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Apologetics and Critical Race Theory with Neil Shenvi

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Although Neil has a PhD in theoretical chemistry, he's made a name for himself as an expert on Critical Race Theory (and Critical Theory more generally). Is CRT just a legal theory? Can anyone know what it really is? Is CRT just a plot by conservatives to gin up votes? Should Christians take CRT and chew the meat and spit out of the bones? Kevin and Neil answer these questions and many more. They also dive into Neil's new book on apologetics and explore the wild world of evangelical Twitter.

Timestamps:

Intro and Sponsor: Crossway [0:00-2:35]

Guest Introduction: Neil Shenvi [2:36-14:46]

Neil's Map of Evangelical Twitter [14:47-22:27]

Why Believe? [22:28-28:43]

What is Apologetics For? [28:44-36:50]

Sponsor 2: Westminster Seminary Press [36:51-38:02]

How to Understand Critical Race Theory [38:03-1:10:06]

Pastoral Responses [1:10:07-1:20:26]

Books:

Why Believe: A Reasoned Approach to Christianity - Neil Shenvi

The Screwtape Letters - C.S. Lewis

Cold Case Christianity - J. Warner Wallace

Critical Race Theory: An Introduction - Richard Delgado

Is Everyone Really Equal? - Ozlem Sensoy & Robin D'Angelo

God is a Black Woman - Christena Cleveland

Transcript

[Music] Greetings and salutations, welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin the Young and I am joined here with my special guest who I'll say more about in just a moment. Neil Shenvi.

Neil and I live in the same state of North Carolina and I've followed Neil and stuff he's written online for a long time about several years and we've emailed here or there but we haven't had the chance to be in the same place at the same time. So this is the closest we've been at least virtually in the same place at the same time. So I'm looking forward to having a wide ranging conversation with Neil in just a moment and fittingly crossway our regular sponsor for Life and Books and Everything.

Everything has a new book and we are going to spend some time talking about this book among other things, new crossway book by none other than Neil on why believe a reasoned approach to Christianity. And at 250 pages it is a real nice apologetics book that covers a variety of issues, the historicity, the resurrection, can you trust the Bible, some of the philosophical objections to Christianity, talks about God and Revelation, the uniqueness of Christianity, the doctrine of sin. One of the things Neil explains in there is he doesn't try to get, I don't want to say it would be sidetracked but he doesn't go down trying to explain Christian views of sexuality, marriage and gender, though we're going to hear that he's working on a book that does talk about all of those issues.

So this book why believe is a book that you could give to high school student, college student, you could give to elders and your church pastors could benefit from it as well. What I appreciate about is it's pulling together a lot of the common sorts of issues that you would find in apologetics books. It's not a philosophical book in terms of debating how we should do apologetics but it's telling us how to give some reasoned answers to these questions and we'll be able to ask Neil more about that in just a moment.

So thank you cross way. So Neil welcome to life and books and everything glad to have you here. So you are, it seems a super smart guy.

You got a PhD from Cal Berkeley worked as a research scientist at Yale and Duke. You've published all sorts of peer reviewed papers and you homeschool your four children, which is maybe the biggest accomplishment of all. So you've written a lot about critical race theory and critical theory and now you got this book on apologetics.

But that's not your academic background. Tell us about yourself, how you became a Christian and a little bit about what your academic degree and work was in prior to doing

all of this. Sure.

Well, thank you so much for Kevin for inviting me. Yