In the NT

As a result of Assyria conquering the northern ten tribes, they were dispersed throughout the Mediterranean taking their religion with them. In addition, the Jews who were exiled in Babylon and Persia, eventually returned but had connections to those regions as well. Thus, Acts 2:5-11 describes "devout men from every nation" in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost with their cultural and linguistic differences. There were also socio-religious differences in Israel at this time. Among the "orthodox" Jews, there were distinctions between the theologically conservative Pharisees (Mt 12:2; Ac 23:8b, 26:5) and the theological liberal Sadducees (Mt 22:23; Ac 23:8a). There were also differences between the Jews and the Samaritans, as will be explained in more detail below.

Mt 15:21-28 shows Jesus recognizing some ethnic or spiritual inequality with haves and have nots, which he first intended to maintain. The NT clearly shows that a person's spiritual position did not result in righteousness as seen in: John the

Baptist's condemnation of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt 3:7-10), Jesus' condemnation of them (Mt 5:20, 15:1-9), and Jesus teaching that a person's spiritual activities were judged on the attitude of the heart in doing them (Mk 12:41-44). In addition, while all people are equally sinful since all are sinners (Lk 13:1-5) and all are under the condemnation Jesus came to undo (Jn 3:16-17), freedom from eternal condemnation only occurs for those who trust in Jesus instead of following the darkness (Jn 3:18-21). This was also shown when Jesus explained how people respond to the gospel differently (Mt 13:1-8, 18-23).

Spiritual inequality in a world full of diverse religions is seen in the Scriptures' declarations that No one can come to the Father except through Jesus (Jn 14:6) and no other name they can claim to be saved (Ac 4:12). Other religions are not all ways to God or equal ways to Him, which is another motivation for Jesus to issue His Great Commission. As that message goes out, some people will respond positively to Jesus and others do not (Jn 10:27). Those who do receive eternal life (Jn 10:28) and the others do not. Even among those who do, some believers will bear more fruit than others (Mt 13:8, 23b).

INEQUALITY AND DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

This final category for looking at inequality in the Bible is, perhaps, the most difficult for some people to accept because it does not always seem fair and just from a human perspective. As a result, there has been significant theological division in the Church that is unlikely to be resolved this side of heaven and that, unfortunately has been a basis for believers on both sides to mistreat in word and deed those on the other side. Therefore, as much as there might be a desire to avoid this topic, doing so would leave a gaping hole in understanding inequality biblically with some significant implications for the issues relevant to this study.

In the OT

Inequality in the Old Testament was also connected with the sovereignty of YHWH in the lives of people and their affairs. Noah found favor with Him and was spared from the Flood with his immediate family (Gen 6:5). YHWH blessed Abraham and promised both to bless those who honored him and to curse those who dishonored him (Gen 12:3); and, He promised to give him a great reward (Gen 15:1). These blessings included giving land already inhabited by others to Abraham (Gen 12:6b-7, 13:14-17; 15:18-21, 17:8), Isaac (Gen 26:2-5), and Jacob (Gen 28:13-15, 35:9-12). They also included making him rich (Gen 24:35) and Isaac, as well (Gen 26:12-16). Likewise, Ishmael was blessed because he was still Abraham's child (Gen 21:13, 18; 25:12-18).

Inequality due to divine sovereignty is also seen in Isaac, the second born and by the first wife, being given preference by God over Ishmael, the firstborn but by the second wife (Gen 17:15-21)—both being blessed by YHWH but one given more divine favor. It is also seen in God recognizing that Isaac hated Leah and Him making her bear six children (Gen 29:31-35, 30:17, 19) before He allowed Rachel to have a child (Gen 30:22) and eventually two children (Gen 35:16-18); in Jacob's financial success caused by God resulted in tension with his relatives (Gen 31:1-2, 4b-5, 9) thought it also involved hard work and good business management (Gen 31:36-42); in Joseph's success in Egypt rising from a being a slave a national leader (Genesis 37-50, esp. 39:2-5) and God assuring Israel that he was leading his family to Egypt, would bless them there, and would bring them back to the promised land (Gen 46:2-4).

It is also seen on a personal level in YHWH being behind differences in individual abilities, talents, and perceived weaknesses (Ex 4:10-11), in Him being angry with Moses because he was not willing to trust Him in the midst of his weakness (Ex 4:12-14a).

Inequality due to divine sovereignty is seen on a national level in YHWH selecting the Hebrews to be a special nation among the entire population on the earth (Ex 19:5-6, 34:10-16). This exclusive national relationship with Him resulted in His choosing to execute the firstborn of the Egyptians but spare those of the Hebrews

(Ex 12:12-13, 29), giving the Law to the Israelites, and expecting them to keep it. This included keeping the Sabbath (Ex 16:4-5, 22-30, 20:8-11, 23:12, 31:12-17, 35:2-3; Lev 23:3), which would result in one lost day's work per week compared to what other people might do. However, it was designed both to give the Israelites an opportunity for rest but, also, to test whether they would trust God for provision when losing one day of work (Ex 34:21). In addition, they were not to follow other practices of the countries around them or in the land they would inhabit where different from God's Law (Lev 18: 1-5, 24-30), especially in the area of sexual relations (Lev 18:6-20) including homosexual intercourse (Lev 18:22) or sexual bestiality (Lev 18:23) or sacrificing children (Lev 18:21). Finally, it can also be seen in the priesthood and Levitical service only being allowed for men and not for women even though other nations had a stronger role for priestesses²⁸

Finally, while the size of the land for each tribe was based on its population (Num 26:52-54), it also involved the use of lots (Num 26:55-56, 33:53-54), which left some of it to the sovereignty of God.

In the NT

Chronologically, divine sovereignty starts in the NT with the pronouncement that the Word created all that is, and that He is the source of life and light (Jn 1:1-5). Had the Word not chosen to create the universe, seen and unseen, nothing would exist with everything good and evil that has resulted.

Divine sovereignty then continues with God allowing Elizabeth to become pregnant with John the Baptist even though older than normally expected (Lk 1:5, 7, 13, 24-25), which also included him being named "John" contrary to what was expected by tradition (Lk 1:59-63). These were parts of God's divine plan (Jn 1:6) of him being set apart by God to do a special ministry that would result in bringing wayward Jews back to YHWH (Lk 1:16-17) and set the stage for the arrival of the Messiah (Jn 1:7-8, 15).

Divine sovereign related to that Messiah continues with Mary, a virgin, becoming pregnant with Jesus to fulfill prophecy (1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38). In God's plan, as has been mentioned before, belief in this Person as God incarnate is the only way sinful human beings can be saved from the penalty of sin (Jn 1:9-18).

Divine sovereignty and inequality are seen in Jesus calling men and choosing them as leaders (Mt 4:18-22, 9:9; Jn 1:43-51, 15:16) even though women naturally followed (Mt 27:55-56; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 8:2-3).²⁹ Other aspects of divine sovereignty are seen in Jesus informing these disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:28-30) and in His other teachings that people cannot know the Father unless the Son chooses to reveal Him to them (Mt 11:27b), or understand Jesus' parables without God's willingness to let them (Mt 13:10-11), and would not be saved unless the Father did something to make it happen individually (Mt 15:13).

He also taught that no one can come to Him unless it is granted by the Father (Jn 6:65) and that those who are appointed to eternal life believe (Ac 13:48b). While, on the one hand, He said salvation is not based on human works but treats everybody equal as an aspect of grace and mercy (Mt 20:1-16), on the other hand, He also said entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven depends both on the many being called, then on the few being chosen (Mt 22:14); and it also depends and whether

²⁸ This is significant in relation to them just having escaped from Egypt, which did have priestess as religious officials (Richard Myers, "Varieties of Egyptian Priest Garments" in *Images from the Temple Dictionary of the Bible*, Logos Research ed. [Faithlife, 2012]; Logos Bible Media collection).

²⁹ This is not intended to comment on whether complementarianism or egalitarianism is the correct position for gender issues in the Church. Rather, it is mentioned to point out that Jesus' divine sovereignty created leadership inequality in gender positions during His years of ministry prior to His ascension. Debate on whether this continued after the day of Pentecost is another source of division in the modern Church. Irrespective of theological position, women have a role as co-rulers of the planet (Gen 2:18) even if that role has been affected by sin, which applies in the context of the marriage relationship (Gen 3:16). Traditional misunderstandings of the role of women are based, in part, on misinterpreting Proverbs 31:10-31, which shows the woman envisioned as active and responsible in both the home and society. The value of women theologically is also shown in their inclusion in the Messianic genealogies: Tamar (Mt 1:3), Rahab (Mt 1:5), and Mary (Mt 1:16) who fulfilled Messianic prophecy (Mt 1:23).

a person is one of the “elect” or not (Mt 24:22, 24; Lk 18:7), a term first used in Scripture by Jesus. Paul applies this to Jews and Gentiles as groups in Romans 10. God’s sovereign is said to also be a factor in determining whether a person might be healed as some illnesses occur for God’s power to be revealed in healing them (Jn 9:3). His divine will also played a part of the selection of someone to replace Judas Iscariot after his suicide (Ac 1:21-22). While the remaining Apostles used some human criteria to determine who would fill his vacant position, they also cast lots trusting in the sovereignty of God when two equally qualified men were considered (Ac 1:23-26).

Finally on this difficult topic, spiritual gifts, their ministries, and their effects are overseen by God (1 Cor 12:4-6) with some appearing more valuable than others, though the truth is that all are needed (1 Cor 12:14-26). God did this to give believers a good reason to care for and honor one another (1 Cor 12:24-26).

EQUALITY IN THE BIBLE

In the OT

Equality as human beings exists first through Adam (Gen 1:26-27) and then through Noah’s children (Gen 10:1). Later, aspects of equality are seen in both Israelites and foreigners among them forbidden to offer sacrifices anywhere except the Tabernacle (Lev 17:8-9), to eat blood (Lev 17:10-14), or to commit certain sexual or sacrificial practices (Lev 18:26). They also both had the same cleanliness requirement after eating animals who died naturally or were killed by other animals (Lev 17:15-16).

An interesting aspect of equality for the Israelites is found in them not really owning their land property because YHWH did (Lev 25:23) and in them not really being owned by other people because God owned them (Lev 25:55). In keeping with this, YHWH required an economic reboot every fifty years, called the Year of Jubilee. When it arrived, debts were cancelled, which involved the return of land previously sold but which had not been redeemed and returned to the family before that year (Lev 25:24-28). It also involved freedom from slavery (Lev 25:10, 54). Even sales of property required adjustment in price according to the length of time to the next Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:13-17). Furthermore, homes outside walled cities were considered part of the land and had both the right of redemption plus were returned to the original owner when the Jubilee arrived (Lev 25:31). However, homes sold in a walled city had the right of redemption for a year, then were exempt from being returned to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:29-30), while the homes of Levites in the cities of the Levites did not have the one-year statute of limitations but followed the same normal rules of redemption and Jubilee like homes outside walled cities (Lev 25:32-33). In addition, Levite land around their cities could not be sold (Lev 25:34).

Of importance in setting the stage for what would occur after the arrival of the Messiah Jesus, Joel envisioned a day when the Spirit of God would be given to people of different genders, ages, and social statuses (Jl 2:28-29).

In the NT

Equality of fallen nature is seen as coming through Adam (Rom 3:9-12) even though Eve sinned first (Gen 3:6). The Genesis narrative on the essence of sin shows it as rebellion against God’s will based in human pride (Gen 2:16-17, 3:6). To these are added individual and group sins that include “sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness” (Mk 7:21-22)” and, in addition, “impurity . . . , idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, . . . drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Gal 5:19-21).

These, and other sins identified in Scripture, can be classified by two types. First, doing what should not be done, and not doing what should be done. Both can either be the result of willful disobedience (sometimes referred to as sins of commission) or unintentional ignorance (sometimes referred to as sins of omission). An example of willful disobedience relevant to this study is showing partiality

based on a person's perceived positive or negative diversity (Jas 2:2-4). A relevant example of unintentional ignorance contrasted with willful disobedience is found in Jesus' parable in Luke 12:47-48. Either way, God wants His people to make distinctions between what is sin and what is not (Ezek. 22:26), which is why He sent the prophets of the OT and Jesus and the Apostles in the NT.³⁰

Because humans sin in both ways, the most significant aspect of equality in both testaments, but shown more clearly in the NT, is access through Christ to redemption for all humans (Rom 3:22-28, 6:28) through faith in Him irrespective of human differences that might keep people from participating in it and enjoying the equal privilege of being God's spiritual child (Gal 3:26-28).

Moreover, as was previously explained, it is an additional privilege of all believers to have the presence of the Holy Spirit, which first occurred historically when Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as all the followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit irrespective of social or religious status (Ac 2:1-4). The presence of the Spirit in the life of any believer has many benefits, one of which is equal in access to spiritual truth from the internal "mind of Christ" that He provides (1 Cor 2:16).

When the Church in Jerusalem began, there was a desire to share all things in common and meet the needs of those in it (Ac 2:44-45, 4:32b, 34-37). This passage does not indicate they sold all their possessions and established some type of communal existence with equal social status. Rather, it indicates that they had less emphasis on private personal possession but more of a willingness to share where legitimate needs existed, and to sell some personal property when necessary to meet those needs. There was no requirement to participate but a matter of personal choice in being involved and by how much. This seems to be the meaning of Peter's comments to Ananias and Sapphira in Ac 5:4a).

INJUSTICE AND JUSTICE IN THE BIBLE

In the OT

This requires looking at issues of justice in the Old Testament, which are based on the character of YHWH who declares Himself to be (ref). Thus, the Scriptures teach that He chose Abraham so he and his lineage might do both righteousness and justice (Gen 18:19a) with some aspects of the promised divine blessings conditional upon them doing these (Gen 18:19b; 26:4b-5). When the Hebrews travel as a new nation from Egypt, the Scriptures highlight how their judges were chosen by Jethro advising Moses to choose individuals who would know YHWH's laws, reverence Him, were trustworthy, and would not be bribed (Ex 18:20-21).

Significant focus covers issues of social justice involving freedom for both males and females as compensation for being injured during a time of servitude (Ex 21:26-27) and restitution for damage or loss to property (Ex 21:33-22:15). It addresses rape (Ex 22:16-17); mistreatment of foreigners (Ex 22:21, 23:9) and sojourner (Lev 19:33-34), the deaf, or the blind (Lev 19:14); forbidding interest or withholding overnight garments as collateral from Hebrews (Ex 22:25-27); withholding wages overnight (Lev 19:13b); oppressing or robbing a neighbor (Lev 19:13a); other forms of theft (Lev 19:11a); cursing God or leaders (Ex 22:28); hiding the truth as a witness (Ex 23:1); hiding the truth in other ways (Lev 19:11b); swearing by God's name when lying (Lev 19:12) or having false weights in commerce (Lev 19:35-36); slander or jeopardizing the life of a neighbor in other ways (Lev 19:16); perverting justice by siding with the majority (Ex 23:2) or the powerful (Lev 19:15) or through bribery (Ex 23:8), especially against the poor (Ex 23:3, 6; Lev 19:15); ignoring returning an enemy's lost property (Ex 23:4-5); or killing the innocent and righteous (Ex 23:7); bearing a grudge, hating, or wanting revenge for something another person has done (Lev 19:17-18a). The goal of these areas of justice was to "love

³⁰ The goal of effective Bible study methods is to determine the trans-temporal (timeless), trans-cultural (universal) principles related to the inspired texts in their original setting, then apply them accurately and relevantly to a current situation individually and/or corporately.

your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18b), which Jesus would later identify as part of the greatest commandment (see more below).

The Law also required capital punishment for certain social sins that affected individuals or the nation. It was required for: striking or cursing parents (Ex 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9); kidnapping (Ex 21:16); certain cases of willful negligence (Ex 21:28-29);³¹ deviant spiritual practices (Ex 22:18, 20; Lev 20:1-5, 27); deviant sexual practices (Ex 22:19; Lev 20:7-21, 21:9); mistreatment of widows or fatherless children (Ex 22:22-24); cursing YHWH or blaspheming His name (Lev 24:15-16); and murder (Ex 21:12-14, 20; Lev 24:17, 21b).

It is important to note that God makes a point of saying that justice applied to both native Israelites and sojourners (Lev 24:22), no one was exempt either in being convicted or in being compensated. Within Israel, there was to be equal justice under the Law without partiality of one’s nationality, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

Along with these sins, the Law provided sacrifices that, when applied, provided forgiveness for the offenders of any offence not requiring capital punishment (Lev 5:1, 6:1-7). As an aspect of fairness, YHWH made provision for economic differences in offering certain sacrifices (Lev 5:1-13, 12:6-8, 14:1-32). In addition to the ritual sacrifices for sin, Israelites were also required to restore or make compensation for what they took in robbery, gained through oppression, lost when entrusted to them, or about which they swore falsely (Lev 6:4-5a). The compensation needed to be the equal to what was lost to the rightful owner plus an additional fifth of that worth (Lev 6:5b); or, if the sin involved injury to another person, the compensation required equal injury to the offender (Lev 24:19-20). Likewise, the killing of an animal required equal compensation (Lev 24:18, 21a). All of these rules, whether involving sacrifice, compensation, or death meant social sin was costly to the offender.

A few other aspects of justice in Israel as seen in the Law need note. First, while it primarily rested on the requirements of the Law and the wisdom of the judges, it could also involve the role of the High Priest who held the Urim and Thummim and breastplate with the stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex 28:29-30) as was used to discover Jonathan’s guilt (1 Sam 14:41-42). Also, some divine justice will not occur until God deals with it as a time He deems best in the future (Ex 32:32-34).

Failure to maintain a society that lived according to these requirements is a critical part of the condemnations found in the Scriptures written by the major and minor prophets. As Isaiah said, “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged” (Is 1:4). The primary condemnation of the prophets was their idolatry and spiritual adultery in trusting in other deities, rather than Him alone (Is 2:8, 45:15-17, 46:8-10; Jer 3:8-10; Hosea), and the acceptance of false prophecy and divination (Ezek 13:3-7).

However, they also condemned both the northern and southern kingdoms for committing the social sins listed above including: oppression, bribery, injustice, and making sinful decrees that subvert justice, especially for the fatherless and widows (Is 1:17, 23, 5:23, 10:1-2; Mic 2:1-2, 3:9-11a, 7:3; Hab 1:4; Zech 7:9-10); mistreatment of the poor (Is 3:14-15; Am 4:1, 5:11a, 12b, 8:4-6), sojourners (Jer 6:6), and parents (Mic 7:6); deception (Mic 6:11); lying (Is 59:4, 14-15; Mic 6:12b); violence (Is 59:6b; Mic 6:12a; Hab 1:2b-3); bloodshed (Is 5:7, 59:7; Mic 7:2); preferring evil over good (Is 5:20); greediness that leads to unjust gain (Jer 6:13); swearing falsely, murder, and adultery (Jer 6:9); and, violating the law of servitude requiring setting Hebrews free after six years (Jer 34:8-16). Ezekiel 18 and 22:1-12, 29 list these and others social aspects of the Law stated above with a clear pronouncement of judgment on the offenders but forgiveness for the repentant and the clear statement

³¹ Willful negligence allows for redemption from capital punishment (Ex 21:30-31).

revealing YHWH's heart, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? . . . and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" and "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways . . . Repent and turn from your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin" (Ezek 18:23).

In bringing the exiles back from their seventy years of exile, He again calls them to show their repentance when He says, "These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD" (Zech 8:16-17). Sadly, their repentance was short-lived as the writings of the last OT prophet, Malachi, show them again violating both the ritual aspects of the Law (Mal 1:6-14, 2:7-9, 3:8-10) and the social ones (Mal 2:13-19, 3:5).

One goal of YHWH's judgment on them will be to humble them for their pride (Is 2:11-12; Zeph 3:11b-12). Another will be to cure them of their social sins (Zeph 3:13, 19). Still another is to show them that He is both gracious and merciful, and that He will bring about justice for those who trust in Him (Is 30:18).

Part of the solution will be the coming of the Messiah who, among other attributes, will rule in justice and righteousness (Is 9:7b, 11:4-5, 42:1-4; Jer 23:5-6). Ezekiel 34:1-31 is YHWH's condemnation of the leaders of Israel as corrupt shepherds who have cared for themselves more than the sheep of Israel entrusted to their care. In the midst of condemning them in verses 1-10a and 17-19, YHWH says He will remove them, be their shepherd (vv. 10b-16, 20-24), and establish the Messiah to properly care for them (vv. 22-24). Part of the care that has been neglected and will be corrected is proper judgment and maintaining justice (v. 16b-17, 20, 22b).

In the NT

Injustice in the NT is found in Herod having killed all the young children in Bethlehem when trying to stop the one child who threatened his rule (Mt 2:16-18). It is also seen where, just as with YHWH's condemnation of divorce in Malachi (2:14-16), Jesus as YHWH incarnate called men to avoid violating their covenant of marriage except under very specific conditions (Mt 5:31-32, 19:3-12). He also condemned developing loopholes people used to avoid fulfilling the Law (Mt 15:3-7a) because doing so revealed the corrupt attitude of their hearts (Mt 15:8-9), which God knows (Lk 16:15). In addition, Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day for their lack of mercy (Mt 9:13a) and for placing other matters over the priorities of "justice, mercy, and righteousness" (Mt 23:23).

Regarding justice, Jesus taught that it would not occur until the Day of Judgment in the future (Mt 16:27). One aspect of being acquitted on that Day was taking care of those who cannot repay what they have received but letting God provide that repayment (Lk 14:12-14).

Avoiding partiality is based in the character of God, who is just, which means not showing partiality (Rom 2:11). He does not make distinctions and cannot be bribed when it comes to justice (Dt 10:17-18). On the other hand, He does make distinctions when it comes to things He designates as "clean" and "unclean" "good" and "evil," "special [holy]" and "common [profane]," or "righteous" and "wicked," (Lev 7:19; 1 Kgs 3:9, Eze 22:26, Mal 3:18). Therefore, believers should avoid showing partiality toward others where God doesn't (Jas 2:1)—which often occurs in status-related situations as it does in the context of this verse (Jas 2:2-7)—both because it violates the second great command to love others as oneself (Jas 2:8) and it is an act of judgment upon others that puts the one judging under judgment as well since showing partiality is sin (Jas 2:9-13a). Avoiding partiality is an act of mercy shown toward others (Jas 2:13b), which models God's attitude toward believers they are expected to have toward others (Lk 10:37).

In this regard, believers are called to avoid making a distinction that restricts the gospel in coming to certain people based on prejudice against them. However, that does not mean there should never be parameters to how much believers are willing to do to associate with people, though Spirit-led wisdom is needed

to discern the timeless, universal principle that applies where the Scriptures are silent on a specific issue or context.

OPPRESSION AND SUPPRESSION IN THE BIBLE

Another relevant area for study in the Bible is oppression and suppression of others as some systemic disparity within certain contexts of Scripture, especially diversity and inequality are discussed or shown.³² In some cases, oppression occurs but is not necessarily systemic. In other places it clearly is. In addition, sometimes suppression occurs, both systemic and non-systemic, instead of oppression.³³

In the OT

At the murder of Abel, Cain was concerned about how he would be treated as he wandered the earth and received God's assurance that there would be some form of protection (Gen 4:14-15); the inhabitants of Sodom attacked Lot, in part, because they felt he did not have a right to judge them as a foreigner (Gen 18:9); Rebekah did not approve of the Hittites as acceptable wives for Esau (Gen 26:34-35) or Jacob (Gen 27: 46);³⁴ and, both Isaac and Rebekah disliked the Canaanites in general as acceptable wives for Jacob (Gen 28:1, 6-8).³⁵

During the time of Joseph, the Hebrews were not allowed to eat with Egyptians for they were an "abomination" to them (Gen 43:32). The English "abomination" (Heb. תועבה *tō'ēbā*; LXX Gk. Βδέλυγμα, *bdelygma*) means something that is loathsome, polluted, detestable (BDB, BDAG), usually in a religious sense (TDOT) that, in this context, likely violated Egyptian ritual purity. This prejudice may also explain why Joseph was thrown in jail without due process (Gen 39:11-20 with the emphasis that he was a "Hebrew" slave). It may also only be a prejudice from their vocation as shepherds, which also makes them an "abomination" [same Heb. & LXX Gk. term as before] (Gen 46:34). Interestingly, Joseph was given some exemption to this prejudice because Pharaoh gave him the daughter of an Egyptian priest as his wife (Gen 41:45). This intermarriage needed to be endorsed also on the side of the Hebrews; so, Israel made sure to make Joseph's sons born to her equal in status and rights of inheritance as if they were pureblood Hebrews (Gen 48:5-6).

After the time of the Patriarchs, systemic oppression³⁶ and injustice toward the Hebrews is seen in their eventual slavery in Egypt because they were a perceived threat, whether real or not, and the command to execute Hebrew male babies (Ex 1:8-16, 23). It is also found in the book of Daniel during the exile in Babylon (Dan 3:4-6, 8-12; 6:6-15) and in the book of Esther where their extermination as a people is again very real—this time from the Persians (Es 1:1, 3:6b).

In the NT

In the New Testament, oppression and suppression are seen in both spiritual and social ways coming from demons, individuals, groups, or governments.

Demonic oppression is described several times (Mt 4:24, 8:16, 9:32, 12:22, 15:22, Jn 10:21; Ac 10:38). The Gk. term is usually δαίμονιζομαι (*diamonizomai*), which indicates that one or more demonic spirits is interfering with a person's normal activities, behaviors, or health so they are not free to be or do as they would normally; but, instead, are being influenced in some abnormal way. So, while the

³² The term "structural disparity" instead of "structural racism" is preferred since the structural issues involved may not be about race but other differences. Otherwise, racism must be more defined beyond skin color as the main criteria.

³³ See the "Introduction" to this study for critical definitions of systemic oppression and systemic suppression as they apply in this section and those that follow, and how they are different from modern political and social justice use.

³⁴ Hittites were the descendants of Heth, one of Canaan's sons in the line of Ham from Noah (Gen 10:6, 15).

³⁵ It is easier to understand why Hittite and Canaanite men might have been unacceptable as husbands to the daughters of these Patriarchs since that issue would involve uncircumcision that separated the descendants of Abraham (Gen 17:9-14) from others (Gen 34:14-17). It is more difficult to understand why the women from these people groups were unacceptable.

³⁶ The term "systemic oppression" is an emotionally loaded term in current culture. Other terms were considered for use in this study; but none were found adequate in describing what occurred in the biblical settings. The activities that caused disparity were both oppressive and systemically so. Therefore, this term will continue to be used in this study though not with the cultural definition it has today.

normal term “possession” is often used to indicate a demon possesses a person, it is more accurate to say the person possesses the demon and is in some way oppressed by it.³⁷

Suppression from individuals is found in Herod the Great seeking to kill Jesus (Mt 2:1:13-15a) and in John the Baptist being both arrested and then killed because he had confronted Herod Antipas and Herodias about their adultery, among other things (Mt 14:3-4, 10; Mk 6:16-18; Lk 3:19).

Systemic oppression and suppression from groups is seen in how the Jews were treated under Roman rule. This involved submission of the Jewish leaders to Roman ones (as is seen in their not being able to kill Jesus by stoning but having to take Him to Pilate for execution (Mt 27:1-2, 26; Jn 18:31)).³⁸

These not only occurred to the Israelites; but they systemically oppressed and suppressed others, as well. The Jewish religious establishment was against Jesus with a conspiracy to hand Him over to the governor with the intention of having Him killed (Mt 16:21, 26:3-5, 57-68, 27:1-2, 12-13, 20-23, 41-43, 62-66; Mk 14:56, 59; Lk 20:20, 23:24-25; Jn 18:12-14). Their methods involved the following:

Trying ways to entrap Him (Mt 22:15-18, 23, 34-35);

Religious discipline for those vocally affirming Jesus as the Messiah (Jn 9:22, 12:42-43);

Giving orders for anyone who knew His whereabouts to be an informant (Jn 11:57);

Enlisting the help of an insider (Mt 26:14-16, 21-25, 47-50) who was motivated by Satan (Lk 22:3; Jn 13:2) and did not expect the leaders to take it to the point of Jesus’ execution (Mt 27:3-5); and,

Paying off the tomb guards to not reveal the truth about His resurrection (Mt 28:11-15).

While Jesus rebuked Peter for wanting to stop it because he was not being Kingdom focused (Mt 16:23), neither Pilate nor Herod found evidence that Jesus was guilty of anything requiring capital punishment (Lk 23:13-16).

In preparing the disciples for His coming death and their leadership afterwards, Jesus informed them that His followers would be persecuted wherever they lived by the established authorities (Mt 24:9) and by families (Lk 21:16) because of their mutual hate of Jesus (Lk 21:17; Jn 15:18-16:3, 17:14). This first occurred when Peter and John were brought before the Jewish leaders (Ac 4:1-22, 25b-27) but continued with additional arrests and desire to kill them (Ac 5:17-18, 27-40, 23:12-15, 25:1-3) even into regions where Paul had his ministry (Ac 13:48-50, 14:2-6, 19, 17:5-9, 13, 18:12-13, 20:3, 19) and then when Jews from those areas saw him in Jerusalem (Ac 21:27-31a). Part of their hostility was because they represented Jesus whom the Jewish leaders refused to accept as the Messiah. It was also because of “jealousy” (Ac 5:17b, 13:45, 17:4-5), which most likely relates to the popularity the followers of Jesus were having with the people and, as a result, the numerous conversions (Ac 2:41, 47b, 5:14).

Finally, there was opposition from within the Jewish Church because they believed Paul’s emphasis on salvation without the need for circumcision meant he was rejecting the Law and Jewish culture (Ac 21:20b-21). Contrary to their beliefs on these areas, Paul still saw the Law as valuable teaching for Christians and followed certain Jewish customs himself. For example, he attended synagogue services on the Sabbath because, while Paul’s primary mission was to the Gentiles, his strategy of reaching them involved having a ministry to the Jews in various mission

³⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 146; Logos Bible Software ed.

³⁸ The meaning of Jn 18:31 cannot be that the Law did not allow capital punishment for, as this study shows, it clearly did. It probably means here that they were not allowed by Roman law to kill Jesus for the sin of blasphemy. Their final appeal to Pilate was not for Him to be condemned for blasphemy against God but in proclaiming to be King of the Jews (Mt 27:11), 29, 37; Jn 18:33-37, 19:14b-15), which would have been a more serious charge under Roman rule.

locations (Ac 13:5, 14, 14:1, 17:1-3, 18:4, 19, 28:17a) and affirming his belief in the Law in his trial defenses (Ac 23:5, 24:14b-15) and other teaching (Ac 28:23). In addition, he had cut his hair because of a vow he had made (Ac 18:18; 21:23-24, 26) and wanted to go to the temple in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Ac 20:16).

While much of the early suppression of the Church came from Hebrew Jews, religious suppression from Jews with different ethnicities occurred in the confrontation between Stephen and some Jews identified as being from Cyrene and Alexandria in modern north Africa, Cilicia in what is now both southern Turkey next to modern Syria and northwestern Syria, and Asia in what is now far western Turkey. These people devised a conspiracy about him blaspheming God (Ac 6:11-14), which led to his murder (7:54, 57-58a).³⁹

While speculative because the Scriptures do not indicate this, it's possible the zealotry of those among this group who led the conspiracy and participated in the increased persecution of church, like Saul (Ac 8:3), were motivated by a desire to be accepted by the majority Hebrews instead of possibly being viewed as minority outsiders. In addition, since they were gathering apart from other Jews in their synagogue affiliation (Ac 6:9a), another possible status factor in their behavior may involve wanting to be accepted as equals after having been freed from servitude. Again, determining both motivations is speculative; but it is not unreasonable to consider them in light of how they may have been perceived by the Hebrew Jewish majority in Jerusalem.

An interesting twist to this story occurred when Paul returned to Jerusalem after his conversion and began boldly evangelizing the people there, including engaging the Hellenists with whom he had previously associated and who now wanted to kill him (Ac 9:28-29).⁴⁰

Systemic disparity is seen in anti-Samaritanism by the Jews and anti-Jewism by the Samaritans. While the reasons were historically complex and multifaceted, they included the Samaritans not being pure-blood Hebrews, giving preference to the Law over the other books of the OT accepted by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, and having a different center of worship that the Jews rejected (e.g., Lk 4:20). These differences resulted in the Jews treating the Samaritans more like Gentiles with similar social restriction than there should have been.⁴¹

Such Jewish prejudice toward the Samaritans was revealed where Jesus was accused at the same instance of both being one of them and having a demon (Jn 8:48). In His response, Jesus denied having a demon; however, interestingly, He did not reject being identified as a Samaritan, which may indicate He was willing to associate Himself with them and accept the prejudice they encountered.

Jesus initially focused His ministry on reaching the Jews and restricted it from the Samaritans and Gentiles (Mt 10:5-6) but still ministered to them. This is first seen in His encounter with the woman at the well in Luke 4. When He first asked her for a drink, she was surprised because she did not expect Him to willingly associate with her because of the tension between the two groups (Lk 4:9). His response to her showed His willingness to invite her to believe in Him and, thereby experience salvation, by offering her living water (Lk 4:10-15). While He did affirm

³⁹ The narrative just before this one involved the choice of Stephen as one of the people chosen to deal with a problem involving Hellenistic Jews in the Church. Therefore, it is possible that Luke connected the two incidents together in his narrative to show different ethical issues affecting the early church—one internal and the other external but both relating to Hellenists. It also explains the presence of Saul at the end of the narrative since he was from Tarsus in Cilicia (Ac 7:58, 22:3a, 8:1a).

⁴⁰ Another interesting twist is the comment after he departed for Tarsus that “the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up . . . [and] it multiplied” (Ac 9:30-31). It is possible that Paul's activity helped convince enough Jews of the validity of the gospel that it resulted in a significant end to the oppression there, at least for a while as oppression again occurs from Herod Agrippa (Ac 12:1-2). Though his reason for initially doing this is not explained, he continued it because of wanting to please the Jews (Ac 12:3).

⁴¹ Walter A. Elwell, gen. ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1887; Logos Bible Software ed.; s.v. “Samaritans.”

that “salvation is from the Jews” (Lk 4:22b), He went on to teach that it was not based on where a person worshipped but, rather, that it was related to “true worshipers” who recognize “God is spirit” and, therefore, worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (Lk 4:23-24). When she then raised the issue about the coming Messiah, He revealed to her that He is the Messiah, at which she went on to tell to the others in the town and which, in turn, led to many trusting in Him (Lk 4:28-30, 39-42).

In addition, as He went through their land, the Samaritans in a certain village refused to accept Him because He was on His way to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-53), which they considered a rival religious capital. At this encounter, the disciples wanted divine punishment on the Samaritans; however, Jesus rebuked the disciples for their attitude and moved on to another location (Lk 9:54-56). Interestingly, Luke then puts the story of the “Good Samaritan” in the very next chapter (Lk 10:25-37), which may have either been a result of Jesus’ intention in dealing with the disciple’s attitude or Luke’s way of putting together his narrative. Either way, the contrast between the restrictions on Him by certain Samaritans and His use of one of them as the hero in the story shows Jesus’ willingness to avoid prejudice against them for their prejudice in treating Him. Only Luke’s narrative further highlights the Samaritan leper who pleaded for mercy to be healed then returned to thank Jesus when he was, while the nine others who were also healed did not (Lk 17:11-19).

While Luke’s narrative in Acts shows resistance to Gentile ministry that needed the divine intervention found in Acts 10-11, this type of intervention is not needed for the Apostles to accept Samaritans into the Church. After the persecution of Stephen and the scattering of the Jerusalem church to more of that region (Ac 8:1), the Apostles willingly went to the Samaritans and made sure they were both baptized in water and received the Holy Spirit (Ac 8:14-17) and ministered in many Samaritan villages during that trip (Ac 8:25). This acceptance may have been a result, as described above, of Jesus working to break down the ethnic wall that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Gentile oppression and suppression of Jews and Christians is also found in the NT. When it first occurs, Paul is viewed as Jew (Ac 16:20b) and the issue causing the problem was financial (Ac 16:10a)—Paul had healed a person who made significant income for others though demonically inspired divination and fortune-telling (Ac 16:16-24). A second occurred at Ephesus, again for the same perceived reasons: the Greeks thinking the Christians were Jews who would undermine Greek polytheism with their monotheism (Ac 19:33-34), especially disrupting religious tourism if their main local deity, Artemis, lost influence and their hosting the “sacred stone that fell from the sky” lost relevance (Ac 19:27b-28, 35); with the primary issue financial since Paul’s ministry there had enough impact to cause fewer people to buy idols from their makers (Ac 19:18-19, 23-27a).

Jesus saw a significant role of His ministry in freeing the oppressed (Lk 4:18) and fulfilling Messianic prophecy (Is 58:6).

John’s story about Jesus and the Samaritan woman also reveals that women did not have equality in society. When the disciples returned, they were quite surprised that Jesus had been talking with a Samaritan (perhaps because they were in tune enough with His mission to know He would do so) but, rather, that He was talking with a woman (Jn 4:27). It should not be difficult to understand why Jesus would ask her for a drink, since that occurred in several places in Scripture and was, apparently, an acceptable aspect of culture. It could not be that the issue was Jesus having the type of spiritual discussion with a woman that He had had with her because he had spiritual discussions with other women (Jn 11:20-27). This incident with the disciples being surprised is likely culturally based since women play a significant role in the spread of the gospel beyond Judea and Samaria without any additional comment from the Apostles reaching women.

DIGNITY, RESPECT, AND HONOR IN THE BIBLE

Dignity, respect, and honor for other people is based on several concepts starting with the character of YHWH.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

A person's view of God is the most important part of their worldview. Since dignity, honor, and respect are ethical virtues, it is essential to understand YHWH's ethical nature. Regarding this the Bible teaches that He is:

- Good (Gen 3:5; 2 Chr 7:3; 30:18; Ezr 3:11; Ps 25:8; 34:8; 86:5; Mt 19:17; Phil 2:13);-
- Righteous (Ezr 9:15; Ps 7:9; 11:5-7; Jer 12:1; Jn 17:25; Rom 2:5; Rv 16:5);-
- Just (Dt 32:4; Is 58:2; Dan 4:37);
- Loving (Ex 20:6, 34:7; Ps 62:12; Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:8; 1 Cor 13);
- Compassionate (Dt 4:31; Rom 9:15);
- Gracious (Ps 103:8; Eph 2:8-9);
- Merciful (Ps 86:15; 145:8; Lk 6:36; Heb 8:12; Jas 5:11);
- Faithful (Dt 7:9; 1 Cor 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thes 5:24; 2 Tim 2:11; Heb 10:23; R-ev 19:11); and,
- True (2 Sm 7:28; Ps 89:14; Is 40:8).

Therefore, it is not surprising that justice and mercy play such a big role in the Law, writings of the prophets, the teachings of Jesus, and the writings of the Apostles. In the OT, Abraham appealed to God's justice of not judging the righteous with the wicked when interceding for the preservation of Lot (Gen 18:23-32, esp. v. 25). YHWH's description of Himself is of one who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex 34:6-7). He YHWH loves justice (Is 61:8a) and both forgives and has steadfast love based on His own integrity on His words of promised faithfulness (Mic 7:18-20). Moreover, the restoration of Israel from their exodus to Assyria and Babylon-Persia is connected to His being merciful (Is 60:10; Zech 1:12-16).

In the NT, Mary declared God's mercy to Israel when she was chosen as the human mother of Jesus (Lk 1:50, 55), who she was told would be the Messiah (Lk 1:31-33). Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, also affirmed God's mercy to their ancestors in preserving them to that day and in his son being the prophet to prepare the way for the Messiah that will bring ultimate salvation (Lk 1:72, 78). Jesus taught people to be merciful because God is (Lk 6:36) and that God would provide justice for the elect (Lk 18:1-8a).

HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE IMAGO DEI

Because human beings were created in the image of God and that image was retained in individuals when humanity multiplied and spread across the planet, all human beings—whether different due to gender, ethnicity, age, ability, or any other difference—has intrinsic honor. Even the most sinful human being has value as a person. There are differences in the roles they have but not in the value they have. It is because each one has value that the Son of God became incarnate and sacrificed Himself for them.

The implications of this are huge in the teachings and stories of Scripture. These are just a few. First, capital punishment for intentional murder is a universal precept that predates the giving of the Law to Israel (Gen 9:6) but is then reinforced in it as well as accidental manslaughter (Ex 21:12-14; Lev 24:17, 21b), even for a male or female slave (Ex 21:20). Second, in ancient Israel, equal punishment is required for injury to, or the death of, an unborn child (Ex 21:22-24). Third, Jesus healed on the Sabbath because he saw value in human welfare (Mt 12:11-12). He also taught a severe judgment would occur for those who did not treat people, especially the poor, with dignity (Lk 16:1-31).

In addition, since the day of Pentecost, personal value for believers is also connected to their identity in Christ which is wonderfully explained in Ephesians 1.

RECONCILIATION AND RELATIONAL PEACE IN THE BIBLE

Because of human value, especially for believers, resolving conflict, restoring relationships, and maintaining them in a healthy way has an important emphasis in the Bible. Sometimes separation is needed, at least temporarily, but the goal should be to overcome the differences as much and as quickly as possible.

In the OT

A good example of separation as a positive solution is seen in Abram avoiding interpersonal strife and preserving clan unity by deferring to Lot in the selection where each should live when they were too big for one location (Gen 13:8-9). In this situation, Abram did not use his right to gain possessions when it was wise not to do so (Gen 14:21-24). Under similar circumstances, Isaac was willing to trust God to provide by moving to new locations whenever conflict arose with others over water rights (Gen 26:15, 19-22). Both men chose separation to avoid greater conflict that would occur under the circumstances that appeared difficult to solve any other way. Furthermore, there is no indication that their relationships were hindered. They might well have continued to interact positively with the other people involved though less frequently.

Two OT stories of reconciliation where tension led to unnecessary interpersonal conflict requiring restoration of the individuals involved occur in Genesis. The first involves Jacob's sin toward his brother Esau (Gen 27:41, 32:3-6), which resulted in him fleeing to another country to avoid Esau's revenge. In that location, God did bless him (not as a result of God approving of his sin but because of divine faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham); however, he was also swindled by a relative; so, he experienced receiving himself the type of emotional pain he had caused his brother.

Reconciliation in the story occurs first with the relative that had hurt Jacob. In it, they resolved their differences and took an oath in God's sight that they would not harm one another (Gen 31:51-54). Then Jacob heads to reconcile with Esau. The years of separation gave Esau's emotions time to calm down even if they were not completely healed (Gen 27:41-45). Jacob took several steps he hoped would resolve the past tension between he and his brother, which would allow them to live in peace with one another:

- He prayed for divine intervention (Gen 32:9-12);
- He showed true humility (Gen 33:3); and
- He provided restitution (Gen 32:13-21)

The result was Esau extending forgiveness and accepting Jacob, now named Israel, home (Gen 33:4, 10c).

The second story of reconciliation involves Joseph whose brothers were jealous of him and hated him both because he was their father's preferred son and because of his perceived arrogance at that and unwisely sharing dreams about becoming more important than them in other ways even though they were older than him (Gen 37:8, 11, 18). Their anger at him led them to plot a way to get rid of him by selling him as a slave in Egypt. While there, he had a good life in some ways and a difficult life in others; but, through YHWH's faithfulness to him, he eventually became the second highest ruler in the land even though he was not an Egyptian.

Reconciliation occurs when his brothers come to Egypt to secure food during a time of famine. The steps for reconciliation seen in this story are:

- Joseph recognizing the providence of a good God overriding his brothers' sinful human actions (Gen 45:5-8, 50:19b-20);
- Joseph giving forgiveness when his brothers request it (Gen 50:17b);
- His brothers showing humility (Gen 50:18);
- Both sides showing love that restored their fellowship (Gen 45:15); and,
- Joseph leaving judgment to God regarding their sin (Gen 50:19b)

As a result, fear is abated (Gen 50:19a, 21) and the family moves from Canaan to Egypt where they had a better life together.

In the NT

In the NT, reconciliation with God is foundational to everything else (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus accomplished objectively reconciliation between believers as an aspect of their union with Him (Eph 2:14). Subsequently, interpersonal and group problems are more subjective experiences that require effort to resolve.

As was shown in both OT stories above, humility plays a big part in reconciliation from an NT perspective. Jesus emphasized the need for humility in the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3, 5) and in explaining it as the main trait of those who are greatest in heaven (Mt 18:1-4). He saw it as an aspect of His character (Mt 11:29) as did Paul (Phil 2). In addition, He was identified as a humble person in fulfilling prophecy by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of normal ways a proud king would arrive (Mt 21:4-5), which means He lived what He taught to others. This is also seen in Him modeling humility and servanthood as their leader by washing the feet of the disciples like a servant would (Jn 13:4-17). Prophetically, He saw a time coming when the proud would be humbled by losing their status, whereas the humble would be exalted (Mt 23:12).

Jesus also emphasized mercy (Mt 5:7, 12:7) as something that helps facilitate reconciliation (Mt 5:9). It was important enough to Him that He taught it as an aspect of His consideration in judging others for their eternal destiny (Mt 25:34-46).

He also taught the need to deal with anger against others because it is more important to do so than religious activities (Mt 5:21-25); to avoid vengeance by showing extra kindness (Mt 5:38-42) and love, especially to enemies (Mt 5:43-48) including praying for them (Mt 5:44); and, forgiveness of others as a critical aspect of personal righteousness (Mt 6:12, 14-15, 18:23-35). This includes extending repeated forgiveness (Mt 18:21-22) and doing so from the heart (Mt 18:35b).

Another aspect He taught to maintain good relationships with others is avoiding hypocritically judging them because that same standard would apply in eternity to the one judging (Mt 7:1-5). They were also to treat others the same way they wanted to be treated (Mt 7:12). Along these lines, His followers would be revealed more by the lifestyle they showed than the words they spoke, which would help distinguish them from false prophets (Mt 7:15-20-23); however, it was also revealed in the words they spoke, which would be part of their eternal judgment (Mt 12:33-37) because they reveal a person's heart attitude (Mt 15:17-20).

Regarding specific steps when a relationship broke down, Jesus expected His followers to take the initiative in reconciling with others (Mt 18:15) especially before ending up in court (Mt 5:25-26). The procedure involved going to the offender first, then taking other witnesses along, then taking it to the assembly (Mt 18:15-17a). The offender is to be treated like an outsider if unrepentant when this process is over (Mt 18:17b); however, this does not mean mistreating them as outsiders still deserve respect—they just do not enjoy the privileges of fellowship enjoyed by the spiritual community seeking to be right with God and one another.

Two stories in the book of Acts also shed light on reconciliation. The first involves Paul not being easily accepted by other Christians. As a former persecutor of believers, they were in fear of him. This shows with Ananias' initial fear of meeting with him; but then his willingness to do so in obedience to the Lord (Ac 9:10-17). After his conversion, even though he was accepted by believers in that geographical area, he needed a peacemaker in Barnabas to help him be accepted by the church in Jerusalem (Ac 9:26-28).

The second story involves Paul refusing to take Mark, Barnabas' cousin (Col 4:10), on his second missionary journey because Mark had been unfaithful in remaining with him and Barnabas on the first one (Ac 15:37-40). The disagreement was so strong that Paul and Barnabas separated into two mission teams heading to different locations, Barnabas taking Mark and Paul choosing Silas (Ac 15:39-41). The Scriptures show that Paul and Mark eventually reconciled (Col 4:10; 2 Tim

4:11; Phlm 24) though how that happened is unknown. The important point is that they did reconcile.⁴²

A final point before moving on involves the need to access God's power in reconciling with others. Believers should be careful of trying to accomplish reconciliation with other believers in the power of the flesh since the issues involved may be too difficult to overcome that way. The better way is to seek reconciliation in the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2-3).

THE ROLE OF LOVE AND LOVING WELL IN THE BIBLE

While reconciliation may include dealing with issues of inequality and injustice, the pursuit of equality and justice must be secondary to the pursuit of love. "If I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor 13:3).

Unity in the Church is the recognition that, in light of the redemptive work of the Savior, all believers are equal in Christ (Rom 10:12; Eph 2:13) and, within that spiritual context, are called as His disciples to love one another substantially (Jn 13:34-45) because of their spiritual connectedness in Him.

However, since unity does not require sameness, conformity, passivity, or passive submissiveness. Unity is not the minority submitting to the majority, or vice versa; rather, it is all submitting to one another out of respect for a common, sacrificially loving, Savior and Lord (Eph 5:21a). It is an active work of love, not merely a passive feeling, to honor one another (Rom 12:10) as part of the Spirit-filled life with the fruit He provides (Gal 5:22-23; Phil 2:1-4). As a result, unity does not require the absence of conflict; instead, it is achieved, in part, by recognizing the presence of Christ in the midst of a difficult situation.⁴³

Maintaining unity in Christ takes effort, effort that is not believers are to consider optional. Rather, it is obligation on them as people called by God into His Kingdom: "Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3). This obligation exists because of the intimate spiritual interconnectedness they have with one another in Paul's explanation of the need for all to use their spiritual gifts no matter how prominent or obscure in appearance, which is a biblical example of synergy where the whole is greater than the sum of the members (1 Cor 12:12-22). It also requires that believers take care of and honor one another (1 Cor 12:24-26).

Furthermore, believers need to remember and recognize that division can be an aspect of spiritual warfare, especially during the end times, from people who do not have the Spirit of God even if they consider themselves part of the Christian community (Jude 1:17-19). For this reason, Scripture commands that anyone who is truly divisive—not just bringing up truth believers must follow but which may make them uncomfortable—be held accountable for it. This must be done in love, which can involve appropriate firmness; but it must be done (Titus 3:9-10).

Additional insights related to love and loving well as disciples of Jesus are found in the following New Testament books.

ROMANS

The Roman congregation/s were by the time of the writing of the epistle to the Romans a fairly well-established set of churches and groups. They probably represented a diverse membership of various ethnic backgrounds representing the Roman Empire at the time by the very nature of the impact of the Roman Republic

⁴² The Scriptures are silent on what happened to the relationship between Paul and Barnabas. The only comment historically past this point in the narrative is Paul's comment about Barnabas as an apostle in 1 Cor 9:5-6, which indicates the Corinthians either knew him or knew of him.

⁴³ Jay Younts, "Peace is not the Absence of Conflict," Shepherd's Press blog, March 6, 2019, <https://www.shepherdpress.com/peace-is-not-the-absence-of-conflict-2/>.

constitution. The potential reality is that the first believers reached Rome from Judea in the A.D. 30s after the initial Jerusalem explosion of conversions where the thousands were made up of visitors to the city from many distinct language and ethnic groups. Some were likely Romans and returned to Rome, their home city after the Judean visit, there to become witnesses of the gospel to the rest of the citizenry.

Paul's treatise demonstrates that pure and well understood doctrine of the message of the gospel directly affects the ability for God's love to flow to and through His faithful followers to brethren and the world.

Key thematic principles of God's love:

- God's love for all is the foundation for all of Christian living (Rom 1:5, 14, 16). Through Him Paul received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.
- God's love meets the needs of others; morally meets all of God's commandments; never harms others; is Light while dissensions are from the darkness of the world's ways (Rom 13:7, 8-10, 12-14).
- Rejections of God's ways (found in His nature) darkens human thinking and short-circuits God's love flowing to them (Rom 1:18-25).
- God's love flows to all through the sacrificial and redeeming acts of Christ (Rom 5:5,8).
- God's will is for His love-based goodness (Rom 5:5) to be expressed through the lives of all believers to one another and the world as they live on His promise-fueled faith (Rom 8:28, 37).
- God makes no distinctions among different kinds of people when it relates to them being beneficiaries of His love (Rom 10:11-12).
- God's love for and through all within the Body of Christ overcomes all differences of people. This is demonstrated by the following:
 - The foundations of sharing God's love established by God-transformed Christian lives (Rom 12:1-2);
 - Transformed lives renewed by the Spirit with spiritually organic member-to-member relationships with one another (Rom 12:3-8);
 - Qualities of Christ's love lived out through and to one another (Rom 12:9-13);
 - Love-based Christlike actions taken with one another no matter what (Rom 12:14-18);
 - If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (Rom 12:18).
 - Love, a fruit of the Spirit, sanctifies one another and is the antidote for dissensions (Rom 14:15-19).
 - Love is accepting of all others, edifying one another, and is glorifying of Christ (Rom 15:1-13).

1 CORINTHIANS

After a salutation (1:1-3) and thanksgiving (1:4-9), Paul begins his letter with an appeal for church unity (1:10). Having received a report that there is quarreling, he describes the various factions at the church in Corinth. After dealing with issues that had been reported to him (1:11-6:20), Paul responds to the question they had requested him to address (7:1), which continues throughout the rest of his letter (7:1-24; 25-40; 8:1-11:1; 12:1-14:40; 16:1-11; 16:12). His thoughts about loving in a divided world are described in the passages about eating meat sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1) and spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).

On the first issue, he reminds them that they "all of us possess knowledge"; but that this knowledge "puffs up" but love "builds up" (8:1). The knowledge he is addressing involves whether it is alright to eat meat sacrificed to idols. His reply states that believers with the correct knowledge understand they have freedom

to eat or abstain. However, each believer must follow their conscience before God, which means some believers will not have the freedom to eat and would, therefore, violate their conscience before God. In light of this, he calls those with freedom to abstain in the presence of those who are not free to avoid causing them to stumble in an area that would offend them (8:10-13, 10:32). His motivation for the entire three-chapter discussion is, again, found in the first beginning of it where he says “love builds up” (8:1).

Paul addresses the large topic of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14) over which there was much apparent controversy and, perhaps, division. While addressing many issues in these three chapters, in the middle of his teaching, he tells them he wants to show them something better than correct knowledge on this topic (12:31b), which is treating one another with love (13:1-13). At the beginning, he says that without love spiritual gifts and significant self-sacrifice are meaningless (13:1-3). At the end, he says love is more important than faith or hope (13:13). Between these statements, he lists the traits of what it is positively (being patient, kind, forbearing, trusting, hopeful, perseverant, unending) and what it avoids negatively (being arrogant, rude, envious boastful, unyielding, irritable, resentful, rejoicing at wrongdoing) (13:4-7).

EPHESIANS

Our ability to love God and one another is rooted in the reality that God has “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (1:3). This is the starting point for any discussion about loving biblically in a divided world. God has chosen believers, called them to himself and created them into one spiritual body.

Because Paul heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love toward all the saints (1:15), he prayed for God to give them “a Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” to understand three spiritual truths: (1) the nature of their calling; (2) the value of their eternal inheritance; and (3) The greatness of God’s power that works on their behalf, a power that is great enough to raise the dead as He did with Jesus. This knowledge helps believers understand the position from which they battle against unseen spiritual forces that may be energizing human agents (Eph 6:12).

When Paul exhorts believers to find their strength in the Lord’s power and to put on His armor to stand against these spiritual forces and their leader, the Devil, he did so right after his exhortations to the household of faith (wives & husbands, children & fathers, slaves & masters) because the struggle within the Christian household is operating on a higher plane than what believers can see. It is not only a struggle between spouses, or parents and children; there also exists a spiritual battle that can be motivating and energizing those struggles. Love for God and for other believers has an adversary that does not want their relational unity to succeed.

As shown earlier in this study, prejudice and ethnic hate have been part of human experience for millennia. That doesn’t by any means give believers an excuse to not pursue solutions, for the Law, the Prophets, and Jesus teach otherwise. Beyond that, Jesus Himself—not just His teaching—is our solution. He not only defines peace for believers, but He Himself is their peace. He has eliminated the dividing wall of hostility that kept them apart, and ended the hostility that existed with God and one another through His atoning and reconciled death (Eph 2:12-16), which becomes the foundation for why believers should “walk in a manner worthy” of their calling and love one another (Eph 4:2).

Regarding this on issues relevant to this study, one commentator says believers are required to show their worth in love by: (1) Accepting and valuing people of other races on an equal level; (2) Investing in Christians of other races; (3) Seeking justice for other people groups; and, (4) Sharing among Christians by being involved with other races.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 150.

Other character traits are listed in 4:2 in addition to love. Believers must not carry high-mindedness into relationships; so humility stands against arrogance. It does not assign more importance to one person over another, but assigns value as given by God based on being created in His image. Gentleness refers to being “mild-spirited” and “self-controlled” in dealing with one another because “Healthy relationships cannot exist under force and threat.” Gentleness conveys a sensitivity, a desire not to harm, and a valuing of the other person that “nurtures people, respects them, and allows them to drop defenses and deal more objectively with issues,” which is the same demeanor we find in Jesus. Finally, patience (Gk. μακροθυμίας [makrothumias] means “to have a wide and big soul.”. It is the ability to endure annoyance and difficulties over a period of time.⁴⁵

Paul concludes verse 3 by calling the Ephesians to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”, which suggests being excited to pursue or participate in making sure unity is preserved. Peace has already been established through the cross since Christ has broken down barriers. In addition, all believers are united in the Spirit and all belong to the same spiritual family as regenerated children of God (Jn 1:12). Eagerly seeking to maintain a subjective living-out of the objective unity that has already been established Christ shows believers walking in the “worthy” manner to which they are called that involves “bearing with one another in love. This involves the need to “renounce our rights” and putting up with much for the sake of a relationship made possible through the precious sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God.⁴⁶ In such renouncing, there is no “suggestion of allowing other people to be selfish, irresponsible, or burdensome. Love seeks justice and cares enough to confront . . . Since we are bound to other people in Christ, a choice must be made not to let them go.”⁴⁷ Seeing this as choosing to invest in others makes it a commitment that enables putting up with them to provide a platform for them to grow.

PHILIPPIANS

Pride and rivalries are inconsistent with the humility Jesus modeled and His followers are to have as well (Phil 2:3-4). For this reason, after Paul expressed his love for this church (Phil 4:1), he called on two women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche, to resolve their differences (Phil 4:2) and for a peacemaker to help where needed. (Phil 4:3). Continued interpersonal issues can disrupt the community and create unnecessary hardship for it. Resolving them proves the following Jesus as His disciples are more committed to obeying Him than holding on to their personal preferences or even perceived rights.

COLOSSIANS

Believers are being renewed in the image of Christ, not in that of our ethnicity or race (Col 3:10). Slaves were also expected to live godly lives, remembering it was the Lord Christ they were serving (Col 3: 22-25). And as God shows no partiality toward anyone, slaves too would be held accountable for their sins.

TITUS

This church consists of both Jewish and Gentile background believers. Local Gentiles may have brought with them heretical thinking from the Minoan religion (perhaps related to Near Eastern prehistoric religions) in which the central deity was probably a goddess. Paul writes to Titus, expecting him to completely instruct the church leaders and those in the congregation to be faithful to the teachings of the gospel and issues of appropriate and inappropriate character that is found in Christ’s love (Tit 3:4). Within this context, three aspects seem relevant for this study:

⁴⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 219. This is how many of our minority staff have endured for a long time. It is also what is required of majority staff if all are to have genuine dialogue and approach race issues biblically.

⁴⁶ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 219.

⁴⁷ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 220.

1. Though Paul writes and addresses his remarks to at least 3 different kinds of folks in attendance of the churches, he does not single out individuals nor groupings of which people might be a part. Every kind of person in attendance is instructed; everyone is included. Thus, he avoids creating reasons for divisions within the Body, or giving those who have not yet become true believers reason to feel pushed away from becoming followers of Christ.
2. The leaders' selection criteria, lifestyles, disciplined godly behavior, kindness to all, and the instruction of all in sound doctrine, Christian character, and behavior are critical to the healthy internal and external relationships of the congregations. Especially noticeable is Paul's instruction on dealing with in-subordinate people causing trouble in the spiritual community. They are to be rebuked "sharply" so they might align themselves with orthodox belief instead of non-Christian religious myths or secular perspectives (1:13-14). This likely reflects Paul's experience in Galatia reflected in his epistle to them (Gal 1:6-9, 5:12).
3. The participants in congregations are taught sound doctrine that is critical to agape love shared among brethren and with all others; exemplary behavior becoming of new life in Christ that promotes peaceful and loving internal relationships; and, the kind of lifestyles that are good examples to the worldly ones around them (Tit 2:3-15, 3:1-11, 14). For example, in Titus 3:2, he tells them "to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone."

1 PETER

This epistle is written to faithful groups of believers scattered throughout the five different ethnic regions of northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). They are probably dominantly people from these cultures, though they may also include Semitic Jews. He addresses them not with their world ethnicities, but rather in terms of their new identity within the Kingdom of God they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Pet 2:9). Whatever their previous ethnic, religious, and/or cultural identity, this is their new one and they should consider themselves as foreigners in a strange land while on earth.

Therefore, they should reflect the character of Christ and display His ways in their values and lifestyle both in relating to one another and to those in the world outside (1 Pet 1:14-16). Multiple references to this identity appear intended to reinforce it and distinctives of the Kingdom's culture in them (sometimes in contrast to the world system cultures). Some of these distinctions are related to their character traits that are necessary for dealing with their circumstances and relationships, especially as they face persecution and have encounters with difficult people.

A summary of interpersonal relationships is found when Peter says to "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Pet 2:17). This is within the context of doing good to others (1 Pet 2:15) including when suffering mistreatment from them (1 Pet 2:20). This can only be done by keeping their focus on Jesus who was also mistreated but trusted in God through it without retaliation (1 Pet 2:19-23).

2 PETER

In this letter, Peter reminds disciples of Jesus in the Asian provinces that God's love is at the core of the gospel; therefore, they should remain faithful and steady inwardly and outwardly toward the world through continued growth in Christ (2 Peter 1); understanding of the nature of false teachers and their false doctrines, retaining the pure gospel, treating them with non-abusive, non-vengeful attitudes (2 Peter 2); and, maintaining loving, holy, godly, and blameless behavior toward one another and outsiders (2 Peter 3). A key passage related to this study is found in 2 Pet 1:5-7 where Peter points to love as the supreme goal for believers. He ends the letter by referring to them as "beloved" and calling them to be careful not to be led astray and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:17b-18).

JUDE

Jude's audience is diverse in three ways at least. It is made up of true believers who are of Jewish and Gentile heritages. The Jews were at least of Semitic origin, if not more diverse ethnic ones. The Gentiles may have been quite diverse as there was significant tribalism within the nearby Eastern Mediterranean. A third set of people are newer attenders of the congregations who brought with them unbiblical doctrines.

Jude begins his letter with a blessing that they experience multiplied "mercy, peace, and love" (v. 2) after which he addresses them as "beloved" (v. 3). The body of the letter focuses on certain people and their beliefs that have entered the church there, which he identifies as "ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (v. 4) and says these types of people "cause divisions" because they are "worldly" and "devoid of the Spirit" (v. 19). Near the end of the letter, he again addresses them this way twice (v. 17, 20) and, in contrast to how he has described those creating problem tell the believers to (1) hold on to correct teaching (which involves both what they believe and how they behave); (2) pray in the Spirit; and, (3) stay within God's love (v. 20-21) because He will keep them from stumbling (v. 24).

SUFFERING IN THE BIBLE

Finally, what happens with dignity, respect, honor, and reconciliation do not occur? When injustice, oppression, and suppression continue? When love is not shown as it should? In such situations, believers must be prepared to embrace suffering from a biblical perspective.

Sometimes suffering can occur under systemic oppression, such as happened with the Hebrews generations after the leadership of Joseph was forgotten and they had become slaves. When the governing authority wanted the midwives to kill male Hebrew newborns, those babies were spared because the midwives found ways around obeying the command because they wanted to obey God more than Pharaoh (Ex 1:17, 20-21). Similarly, under systemic suppression from the Jewish leaders as the new Church began to grow, the Apostles said they would not disobey God to obey them (Ac 4:19-20). These examples show there may be times for resistance to authority, though there may be increased suffering as a result.

Other lessons can be learned from both situations. The oppressed Hebrews in Egypt prayed and entrusted themselves to God for a solution (Ex 2:23-25). God was aware of their situation and eventually acted to deliver the Hebrews from oppression (Ex 3:7-10, 16b-17, 6:2-8). However, God increased the suffering of the Hebrews in Egypt before Pharaoh released them (Ex 4:21, 5:6-23, 7:13, 22, 8:15, 19b, 32, 9:7b, 12, 35, 10:10, 27, 11:9-10, 14:4, 8); but, He did so for the greater purposes:

- The main purpose was to reveal to the Egyptians and the Hebrews that He, YHWH, is the true God (Ex 7:1-5, 14:4, 17-18, 31, 15:11). Others who heard the story would also come to this same conclusion (Ex 18:10-11)
- The second purpose was to make sure Pharaoh wanted to let them go completely rather than temporarily (Ex 11:1).
- The third purpose was to motivate the Egyptians to willingly supply the funds needed for the journey to the promised land and the ability to begin economically as a viable nation (Ex 11:2-3a, 12:35-36).

In delivering the Hebrews, Moses was as an earthly representative/ambassador for YHWH to Pharaoh and led the people as God directed; however, Moses was not the deliverer. (Ex 3:8, 10). In this situation, God's rescue from oppression also involved providing viable economic ability as a new people moving to a different location so they did not start as poor people (Ex 3:21-22), which may have been His way of restoring the previous wealth they had but which had been taken from them in making them slaves.

From the teaching in the NT it is clear Jesus knew His followers would suffer injustice (Mt 5:10-12) and be persecuted (Mt 10:16-25). While they might not receive

justice on earth, they will in heaven if they remain faithful (Mt 10:32-33). With this assurance, He called His disciples to suffering for the sake of the Kingdom (Mt 16:24). For this reason, the Apostles saw mistreatment as a reason for praising God because they were opportunities for expanded mission (Ac 4:29-30) and being “worthy to suffer dishonor” as His followers (Ac 5:41). They also taught that such oppression and suppression was an experience they needed to embrace as His followers in this life (Ac 14:22b).

Summary of Findings on Relevant Issues Studied in the Bible

The previous study reveals that the Bible is full of divinely inspired material related to disparity and injustice issues. While it was quite extensive in some ways, it only touched the surface of the related issues in some other ways. Many principles can be gleaned from what was covered. For this report, it is best to focus on the ones most related to current Cru/CCCI problems moving forward.

First, diversity, inequality, and injustice are not new in human history. They are a reality as aspects of life on earth. Sometimes they are a result of sinful human decisions and choices. Other times they are aspects of how God designed things or how society has developed. Some of them are a result of God’s sovereignty with Him working His good will in the midst of them. Moreover, both oppression and suppression of others does exist, including systemic ones that cause or sustain structural disparity in society, especially related to ethnical and economic factors.⁴⁸

God cares about injustice and He cares about the vulnerable and the wrongly oppressed. Divine justice might be delayed, especially where God is waiting for people to correct the situation. Aspects of unity and equality, along with justice, are expected of those in a covenantal relationship with Him (either under the Old Covenant with Israel or the New Covenant in Christ); and God expects leaders to provide justice, especially for those of whom others might take advantage.

On the other hand, absolute social, economic, or spiritual equality is not taught or envisioned in Scripture either for life on this earth or in the eternal state. Different roles in life can have different aspects of equality and inequality related to them. The concept of servitude has value when spiritually applied to a believer’s relationship to the Lord and ministry to others. It should not be seen negatively and rejected outrightly because of social injustices associated with it historically or currently.

Being created in the image of God provides value for all human life; union with Christ increases that value for believers. Therefore, all humans should be valued and treated with respect, especially other believers, without regard to areas of diversity that cause devaluing them by those not committed to Christ and His Kingdom. Believers are united in Christ, no matter how diverse their differences. Therefore, mutual identity in Christ must be more important for believers than any other identity whether ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural, etc.

The ethnical focus of the Great Commission requires that leaders deal effectively with issues of diversity that could affect unity. Furthermore, inequality and injustice that are counter to God’s character undermine the dignity of human beings and the credibility of the believing community. Leaders must address the concerns of both groups involved, not just one side—otherwise unity is threatened. They also must encourage and facilitate reconciliation among hurt individuals and groups where the hurt is not biblically justifiable. Maintaining and/or restoring authentic unity provides both internal and external credibility for the community of believers. However, wisdom in navigating these issues must come primarily from the study of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸ The term “systemic oppression” is not used here with the emotional cultural definition it has today that involves government policies, their execution in various institutions under its rules and regulations, and the intentional inequality it creates as individuals and groups are associated with separate identities such policies promote. As explained in the introduction to the study, these terms are closely related and overlap; but they are also different in distinct ways. In the Bible, systemic oppression involved activities causing disparity that were both oppressive, and systemically so. On the other hand, systemic suppression involved activities where organized attempts to hinder something advancing without the additional burden of actual oppression being involved.

Humility and love are the two highest virtues a believer can have, with love the greatest of these. Loving a neighbor as oneself is emphasized in the OT, Gospels, and Epistles. Both virtues were modeled in Jesus. The first allowed His incarnation, the second His work of redemption. All ethical virtues in Scripture find their source and foundation in the character of God. Believers must focus on Him and seek to become like Him in the power of the Holy Spirit as an aspect of their union with Christ and basis for unity in Him.

Where they have failed, whether intentional or not, and hurt has occurred, reconciliation should be pursued. The Scriptures show how this can and should be done. It should be initiated by the one(s) causing hurt (though it can also be initiated by the hurt individual or group) and should involve humility on the part of the offender that includes confession of wrongdoing, whether intentional or not; request for forgiveness; and restitution where needed. On the part of the offended individual, it should involve trusting God in the midst of hard circumstances that may have resulted from the offense; issuing forgiveness, whether requested or not; and a willingness to keep moving toward restored fellowship until it occurs. Separation is sometimes advisable when it is in the best interest of both individuals to avoid increased difficulties and maintain a good relationship with one another. If the relationship is threatened, temporary separation can occur but only long enough to allow hurt feelings to diminish so reconciliation can move forward.

In addition to these interpersonal pathways, believers should be prepared to suffer and not be surprised by it. This can come from the world where it is opposed to Christ and His Kingdom; but, unfortunately, it can also come from within the community of faith. No matter the source, believers must put their trust in God and the power of the Holy Spirit to provide all that is needed to joyfully persevere knowing their suffering is part of sharing what Jesus experienced and He will eventually reward them for it.

Spiritual enemies may be active in seeking to disrupt or destroy unity and relationships. Where they are involved, the struggle is primarily not with organizational leaders, or between those of the majority culture and those who feel some aspect of disparity. Where interpersonal and organizational disputes exist, those involved should consider how spiritual forces of evil may be causing problems actively and utilize the spiritual weapons listed in the Epistle to the Ephesians to help resolve them.

Finally, mission drift can occur as it did with Israel requiring prophetic rebuke; its eventual exile for continued disobedience; and, finally, a leadership change with the coming of the Messiah who enacted a new covenant under which a relationship with God would move forward. Current leaders need to be aware of the danger of mission drift, how drifting can occur quickly or over time, and whether it is occurring under their watch. Steps must be taken to address legitimate concerns, especially from a biblical perspective, and make adjustments to realign so drift does not result in either unnecessary division or God's disfavor and organizational discipline.

Not seen in Scripture on these issues are standards based on ethnicity or socio-economic status for church leaders and for other church positions, except for specialized ministry when it solves problems that would otherwise hinder advancing the Kingdom of God and fulfilling the Great Commission.

Implication for Cru/CCCI: Its Mission in Light of Racism, Diversity, and Equality Issues

THE GREAT COMMISSION

God has always been concerned about reaching the world. He established Israel in a place where it was in the center of other nations that surrounded it (Ezek 5:5). It was from this international vantage point that the surrounding nations would learn about the true God, YHWH (Ezek 37:28, 38:23, 39:7, 28; Mic 4:1-5; Zech 8:20-23) and from there, His name would be great upon the earth (Mal 1:11-12). As people

were drawn to Israel, they could be included in it if they committed themselves to the covenant He had given Israel, which required at the foundational level: (1) accepted YHWH and trusting in Him as the true God, which required leaving behind worship of any other god; (2) being circumcised as an outward sign of this inward commitment; and, (3) keeping the Sabbath, which caused them to trust Him since they were giving up a day's worth of potential monetary gain.

YHWH's commitment to having a relationship with all people in this way is at the heart of the book of Jonah. When He commanded Jonah to preach to those in Nineveh, Jonah took extreme measures to avoid obeying because he did not want to give the Ninevites the opportunity for repentance (Jon 1:2, 10b, 4:1-3) because he wanted them punished for what they had done to Israel. However, he finally obeyed YHWH. When the Ninevites listened to Jonah's message, they repented; and, because YHWH has compassion on people other than the Israelites, His judgment on Nineveh was delayed (Jonah 3; 4:6-11; Mt 12:41) until it's eventual destruction after they again turned to evil (Nah 1:1, 9). YHWH said this was His way of dealing with any nation (Jer 18:7-10). This story is often used to point to God's global mission even in the OT with the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom being for all people (Is 2:2-4, 11:10, 42:6, 49:6, 52:15, 55:5; Jer 3:17; Zech 2:11). However, it also speaks to the need to overcome prejudice in bringing the gospel to those whom the gospel minister might avoid or want judged.

The New Testament begins with a proclamation of Simeon about Jesus' being the Messiah who would have a dual role as in reaching both Israel and the Gentiles (Lk 2:32). Part of Him fulfilling Messianic prophecy was to proclaim justice to the Gentiles (Mt 12:18). This is likely why the Magi came to worship Him and Matthew included it in His narrative (Mt 2:1-2). When He was engaged in His ministry before His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus saw His primary mission in the first century as to the Jews (Mt 15:34). However, He was willing, at times, to help those who were normally avoided by the Jews; for example, when He healed the Canaanite's daughter because of the mother's faith (Mt 15:25-28) and the centurion's servant because the Jewish elders vowed for him as a Gentile who loves Israel (Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:4-5).

He had a greater vision for including the Gentiles (Is 42:1b, Mt 12:18b, 21) even though was beginning His work from Jerusalem (Lk 24:47) and even taught that the Gentiles would be included in the Kingdom whereas some Jews would not (Mt 8:11-12). A turning point occurred in His ministry when, during the week He was crucified, Greeks came to see Him and He finally announced He was ready to include officially reaching the Gentiles (Jn 12:20-24). Their arrival also motivated Him to declare that His crucifixion would result in drawing "all" to Himself (Jn 12:32). The English "people" is not in the Greek text but is inserted by interpreters. The Gk term πάντα translated "all" most likely does not mean in this context every human being since many did reject Him and have continued since then to do so. Rather, in this context where the Greeks came to Him, it more likely indicates all types of people would come to Him.

Jesus' primary strategies in reaching the types of people was recruiting the disciples to reach other people (Mk 1:17; Lk 10:1) and calling them to pray for still others to join in the spiritual harvest (Lk 10:2). One of the people that proved to be an answer to that prayer was a highly educated Pharisee named Saul who became the Apostle Paul based on God's call that He be His primary early church missionary to the Gentiles. In an address in Athens, he declared that God had dealt with nations in the past by letting them go their own way apart from having a relationship with Him, though He would still bless them (Ac 14:16-17) and that He did want them to seek Him and find Him (Ac 17:26-28). The change was that, instead of needing to commit under the Old Covenant, they could now come under the New Covenant in Christ.

The essence of this missionary thrust after Jesus ascended to heaven is His Great Commission given while on earth during the days between His resurrection and

ascension. It is stated slightly differently in the Gospels. Luke gives the abbreviated version “repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47). Matthew gives the full version as “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:18b-20).

THE SCOPE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Both versions include a purpose and scope. The purpose in Luke is proclaiming the good news; in Matthew it is making disciples. Both aspects are critical in fulfilling the Great Commission: the gospel must first be proclaimed for people to have any opportunity to become a disciple; however, proclaiming alone can leave people spiritually immature. Therefore, the goal is those believers being made into mature disciples who follow Him. One without the other is spiritually deficient.

While the purpose is complementary in both Gospels, the scope is the same: “all nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). Two aspects are “all” and “nations.” The first of these designates the extent of the mission: complete coverage—do not leave any out. The second aspect is often translated “nations” but that can cause a critical misunderstanding of the nature of the mission. As numerous commentators point out, broadly this means that the previous mission to the Jews now means the inclusion of the Gentiles so both Jews and non-Jews are globally covered. This is clearly seen in Paul’s comments on his calling (Rom 1:5) and what is meant in the early Church confession found in 1 Timothy 3:16.

However, the Gk. ἔθνη may mean more than is understood by this broad understanding. The Greek term transliterates into English as “ethne” and is the linguistic origin for the English word “ethnic.” In missiological literature during the last fifty years, the case has been made that, when Christ gave the global command, He really envisioned going to all the various ethnic groups globally, which has resulted in missions literature and organizations calling for outreach to “people groups.” A people group could be a particular ethnic identity (e.g., Ethiopians both in Ethiopia and those scattered globally outside that country) or some type of other distinct identity that is not necessarily based on ethnic identity (e.g., taxi drivers in New York City). In either case, reaching the particular people group probably requires some effective contextualization of the gospel for it to be correctly understood by those in that people group, hopefully resulting in a more positive response than would otherwise occur. Support for this interpretation also comes from references in revelation to the saved through Christ coming from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation (Rv 5:9, 7:9).

THE PURPOSE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus gave this command for a specific purpose, which has also been misunderstood in the Church in various ways during history. Some misunderstanding is related to the order of the words in languages that do not translate effectively with the grammatical nuances of the original Greek text, like English. In English as in the Greek text, the first word is “go”; however, the grammar is not the same. In Greek, the main verb is “making disciples” with “go” being the type of verb that relates to how making disciples is to occur. The words “baptize” and “teach” have the same grammatical form as “go”—all are commands as the main verb; but all are secondary to it. In addition, the grammatical form also reveals that it was to be an ongoing process, which is again hard to communicate in English grammar for go, baptize, and teach show the command nuance in these words but minimize the ongoing aspect, whereas going, baptizing, and teaching communicates better the ongoing aspect but does not reveal the command aspect as well. Both must be included to fulfill the command as Jesus intended. Thus, the Church and believers in it are commanded to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching, which are not optional aspects of that strategy.

Furthermore, each part of the strategy is significant as an aspect of making disciples. The “go” sub-command requires taking the initiative in reaching the world. This contrasts with what occurred in the OT under the Old Covenant, which included the Gentiles if they took the initiative to become Jews. Luke’s version of the Great Commission clarifies the focus of what they would proclaim in seeking to call people to become disciples. They were to proclaim “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” This was an offer that guilt had a cure, which could only occur when people wanted a change and sought the solution. The example of the jailer in Acts 16:25 provides an example of this in the life of what person in the context of Paul’s ministry who felt enough guilt over professional failure at his job that he was ready to commit suicide. However, when they sought to stop him, and because he became aware of their spiritual authority, he said, “What must I do to be saved?” Their response was the clear gospel message of “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,” which they also assumed would likewise lead to bringing that message to the rest of his household (Ac 16:31).

The “baptize” sub-command requires making sure those who hear the gospel and respond positively to it make a clear decision to identify with Jesus Christ and show minimal submission to Him by obeying this command. It also has an additional goal of making sure both that the new believer is willing to identify with the Christian community and that the community accepts this new person into it. In this sense, it serves as an initiation ceremony into the community although it is not required for salvation that is fully dependent on the person’s faith alone in Jesus (Jn 1:12, 3:16; Eph 2:8-9). Finally, the “teach” command is necessary for how can a person know how to obey Jesus, even in this minimal command, if they are not taught what to obey?

A second misunderstanding of the command occurs with the command to teach. One aspect of this misunderstanding probably relates to King James Version that incorrectly translates verse 19a as “teach” all nations” instead of “make disciples” of all nations.” Thus, the goal has sometimes incorrectly become advancing the intellectual understanding of Scripture rather than making disciples. Teaching for an intellectual understanding of the Bible is an essential aspect of making disciples; but it is not the goal.

A third misunderstanding has occurred in the reason for teaching related to making disciples. It is not so disciples know what Jesus taught (knowledge). That is necessary but insufficient in making disciples. The sub-command says, “teaching them to observe [keep] all I have commanded you.” Again, the goal of teaching is not intellectual knowledge of what Jesus said; but the application of it in the lives of individual disciples and the community of those following Jesus. Knowledge without appropriate application was the main reason Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders as hypocrites.

An understanding of the scope and purpose of the Great Commission shows it includes both quantitative reproduction and qualitative reproduction. In addition, related to reproduction, it shows four spiritual generations: Jesus, the disciples, those they were to teach, and more disciples from the third generation when they obeyed the Great Commission as part of what they are taught to obey.

Of the commands Jesus gave and expected to be applied, two were preeminent, which were explained earlier in the study—the greatest commandment to love God above all others (Mt 22:38) and the second like it of “Loving your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39). In Matthew’s narrative (Mt 19:18-19), Jesus first mentions this when putting this command from Lev 19:18b together with some of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:12-16) as if it was equal to them. By doing so, He sees these two commands as fulfilling everything taught in the Law and the Prophets. In addition, His new command of loving one another just as He loves them would be a witness to the world that they are His followers (Jn 13:34-35).

Furthermore, again as shown earlier, Jesus clarified that loving a neighbor occurs when showing them mercy (Lk 10:36-37). Mercy as can be what has historically

been called His “Golden rule”: So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7:14). Luke’s narrative includes more on this than Matthew’s.

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Lk 6:31-36)

In His teachings, Jesus says love for God, love for others, and love among disciples is not optional for those who seek to follow Jesus as His disciples and in making other disciples. In this passage, Jesus calls for His disciples to love others even when it involves both sacrifice and mercy.

THE GREAT COMMISSION AND SOCIAL ISSUES

As mentioned above, the Great Commission requires teaching disciples to keep Jesus’ commands. It will be helpful to look further at this in one of the Gospels.

EXAMPLES FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

In his gospel narrative, Matthew organizes Jesus’ commands in five discourses:

- The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7): “And when Jesus finished these sayings . . .” (7:28)
- The Mission Discourse (chapter 10): “When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples . . .” (11:1)
- The Parable Discourse (chapter 13): “And when Jesus had finished these parables . . .” (13:53)
- The Church Discourse (chapter 18): “Now when Jesus had finished these sayings . . .” (19:1)
- The Eschatological Discourse (chapters 24-25): “When Jesus had finished all these sayings . . .” (26:1)

Matthew clearly marked out five major blocks of Jesus’ teaching at the end of each discourse. So, Jesus’ Commission to make disciples by teaching them to observe his commandments at the very least should include those commandments that are found in these five discourses. He initially emphasizes this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (the wise builder who hears Jesus’ words and does them vs. hearing and not doing 7:24-27).

Matthew 15:21-39 provides a good look at how Jesus interacted with, and ministered to, those of a different ethnicity from His own. After interacting with the Pharisees and scribes regarding not adhering to another one of their man-made religious traditions, He then tells the crowd a parable (that He explained afterwards to His disciples). Then He goes to the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon where a Canaanite woman begs Him to deliver her daughter who was demon oppressed.

There is tremendous irony here in the narrative in the contrast between this scene and the one Jesus just left with the religious leaders. They had just complained about a tradition God never prescribed being broken that led to the parable in which He emphasized that real defilement comes from a sinful heart. Now Jesus is risking supposed defilement by allowing Himself to be confronted by a descendant of Israel’s ancient enemy.⁴⁹ Jesus does not respond to her initially, and the disciples beg Him to send her away. While they seem to be very annoyed with her, Jesus tries to draw her out by first not saying anything, then communicating

⁴⁹ Matthew is very intentional here to mention she’s a Canaanite, with his audience being primarily Jewish.

that He was sent first to the Jews (perhaps as a way to test whether she was a person of faith though it is impossible to know His reason from the text). She persists, which displays an enormous amount of wisdom and faith since she saw Jesus as her only option. He responds to her faith definitively and affirmatively by healing the daughter.

In verses 29-31, “great crowds” come to Him bringing people with all sorts of physical needs to be healed by Him. Again, the vast majority, if not all, these people in this region were Gentiles with some of the first hints of the gospel going to the Gentiles. This shows He is a God of compassion and that salvation is available to anyone and everyone who will come to Him in faith, regardless of ethnicity.

In verses 32-39 with the same growing crowd after being with Him for three days (the Greek has the tone of genuine commitment on their part), Jesus wants them to have food to eat—to care for their practical, physical needs. The disciples again were not so willing to jump in with a servant’s mentality; yet Jesus still engages them in His work with His compassion causing Him to repeat the miracle He performed in feeding the crowd of 5,000, this time for a crowd of 4,000 (not including women and children).

In each of these scenes, Jesus responded affirmatively and compassionately to true, genuine faith as He meets people where they are to provide for their spiritual, physical, and practical needs. As He does so, He does not rebuke or condemn the disciples for being so slow on the uptake in multiple ways. Nor does He alienate them or any other Jews in any way except for the Jewish religious leaders who needed to be held accountable for their poor spiritual leadership. Apart from them, He does not bring one group down to raise another up. In fact, He still involves the disciples in His work whenever there is an opportunity for them to directly engage in His ministry.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF MATTHEW 22

The way Jesus ministers to others in Matthew 22 provides a blueprint of what can be done in any ministry showing Christ-centered biblical love and compassion to others. Sadly, this way contrasts with what many within the evangelical community have experienced in matters of diversity. Romans 8:1 declares an end of divine condemnation for believers. However, the same kind of grace and kindness He has shown to believers, and which Jesus teaches His followers to show towards others, has been lacking in the believing community with one another.

Luke’s version of the Great Commission focused on the need for non-believers to repent for the forgiveness of their sins to be saved. Repentance of sin should not stop once someone chooses to trust in Jesus. Disciples are to learn what He taught and obey it, which means repenting of any area where they are failing to apply His teachings in their life individually and corporately. John the Baptist’s mission was to help pave the way for the Messiah so “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Lk 3:6). However, his preaching also involved calling people to repentance in areas of inequality and injustice consistent with the social commands in the OT Law (Lk 3:10-14). Building on John’s ministry, Jesus preached repentance as well (Mt 9:13b; Lk 5:32), which He saw as an aspect of humility that led to God’s mercy and justification of sinners (Lk 18:9-14). Under His Messianic leadership, repentance would involve bringing justice to a situation (Mt 12:18b, 20b; cf. Is 42:1b, 3b-4) that could involve restitution to others they had hurt by individuals now changed by their relationship with Jesus (Lk 19:8-10). Furthermore, Jesus’ compassion for “harassed and helpless” people motivated His call to prayer for ministry laborers (Mt 9:36-38). His disciples should share this same motivation as they represent Him to the world. In addition, as much as possible, Christ-followers are called to be peacemakers, not to cause strife and division (Mt 5:9; Rom 12:18).

This will involve Jesus’ disciples understanding the difference between biblical justice and social justice. Biblical justice is “making sure all people are treated fairly, impartially, accurately, consistently, and equitably all of the time without

respect to how powerful, wealthy, or beautiful they may be.”⁵⁰ In the current national culture, however, “social justice” has a different meaning that emphasizes the redistribution of wealth, advantages, and opportunities. Here is a sampling of the definitions of “social justice” from common reference tools:

- “fair treatment of all people in a society, including respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among members of a community”⁵¹
- “a state or doctrine of egalitarianism”⁵²
- “Social justice is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society as measured by the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges.”⁵³

These definitions show the secular emphasis being on groups of advantaged and disadvantaged people rather than specific individuals. It “assumes inequality equals injustice”; so it pushes for equality, which means various rules and regulation must meet an equal diversity criteria or favor people deemed oppressed under perhaps unbiblical equality criteria (e.g., LGBTQ+ demands on religious organizations that have a biblical reasons for not including them in certain roles or functions where those reason apply). Therefore, care needs to be taken to avoid focusing on perspectives from a secular worldview (Col 2:8). However, this does not mean reacting to it so much that biblical justice “for the poor, needy, and vulnerable” is thrown out. Biblical justice, then, is not social justice; however, if biblical justice occurs, it will impact society and may lead to increased social justice.⁵⁴

THE BIBLE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND CT/CRT

General “searches” on the internet using “The Bible and CRT” or “The Bible and Social Justice” produced mainly commentary in the form of blogs and articles about CRT’s infiltration into the Church. No clearly presented biblical or theological arguments for their possible compatibility could be found easily. Scriptural support of CRT and Social Justice seemed to be mainly piecemeal. For example, values, characteristics, and ideas from the concept of CRT or Social Justice were taken and Scripture found to support the idea. This is not necessarily a poor way of doing such thinking (many Christians work this way); however, when this method is done, it invites a level of humility from the individual to adjust their ideas and conclusions as needed if a legitimate critique is leveled. In addition, it runs the danger of being proof-text support being used in a way that violates biblical context from which it is being cited.

For example, one of the articles found on the Beliefnet site listed verses that did not have any apparent reference to justice or injustice. The verses were encouraging and familiar verses for the Christian life from Proverbs 3 and 6, and Colossians 3; however, they were not necessarily the best for supporting ideas of CRT or social justice. There seemed to be no distinction from the sites searched between what is biblically descriptive (stating only what happened) and prescriptive (issu-

⁵⁰ Jeff Daley, “Kingdom Justice,” Kingdom Down sermon series, part 3; October 18, 2020, <https://sgc.org/latest-sermon/#latest?sapurl=Lys3azN2L2xiL21pLys2cmNjMnljP2JyYW5kaW5nPXRYdWUmZW1iZWQ9dHJ1ZQ==>, accessed 18 October 2020.

⁵¹ “Social justice,” Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/social-justice>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁵² “Social justice,” Merriam-Webster online dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20justice>, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁵³ “Social justice,” Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice, accessed 4 November 2020.

⁵⁴ Jeff Daley, “Kingdom Justice,” Kingdom Down sermon series, part 3, October 18, 2020; <https://sgc.org/latest-sermon/#latest?sapurl=Lys3azN2L2xiL21pLys2cmNjMnljP2JyYW5kaW5nPXRYdWUmZW1iZWQ9dHJ1ZQ==>, accessed 18 October 2020. Jayme Fraser says the secular phrase “social justice” originates from Catholic “social teachings” where it calls believers “to action on matters of human dignity and common good in society, stretching from conception to natural death” (Jayme Fraser, “Trump delivered his SCOTUS promise, but his pandemic response cost him support among Christians,” USA Today, Oct 19, 2020, accessed 19 October 2020, Microsoft New app). Whether the Roman Catholic church did indeed initiate the term, it did support the concept nearly a century ago and has incorporated it into its catechism (“Catechism of the Catholic Church,” Part 3: Life in Christ, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c2a3.htm, accessed 4 November 2020).

ing a command or exhortation to think or live differently). In fact, the descriptive was utilized to be prescriptive, which is a critical hermeneutical error in applying ripture in any context.⁵⁵

The last paragraph of the Beliefnet article says, “God is against oppression of any form. Everyone should be offered equal opportunities for success and growth within a society. Christian can easily fall prey to serving themselves for personal gain, rather than serving the Lord. We must discourage ourselves from only looking out for our well-being, and instead encourage our governments to fight for those who need help.”⁵⁶

A few other articles accessed through a search yielded these Scripture references: Dt 10:18; 24:17; 27:19; Am 5:22-24; Mt 11:28, 22:39, 25:30; Lk 4:18-19; John 4; Jas 1:27; Rev 7:9.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ These are portions of three articles accessed to see what Scripture is used:

Under the article subheading “What is God’s Stance on Social Justice”:

- “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Is 1:17).
- “The Lord hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him: arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil, a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers” (Pr 6:16-19).
- “Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Dt 16:20).
- “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Pr 31:8).
- “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor” (Lev 19:15).
- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Pr 3:5-6).
- “He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He” (Dt 32:4).
- “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people” (Col 3:23).
- “The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His unfailing love” (Ps 33:5).
- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

Under the subheading “Does God see Us all as equals?”:

- “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him” (Rom 10:12).
- “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7:12).
- “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (Jn 13:16).
- “A just balance and scales belong to the Lord; all the weights of the bag are His concern” (Pr 16:11).
- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (Jn 13:34).
- “You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God” (Lev 24:22).
- “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27).

Under the subheading “What does God say about helping the vulnerable?”:

- “A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge” (Pr 29:7).
- “Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses” (Pr 28:27).
- “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing” (Dt 10:18).
- “Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors Him” (Pr 14:31).
- “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;” (Is 61:1).
- “Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Pr 31:9).

⁵⁶ Megan Bailey, “What does the Bible Say about Social Justice?”, <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/christianity/what-does-the-bible-say-about-social-justice.aspx>, accessed 17 October 2020.

⁵⁷ Antipas Harris, “Yes the Bible is a call to Social Justice”, <https://www.relevantmagazine.com/justice/yes-the-bible-is-a-call-to-social-justice/>, accessed 1 October 20; no author, “What the Bible says about Social Justice”, <https://www.gotquestions.org/social-justice.html> accessed 1 October 2020.

A full history of Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be taken up elsewhere (the cited links are a good place to start). What follows is a general overview of some of CT's and CRT's general principles and ideas and where Christians can agree or disagree.

Christians cannot agree with the presupposition of materialism that is a part of Critical Theory (CT) and therefore also Critical Race Theory (CRT). Christians believe there is both an "inside" and "outside" the box—immaterialism and materialism—that composes reality. The world was created by a transcendent God (outside the box/immaterialism) by the exercising of his eternal voice (Genesis 1). Christians also believe this same God entered reality (inside the box/materialism) in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (John 1). As a result of Jesus's perfect life, atoning death, and powerful resurrection, He reunited the two disparate realities back into their original state.

Christians can agree with CT/CRT in the presupposition that there is the reality of humanity being enslaved and in need of emancipation. It is in the Fall in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve picked the "Forbidden Fruit" that enslavement ensued and in the humble life of Jesus the Christ that "emancipation" happened (John 19:30). However, the difference here is that, for CT/CRT, the emancipation of humanity is not something addressed by anything beyond its own materialist belief. This is probably why CT/CRT leans so heavily toward political action and Marxist theory because the attainment of power would be the only way to free human beings, not the death and resurrection of a first century Jew.

The last presupposition discovered is CT/CRT's belief that its claims are seeing a broader view of history and social culture—a "grand narrative." This is no different than the Judeo-Christian view, nor any other worldview that similarly claims to understand the meaning of human life and history. The difference between the CT/CRT view and Christianity is that CT/CRT discards traditional views on how to view the world and claims a new and better (perhaps best) way of viewing human history. By contrast, Christianity gets its understanding of history in the Scriptures that it believes are the result of divine special revelation that occurred through human writers influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Addressing three particular assertions used by CT/CRT

Emancipation from Slavery: Christians can get behind this. However, they need to ask which "slavery"? Slavery to sin? Slavery in this existence? The current effects of American chattel slavery? The sex slave trade that is rampant and growing in this world? Which is more important? Does one come before the other? In engaging the idea of being freed from slavery clarity needs to be grasped on exactly what slavery is being addressed and perhaps in what order.

Acts of liberating influence: Again, Christians can get behind this idea. But they must ask, what liberating acts? As Christians the greatest liberating act was the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Romans 6, Galatians 5:1). Someone who is immersed in CT/CRT would not see any such act as anything more than inside this world or existence.

"To create a world which satisfies the needs and powers' of human beings": In the context of a materialist worldview this assertion makes sense. If there is nothing "outside the box" then it is reasonable to exercise power to attain personal values. If human beings are the ultimate being in this world, then everything centers on humanity. Exodus 20:3 establishes God as the ultimate being. Therefore, Christians believe that humanity is not the ultimate being in existence, though they are "the ultimate being's" greatest creation on the earth. Genesis 1 and 2 establish humanity as God's greatest creation and humanity is given responsibility for His creation (Gen 2:15).

Another point of contrast with CT/CRT's assertion here is the orthodox Christian belief that God's ultimate act of power was not brute force but Jesus' submissive sacrifice "unto death" (Mt 26:53; Philippians 2); and not political action but for spiritual transformation (Mt 22:21).

Another phrase used in the description of CT was for goals that are “practical in a distinctly moral sense.” This sounds compatible with Christianity where the Apostle talks about the need for belief and action to be united because ultimately “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:14-17). However, if CT and its resulting schools of thought are materialist, whose “moral sense” do people follow? Who gets to decide what morality is and where it should lead?⁵⁸

THE GREAT COMMISSION, SOCIAL ISSUES, AND MISSION STRATEGY

The survey of biblical truth in the earlier part of this study showed that God is concerned about social issues related to diversity, inequality, and justice. Therefore, they should be addressed by believers individually and corporately. However, as shown above in this part, the focus of the gospel is to be first reconciled with God. Afterwards, reconciliation between people. Dealing with social issues is a significant part of biblical teaching in both testaments; but, even so, it is primarily an internal issue within the community of faith. The Church must be relevant externally but not in a way that puts promoting other forms of reconciliation at equal to, or greater importance than, promoting their reconciliation with God.

Historically, the Church has had movements where mission drift from these priorities has occurred. In the great mission movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionaries brought the good news of reconciliation with God to people throughout Africa, Asia, and South America. Because they came with hearts of compassion, they often provided aspects of ministry today seen addressing social concerns. Unfortunately, drift from the primary focus on reconciling people with God was replaced with focus on addressing their legitimate physical and social concerns, which led to the establishing and building of hospitals, orphanages, and schools. Part of this drift occurred from the influence of liberal theology, which de-emphasized evangelism and emphasized these instead, that some missionaries brought with them to the mission field.

The influence of both atheism and liberal theology in America in the early twentieth century led to a reaction by conservative Christians who developed theological fundamentalism, which retreated from addressing social concerns as a way to protect the true gospel of reconciliation with God that they saw minimized in liberal Christianity. Modern evangelicalism was formed in the mid-1940s to avoid an either-or theology that separated the two aspects of truth in the teachings of Jesus—proclamation of the gospel and compassion toward people that met their other needs. However, while including them both, it put the social issue aspect secondary to the primary goal of being ambassadors to reconcile people with God first.

Unfortunately, evangelicalism has not kept its envisioned mission and, instead, emphasized more the proclamation without always including an appropriate emphasis on the compassion aspects of Jesus’ teaching. As a result, some ministries have become more focused on the one and other ministries on the other. Recent younger generations have grown into adulthood within the current cultural context and from homes that may not have modeled the proclamation of the gospel well; or, they may have had parents who taught what the Bible teaches but did not model it well in their own lives. As a result, while still highly spiritual, they reject organized religion and evangelicalism’s emphasis on evangelism. Instead, they hold more to its social teachings, especially to love other people. For them, evangelicalism is irrelevant; but social action is.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to bring reconciliation and unity to the diversity of peoples on the Earth; and unity under Him is the most effective way for other issues to be addressed. Within this context, evangelical churches and ministries are in danger of drifting from their proclamation of reconciliation to God toward social action that helps reconcile people with one another. Again, **the**

⁵⁸ James Bohman, March 8 2005, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>, accessed 2 October 2020; Richard Wolin, May 12 2005, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Horkheimer>, accessed 2 October 2020.

latter is not bad; but needs to be secondary. To avoid mission drift, reconciling people with God needs to remain primary; to avoid being irrelevant, some aspect of Jesus' heart of compassion in other areas also needs significant inclusion in mission strategy with appropriate safeguards that keep it from becoming primary or equal with it. Simply put, the mission must be to expose the lost to the gospel, establish them in the faith, equip them to do this with others, and expand the Church by making disciples throughout the world. Meeting social needs can have a role in this but it should not be an additional emphasis that results in expose, establish, equip, expand, justice.

Moving Forward Together

THE CHALLENGE

Cru is faced with a current challenge that has grown and changed over the years yet remains. It has historically been an organization with a disparity between the proportions of ethnic cultures represented by our staff and the ethnic cultures in the communities it serves. Majority staff primarily come from the national white culture that has been accepted as normative. This includes a variety of manifestations, some of which are style, language, communication, and perspective on ministry. Because this majority culture is so strongly accepted as normal, many minority staff have felt alienated. In addition, the established MPD structure and process is based on a fundraising model that has been a hindrance in many minority communities because of things like community loyalty and perceptions about the organization, which create an added MPD burden for many minority staff. As a result, the majority culture--and all of the relational, leadership, and community dynamics promoted within it--has created an atmosphere where minority staff are less comfortable, feel less valued as people and as missionaries, and believe they are under-represented by organizational leadership in a way that hinders their experience as staff members.

THE VISION

- Given this current challenge, this part of the study presents an opportunity to help the organization move forward:
- Have a well-defined starting point for addressing issues of diversity, especially minority ones within it;
- Be a place where all staff can bring concerns and questions regarding issues of diversity without fear of condemnation, shame, or guilt; and,
- Be a place where each staff member and group is equipped with information to take individual and corporate responsibility for their relation to diversity issues, as well as address the concerns and questions that exist regarding issues of diversity in the pursuit of the mission God has entrusted to the organization.

To address this challenge and seek healing together, this part will outline steps for initiating genuine dialogue around love and understanding without shame, criticism, defensiveness, or blame. The desire is for resources and training that are rooted in the gospel and Scripture; shepherding that leads to reliance on Christ as an organization; and, a staff body that is unified in addressing their mutual challenges with clarity, grace, truth, and renewed hope in Christ.

POSITIVE MOVEMENT

Darryl and Gwen Smith, along with the Oneness and Diversity Team, have done an excellent job initiating the organization's engagement with issues of diversity within the organization. Their research, strategy formation, and commitment to people, have made a significant contribution to the organization's awareness on these issues. Core Training for new staff, Cru15, Cru17, Cru19, SLI, and "Workplace" are several areas where staff can now engage in important racial conversations . It is encouraging to see that more minority staff have been elevated to leader-

ship positions and there is more awareness their unique contribution makes to the organization's mission.

Because of these steps, staff are more aware than ever before about the diversity issues experienced within the organization. There have been more opportunities presented for minorities to lead and contribute from their unique giftings and perspectives. Research has helped reveal more definitively what has been felt across the organization about the need for transparency from leaders. Attention has been drawn to the realities of hardships of being experienced by minorities as staff members. Training and communication platforms have been created to connect and learn about these topics. SLI has sought tangible solutions and proposed plans for addressing some of these issues. All of this reveals a genuine attempt within the organization to see how the gospel impacts inequality and justice, including a wrestling with the weight put on these issues.

HOW THE CURRENT METHODOLOGY FALLS SHORT

Despite these steps that have been taken and the positive results experienced, there are significant and foundational shortfalls with the current methodology. There has been an absence of defining the problem faced by the organization regarding issues of diversity. The organization's founder, Bill Bright, said, "The world is in a desperate plight and we must do something about the problems that face mankind now; but first, let us define the issues and then proceed to some logical conclusions and possible solutions."⁵⁹ For example, there are different definitions of racism. If different staff members are starting from different points of definitions, then there is an immediate division, producing the potential for much misunderstanding and conflict. Over the past few years Cru trainings have defined racism, but this has not been clearly communicated to senior staff across every ministry and those definitions given are controversial.

Additionally, a significant number of staff members are concerned that the action steps taken on diversity issues through Lenses, Our Cultural Journey, Core Training, and at staff conferences have been largely rooted in secular theories and worldviews whether this is unintentional or otherwise. Also, training, teaching, and communication from up front as well as through "Workplace" have taken on an accusatory posture rather than inviting an open dialogue that seeks genuine understanding. Furthermore, training and teaching contain examples of prejudice in history; but they lack attention given to positive examples in history that staff members can follow and stop short of speaking directly to the issues staff within the organization are facing. This has led to a gap in understanding for majority staff to more fully grasp the significant hardships experienced by many minority staff. Rather than directing staff members to hope in Christ and dependence on the Holy Spirit to bring healing and change, the current methodology and shepherding is more reliant on human ability, underestimates human sinful tendencies, and is leading to a place of either guilt or power.

Four approaches to diversity issues, especially related to racism, have been described: (1) The colorblindness model is a mindset that proposes race issues will go away if people stop obsessing over racial identity; (2) The Anglo-conformity model proposes if racial groups can obtain relative economic equality, then conflict between them will lessen or even disappear; (3) The multiculturalism model proposes distinct racial and ethnic groups must preserve their own identities and the larger society is constructed to insure that racial and ethnic groups maintain economic and legal equality; and, the (4) The white responsibility model says the majority culture creates the problems of race and ethnicity. The author, a minority individual himself, says these models fall short because they only put blame in a single category, underestimate human sinfulness, and assume the possibility of

⁵⁹ Bill Bright, *Revolution Now!* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1971), 17.

human perfectibility this side of heaven.⁶⁰ They are culture up solutions to the problems rather than Kingdom down ones.⁶¹

WAYS TO IMPROVE

The previous parts of this study have sought to show that there are Kingdom principles in Scripture for how diverse human relationships are to work and how issues related to diversity, inequality, and justice should be addressed by Christ's disciples, ways that may be very different from the how those not committed to following Him would handle them. As Paul said to the Corinthians even after addressing something from a truly biblical perspective, "And I will show you a more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31b). Here he points out that within Kingdom principles, some are even better than others.

PROPOSED STEPS TOWARD HEALING AND REFOCUS

Therefore, built on the previous parts of this study, the following are additional aspects for consideration in moving the organization and the body of Christ forward on the issues related to the full report. They seek to define and list appropriate steps seen necessary for organizational unity in the midst of differences and disagreements while addressing the issues involved.

Full Transparency

It is widely known and accepted, both within leadership and outside it, that transparency from organizational leaders is a great need for all staff members. They want to understand the work being done, decisions being made, why those decisions are made so they see leadership held accountable for commitments. In light of this need, organizational leaders, starting with the President, should be fully transparent about the hardships experienced by minority brothers and sisters. He and the other leaders also need to be transparent about using any secular methodology associated with the attached documentation, why they have willingly adopted them, and how they would like to move forward in light of these realities. If these documents have made him and them aware of the dangers involved in adopting such methods, that should be stated, and appropriate adjustments made to rid the organization of any inappropriate secular aspects in moving forward. This does not mean total rejection of anything secular since some aspects may still be consistent with the teaching of Scripture. Adoption and adaptation should be biblically informed.

Transparency has been a significant topic within the organization and continues to be an area for growth. The intentional efforts made to be more transparent by the former U.S. Director and other leaders is recognized and appreciated. However, there needs to be more improvement in this area including a clearly communicated method for available positions within the organization that takes care not to simply invite those who are most well-known by leaders; but, rather, to communicate about how the "best person for the job" was sought. The method of leaders being chosen based on "who-knows-who" is one way the culture within the organization has resulted in disparities and hurt with those most affected often being minority staff.⁶²

Transparency is also needed in the specific areas where minority staff are experiencing the most hardships. Rather than emphasizing past injustices in history, providing better insights on ways minority staff currently experience specific disparity within the organization would help majority staff understand and bring clarity to the needs within the organization. The key here is ending the focus on the external national past and, instead, focusing on the internal present. Even if

⁶⁰ George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, (Downer Groves, IL. IVP Books, 2006), 82-83. See this resource for a more thorough analysis of these models.

⁶¹ Jeff Daley, "Just Jesus: A Study in Colossians," July 12-September 27, 2020, <https://sgc.org/sermon-series-archival/?sapurl=Lys3azN2L2xiL21zLyt5cHRjNWN3P2JyYW5kaW5nPXRYdWUmZW1iZWQ9dHJ1ZQ==>, accessed 4 November, 2020.

⁶² Perhaps the organization should have a place on its internal web where open positions are listed with the required qualifications. This would let any staff member apply for the position and be vetted accordingly.

the national context does not move forward, this organization must be based on the spiritual principles to which it is committed.

Mutual Responsibility

Solving diversity issues with the organization also requires each staff member to take personal responsibility in the problem. Whether in the minority or the majority, all are needed to move the organization forward. This requires dealing with interpersonal and group identity issues. Examples of how all staff could take steps toward personal responsibility may involve asking the questions:

- Am I seeking to be rooted first in Christ and hoping in Him for restoration for all people within the organization and my ministry team?
- Is fear of bringing up disparity concerns keeping me from engaging with others on diversity issues?⁶³
- Do I intentionally seek out friendships with people who are different from me and outside my relational comfort zone, especially in areas of diversity (this applies to the majority related to the minority, and the minority related to the majority)?
- For the majority:
 - › Am I believing the best of my minority staff brothers and sisters, even when they raise issues of diversity?
 - › Are there ways I try to ignore diversity issues?
 - › Have I sought to understand the hardships experienced by my minority brothers and sisters on staff? Is there genuine grief for both the history of hardships for them and for the current hardships they experience? How would I want to be understood if our situations within society and the organization were reversed?
 - › Do I understand that structural disparities exist within the organization and how they affect other staff?
 - › Do I harbor bitterness or resentment toward minority staff or leaders for how they have proposed to bring diversity issues to the forefront within the organization?
- For the minority:
 - › Am I believing the best of my majority staff brothers and sisters even when they are apparently insensitive to issues of diversity?
 - › Do I quickly blame opposing diversity perspectives for people not responding to me the way I want or not getting what I want? Have I examined other possible causes of conflict? Is it simply a misunderstanding or am I being triggered by past experience?
 - › Do I harbor bitterness or resentment toward majority staff or leaders for not being more sensitive and supportive of diversity issues being brought to the forefront within the organization?
 - › Have I forgiven the organization and my brothers and sisters within it for the prejudice I have experienced? Are there conversations I need to have?

Grace and Truth Environment for Dialogue

Along with personal responsibility, having dialogue in an environment of grace and truth is necessary for healing, restoration, and moving forward. The environment must provide an opportunity for people to share without fear of being labeled or

⁶³ The source of fear within the organization can include: (1) Being labeled a “racist” when that is not how the person sees themselves or how they want to be; (2) Not wanting to be ridiculed for what is said or how it is said, which may be due to ignorance or lack of finesse in choosing words carefully; (3) Not being taken seriously because others do not see something another person does that may be valid upon further consideration; (4) Being characterized as a troublemaker when the motives were to help, not hurt; (5) Knowing what would be said will not agree with others in that diversity group; and, (6) Falling out of grace by one or more leaders, which might hinder advancement within the organization.

judged but where everyone agrees on certain criteria for conducting the group to prevent hostility and judgement. The idea is not to “win over” another but to seek genuine understanding.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

This organization as a Christian mission must be biblically grounded, relevant in reaching a diverse world, and representative of those reached and included in the Church. This means its view on diversity issues must also be both biblically grounded, relevant, and result in adequate inclusion of those reached. The work Keith Johnson and the Smiths have put in developing training and teaching on diversity issues is valuable and appreciated. The Oneness and Diversity Team and the Theological Development Team involved in research related to this report have sought to provide insights into the relevant issues involved and provide additional theological grounding moving forward. Its research has shown that a secular victim-oppressor worldview and its related methodologies—methodologies that are contrary to the gospel—are now included and promoted in much of the organizations training and teaching on diversity, whether inclusion is intentional or not. Moving forward, it would be helpful to have a collaborative endeavor by both groups above to make sure diversity issues are biblically grounded with concerns on both sides addressed.⁶⁴ This should include a biblical framework that:

- Provides clear biblical definitions for all staff regarding the framework promoted within the organization (as outlined in the attached materials);
- Establishes methods for shepherding all staff through the process of addressing diversity issues now and in the future; and,
- Provides easily accessible resources for all our staff to be able to search for understanding and answers to these issues as grounded in Scripture.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION & CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION

Hard work and time has been given for many years to address prejudice, disparity, and diversity issues by people within the organization. As a result, staff have been asked to shift their perspectives and the organization has been asked to shift structures and modes of leadership. New training and teaching of individuals and teams have been asked to evaluate a lot already; and now, they are being asked to evaluate again and incorporate any necessary changes. The implications of this study are not taken lightly.

Included in intentional communication through the change process, transparency and regard for all staff are essential. Any ways the organization can invite staff members into the process and rebuild any trust that has been lost is needed in the healing process. They are critical contributing factors in all staff members accepting necessary changes. Communication throughout this process is essential and requires devoted individuals who are familiar with taking organizations through change. Such caring individuals should be established to field questions and feedback.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

One more excellent way is finding common ground on which to move forward. As was shown earlier in this study, one area for common ground is affirming that all humans are created by God and created in His image no matter the type of diversity identity they have. All humans are created with a distinct difference from the animals or angels God created.

Another area for common ground is keeping in mind that all humans are fallen and live in a fallen world where problems like prejudice, unnecessary inequality, and injustice do exist. Believers can choose to ignore them, tolerate them, fight against them, or address them in a healthy way. The survey of relevant issues in the Bible presented earlier in this study should convince disciples that these

⁶⁴ Perhaps some of the individuals representing the concerned group associated with the full report (of which this study is but one part) should be included on the Smiths' team so that voice is regularly represented.

problems do exist, should be addressed, and have solutions that should be applied by them. Once one of these problems is identified, the question should not be about whether to address it. Rather, it should be about the correct solutions and how to implement them.

The Importance of Being Spirit-filled

For disciples, a foundational solution while working through the issue should be emphasizing that those involved make more effort to be aware of whether they are filled with and walking in the Spirit. If they are, the following things should be apparent during interaction.

CORRECT ATTITUDES

Humility should be a foundation on which other characteristics are built. (Mt 11:29; 1 Pet 5:5b). This will show those of differing opinions a willingness to let others, who do not see things the same way, express what they see because it may reveal potential blind spots. It also means realizing personal experiences may be neither right nor wrong but simply different perspectives. Two individuals can look at the same diamond through different facets of the same diamond. One sees red reflections, the other sees blue. Neither is wrong because both colors are reflecting through it from a different angle.

A Spirit-filled person should also keep anger in check (Jas 1:19-20). They do not need to avoid anger; but they do need to make sure it is godly and apologize quickly when it has resulted in offending others because it resulted in sin (Eph 4:26; Mt 5:21-26). People may be passionate on both sides of a controversy; but they need to make sure that they do not let their passion result in carnality. Rather, they should be people who are still seen as those who love others amid their strong feelings on an issue. 1 Corinthians 13 provides a checklist to help people determine whether they are Spirit-filled in the midst of relating to those who disagree with them.

Those who are Spirit-filled will also correct others in gentleness on issues related more to sanctification than justification. The book of Galatians shows this. Paul is quite strong in his wording (Gal 6:6-9) and even borders on being inappropriate (Gal 5:12) in rebuking those trying to lead the believers there back under the Law. The issue is justification. However, in verse 13, he switches to sanctification, which leads him to his comments on walking in the Spirit and gentleness in correcting those who have sinned during a time of carnality (Gal 6:1).

One contributor to this study was attending IBS during his first year on staff and was coming into a classroom as the earlier class was exiting when one of the people leaving said in passing, "Damn Arminians!" That class had apparently been on soteriology and the person leaving apparently disagreed with the perspective of the other group on the Calvinist-Arminian issue. Both groups are committed to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone that are key commitments of the Reformation. People on both sides will be in heaven but this person did not discern that well and clearly needed to take a spiritual breath. It's possible he was not on staff and attended the class as a guest. More likely, however, he was a staff member who let his passion on the topic move into sin.

Years later, when this same contributor was attending seminary, the Calvinist-Arminian controversy was a matter of talk on campus. To help deal with it a debate occurred between two faculty members—one a committed Calvinist, the other a committed Arminian. Each faculty member, in turn, presented their reasons for and against the other position. It was clear that they would not resolve the historical controversy themselves and the evidence on both sides was compelling. It was a theological stalemate. At the end, they embraced one another to express their love for one another as brothers in Christ. Then they turned and said, "We hope you will learn to treat one another in the same way."

Unfortunately, many on staff have encountered other staff members behaving at times more like the person above coming out of the classroom than like the two faculty members. Staff members are not perfect and will have moments when

they need to re-appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit. However, there are too many staff members who do not seem to apply spiritual breathing as rapidly or as often as they should in an organization that promotes it as strongly as it does, especially when they have strong convictions or opinions on certain issues (Jas 4:1).

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Spirit-filled people will honor others appropriately and give appropriate submission to recognized authority (1 Pet 2:17), which will show in the way they communicate. This will involve patiently seeking to clarify what the other person or group wants. Careful, tactful wording should be used that seeks to avoid creating a problem that does not need to occur, or to help de-escalate one that already exists (Jas 4:1). It should involve being quick to listen and slow to speak (Jas 1:19) to learn the perspective of those who have had a different experience or see things from a different perspective.

A Spirit-filled person will seek to avoid hurt by choosing words that heal instead of those that hurt. For example, in the current organizational issue this study addresses, the term “structural disparity” is better than “systemic racism” because the word “racism” is emotionally charged. Making the slight, but significant, change in wording points to the problem even where intended or unintended racism does exist. It avoids emotionally charged words because those words are usually hurtful. Hurtful words are a sin—sin that is personal and that alienates people from one another. When national, cultural, ethnic, or minority or majority stereotyping occurs, it causes personal hurt that can lead to resentment toward others. On the other hand, healing words help unite even when differences exist. They build up trust in one another and appreciation for one another because they build up instead of tearing down (1 Cor 8:1; Eph 4:29).

Getting feedback and input, whether from individuals or groups in the minority or majority is an opportunity to trust the Lord in humbly seeking a clear understanding of what is shared. This requires assuming the best intentions of that person or group in spite of how it may have come across due to the communication filters involved (e.g., personality, cultural perspectives, verbal and non-verbal differences, etc.) that could lead to a misunderstanding. It also requires both sides looking for ways to communicate better (which is a process that takes both practice and time) so unintentional hurt and misunderstandings are avoided.

Related to tensions over definitions, the following are a few suggested action points:

- *Find and clearly define the important terms and words used in these interactions.* For example, what is meant by “racism” and even the phrase “systemic racism”? In Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory there has been consistent mention of new definitions being used for words and phrases; these are different from the way the same words have been defined decades ago. As has been mentioned in this section before, perhaps if some of this way was made clearer and transparent it would help in going forward with understanding.
- *Revisit Revelation-Hermeneutics-Epistemology:* A dialogue about definitions and beliefs about how Scripture is interpreted and applied might be a point of connection and dialogue between both groups. What does each believe to be unique about the Bible as God’s revelation? How should people interpret it? What difference does correct interpretation make on understanding it and the world? Having this conversation could help turn staff members toward each other as brothers and sisters more united on how they know God’s Word to be true and how they discern correct and incorrect conclusions and assertions related to it.

A personal example shows why there is tension that the suggestions above are stated to address. When one of the contributors lived in NYC, he would often get together with two friends for coffee. For hours they discussed the issues of the day particularly related to the arts, the current culture, and the apparent need for

change. Out of these times a weekly discussion group emerged from the communal needs of the impact of 9/11.

One of the members observed that the three of them seemed to reflect the three offices of authority described in the Old Testament, that of the Prophet, Priest, and King. The Prophet was the mouth of God and the one who would step forward to “throw the flag” or cry “foul” when God’s people turned away. The Priest was the servant of God and the one who offered solace, sacrifice, and the visual act of “salvation” and who, through their work, offered reconciliation to God. The King was God’s “rod” or authoritative voice, the one who called for action or led the way, the one who helped discern what things should or should not be done in their pilgrimage toward God.

Of course, all three of these offices are ultimately reflected in the person of Jesus Christ. He alone perfectly fulfills all these roles and exercises them to this day. Perhaps the voice staff members have been hearing the last few years most evidently through the Cru conferences has been mostly the prophetic one where much has been said about what is wrong and needs addressed. This is needed; but it can become difficult to hear if that is the only office speaking. Especially if the hearers agree, that consistent voice will result in hearers feeling depressed and, perhaps, demotivated. On the other hand, if you staff members only hear a priestly voice, they may begin to feel too prideful or secure in life; and, if they only hear a kingly voice they may begin to feel confined and suspicious of authority. All three voices can be twisted if they are only held aloft by themselves. All three voices need to be heard, most especially from the very One who occupies them perfectly. Perhaps what would assist the organization in moving forward together is not just hearing all three voices with more balance—the priestly one to keep the organization fixed on bring the world hope through reconciliation with God in Christ Jesus, role), the prophetic one to help the organization be aware of how it is either deviating from this or otherwise not accomplishing it well, and the kingly voice to remind the organization to accomplish its mission both in the power of God but with the courage to move forward in that power when confronting the challenges of faith involved. Clarity and unity come from hearing from all three voices.

The Importance of Loving by Faith

A critical foundational organizational value that undergirds its mission, vision, and other core values; and, to which staff member should return in addressing the current tensions. It is the emphasis on living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Surrounding Jesus giving the Great Commission are His references to the Holy Spirit. Before His death, He said in John 14 verses 16-17, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” After His resurrection he stated as recorded in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

One theologian of personal acquaintance once said he believed CCC’s greatest gift to the Christian community was its emphasis on the Spirit-filled life. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in Him are the greatest needs for Christians and the global Church today, and in any generation. During this time of challenge within our organization, perhaps that is our greatest need as staff members now.

No matter how diverse it is as an organization, members cannot join its staff without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which guarantees spiritual union with one another (Rom 8:9, 14). Each has the personal influence of the Holy Spirit within them. It also means every staff member has divine power available to them in dealing with overcoming the effects of human fall into sin though they need to make sure they access that power through being filled with and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, which does not always occur with staff members.

An important aspect of grammar in Ephesians 5:18 is the passive tense of the verb. It indicates that the Holy Spirit wants and will fill believers if they will just let him. However, they often do not let Him; rather, they get in the way. Paul refers to this in telling believers to avoid quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 5:19) and to avoid grieving Him (Eph 4:30). Believers grieve the Holy Spirit when they do that which He does not want us to do (e.g., treating other staff members wrongly). They quench Him when they do not do what He naturally wants them to do (e.g., not providing understanding with staff members need it).

While Ephesians 5:18 uses passive tense verbs, Paul's admonition to walk in the Spirit in Galatians 5:13-26 uses active verbs—believers are to make sure it is happening, which is stated in the context of how they can misuse their freedom in Christ. In chapters 1-4, he has explained salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone and, as a result, begins chapter 5 declaring that justification in Christ has freed believers from keeping the law for our salvation.

Then, in 5:13 he turns to the process of sanctification saying, not to let that freedom become an opportunity to indulge in sinful behavior. Rather, those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them should naturally keep the spirit of the Law if they are walk filled with the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25) where both uses of “walk” are active verbs, which means it will not occur unless believers make this happen. Furthermore, the English word “walk” in both verses is not the same word in Greek; they each describe walking with some nuance of the type of walk envisioned. In verse 16, the Greek word is a common one for going on a walk. For example, it would be used if someone said to you, “Please come take a walk with me.” Paul's meaning here is that believers should always move forward in the power of the Holy Spirit by dealing with whatever could grieve and/or quench Him that would interrupt being controlled and empowered by Him through His filling.

The Greek meaning of “walk” in verse 25 can have a more military meaning in the sense of moving forward in rank-and-file like soldiers who are marching. Here Paul is saying believers should follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. They should stay with Him, not ahead or behind, not to the left or the right. In fact, they should stay even in step with Him—at the same pace. When He moves, they should move. Where He leads, they should follow. When He stops, they should stop. That is, they should breathe spiritually so consistently that they are sensitive to His leading and work in and through their lives.

It is interesting that, after speaking so strongly about salvation, Paul then immediately speaks strongly to believers about relational difficulties and, in doing so, warns them against allowing inappropriate behavior to exist or continue because Jesus has commanded them to love those with whom they have community (Gal 5:14-15). To obey Christ's command, he highlights walking in the Holy Spirit as the source of power in moving forward through relational difficulties. Without the power of the Spirit, they can exhibit ungodly relational behavior that he says might include “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, [and] envying” (vv. 20-21a). By contrast, he says those under the control of the Holy Spirit will show the relational characteristics of “love, . . . , patience, kindness, . . . , gentleness, [and] self-control” (vv. 22-23a), which can exist even during very difficult circumstances because of the divine resource within us them the Spirit's indwelling. Based on the active voice in the “walk” commands, the solution to moving forward lies first in dealing with one's own heart before trying to deal with someone else's heart, in exhibiting personal godly behavior rather than wanting someone else to change his or her behavior first, and in managing oneself better before trying to manage someone else or the organization.

Like Paul said in some of his letters, this is not being included because staff members do not know it; rather, it is a way of reminder for reflection on whether they are applying it—that is, living out what they know—which is a true measure of spiritual maturity. The reason for addressing this is the simple reality that relationships can significantly challenge a person's godliness. They are difficult and

involve strong emotions when they go awry; and, the closer the relationship, the more emotionally difficult it can be: Husband-wife, parent-child, roommates with one another, and work colleague relationships involve deeper feelings than relationships people can more easily take or leave, or in which they can find ways to minimize being together.

It is comforting and encouraging that Paul was a realist in his letters by addressing, rather than ignoring, the fact that the churches in his time were already having relational issues. It is not a modern phenomenon. The Church would not have some of his letters, or major sections of them, if he had not needed to address the ethical tensions revealed in Romans or Corinthians, or the personal tension between Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians, or the preferential treatment issues addressed in James. The fact that those early believers had issues should provide comfort when believers today have them, or see the Church having them. However, the fact that he addressed them during his time as a church leader, also means modern church leaders should not ignore addressing them today.

The organization's Transferable Concepts 2, 3, 4, and 8: "Experience God's Love & Forgiveness," "Being filled with the Spirit," "Walking in the Spirit," and "Loving by Faith" are all significant components of what believers need to understand; but, the last one addresses the critical emotional-relational need believers experience from time to time. Unresolved relational tension grieves and quenches the Spirit's work in the lives of believers and His work through them in the lives of others. The crux of this can be a person's unwillingness to forgive those who have caused hurt, which is contrary to the Master's call in being His disciples. More than once, Jesus emphasized radical love and forgiveness: Believers are to love their enemies (Mt 5:44, 46a), to bless those who curse them and to pray for them (Mt 5:45), to forgive as they have been forgiven (Mt 6:12), and to forgive seventy times seven (Mt 18:21-22)—over and over and over again. Even on the cross, he called upon the Father to forgive those executing Him. Furthermore, he said, believers are to love one another with a love that proves to the world that they are His disciples (Jn 13:34-35).

This would be potentially impossible if forgiving were based on emotions. Fortunately, it is not. Because it is a command, it is an act of the will—an act of obedience—and not an emotion. In fact, emotions can be contrary to what a disciple of Christ should do, and often they are. In addition, forgiveness is costly because the one doing the forgiving has to give up a right to revenge or the punishment of the one who has done the hurting. Moreover, while non-believers do not have to forgive those who want to follow Christ as His disciple must do so. They must come to a personal crossroad where they determine what is more valuable to them—retaining a bad, unforgiving attitude toward the offender or following Christ by forgiving him or her.

The beauty of the concept of loving by faith for believers is letting the Holy Spirit love through them supernaturally when they do not have the natural emotional capacity to love their enemies, or to bless them instead of cursing them. Human natural ability to love can be, and often is, limited by the ability of the flesh to cope with the hurt experienced from others. This means there is a clear difference between "I won't forgive." and "I can't love." The former is an act of the will based on a decision whether to obey Christ; the latter is a capacity based on the ability of the flesh. That's why forgiveness is so closely related to being filled with the Spirit. Jesus loves those a human cannot naturally because of intentional or unintentional, but real, hurt. Believers can simply let the love of Jesus for others they naturally hate flow through the Holy Spirit in them. Consistent with Ephesians 5:18, they just need to give Him permission to do so instead of resisting Him doing it.

This does not mean the memories of hurt disappear. They can remain very real. Whenever the emotions from those memories arise, a believer will need to reaffirm forgiving the past wrongs, forgive the new ones, and ask the Holy Spirit to make them love the offender in spite of himself or herself. Even if the offender

never changes or apologizes, the burden for the relationship moving forward lies on Christ's disciple to obey Jesus in loving the unlovely because it is not an obligation for the non-believer.

Loving by faith and the forgiveness it involves, is not an option for the organization's staff members. Hurts are real and they must be addressed. Staff members make disciples, which means they must be what they want them to become—including in giving forgiveness and making every attempt on their side to be reconciled to those with whom their relationships suffer. Satan will seek to undermine their key evidence as Christ's disciples—their love for one another. Walking in the Spirit—evidenced through loving others in the power of the Holy Spirit beyond their own ability—is one of the greatest things staff members can transfer to those they disciple and to help positively impact the church and society in each country. Christians do not need to agree on everything; they do need to love one another always.

Staff members need to develop in many ways; but they must remember to develop in character even more than in knowledge and ministry skills. It is essential if the organization and the individuals in it really wants to hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The organization should not expect perfect people on its staff. They should expect staff members to deal with critical imperfections. The Apollo 13 astronauts when their spacecraft had an explosion on the way to the moon declared, "Houston, we have a problem!" So, too, if staff members do not forgive others with whom they have differences that have led to deep hurts, then the organization needs to declare, "Cru, we have a problem!"; and, it needs to fix it to keep its mission from turning into an unexpected disaster.

Staff members need to go beyond just tolerating others; instead, they need to actively love them. Confucius' golden rule was: "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you." It's a nice start; but, it doesn't go far enough because it lacks the kind of action to which Jesus called His disciple in His version that says: "Do unto others what you want them to do unto you" (Mt 7:12).

Furthermore, Jesus gave the Great Commission but told His disciples to wait to do it until they had the Holy Spirit in them. He said this because walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to all believers in helping fulfill the Great Commission, including loving one another when they might not naturally get along. Walking in the Spirit and loving by faith in His power are foundational aspects of our organizational alignment. Any staff member unwilling to forgive and deal with hurt in the power of the Holy Spirit needs to look elsewhere to serve. This is not a matter of questioning one's call to ministry or the excellent abilities they bring into their ministry; rather, it is a question of organizational alignment on whether this is where they should be serving. There are other areas of alignment that can be addressed; but this is a foundational one.

Bill Bright's example of the short-circuited train shows how small, simple things can undermine the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as staff members and as an organization. The organization should have staff members committed to being filled with the Spirit as the source of spiritual power in their lives. They should be most characterized as an organization by their emphasis on, and being an example of, walking in the Spirit as they fulfill our mission and vision within its other core values. They have been taught how to breath spiritually as individuals and teach it to others; but are they applying it in areas of interpersonal tension within our organization? Just as importantly, is the organization doing corporate spiritual breathing?

Staff members on both sides of the current tension should ask themselves: Where do I need to develop in loving others by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit? Where do I need to do that with others in the organization; where with those outside it? Where do I need to deal with a resistant will in me? Where do I need to entrust strong, negative emotions to the control of the HS? Where do I need to forgive and forgive again? With whom do I need to reconcile?

The Heavenly Father knows the failings of fallen flesh. Believers long for the day when they leave it behind, and the problems it creates, and have resurrected bodies. However, they cannot wait for that day to deal with the flesh. He has given the Holy Spirit so they can experience the powerful love Jesus has for others and demonstrated even toward His enemies. They need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any wicked way within them related to forgiveness and reconciliation; then, guide them where they need to repent and, perhaps, offer restitution where it is appropriate and possible.

A song often sung by staff members during the time of racial tensions during the 1960s and 70s says, "We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord . . . And they'll know we are Christians by our love." This is the critical characteristic that should describe the organization individually and corporately as it moves forward.

Conclusion

This document has sought to provide an understanding of diversity issues in the Bible and how they were addressed. It has also looked at the nature of the Great Commission and the implications for diversity issues related to it. Finally, it looked at biblical implications and applications for the organization moving forward.

It is hoped this study will provide organizational leadership with reasons for caution where secular influences may have become mixed with biblical truth in addressing diversity issues. It is also hoped this study will help both groups currently concerned about such issues within the organization calm down and love one another better in word and deed. What is good, right, and helpful, whether from a biblical or secular perspective that is not inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture, should be incorporated into how the organization moves forward even better together in its common commitment to achieve its mission consistent with its vision, core values, and movement distinctives. ■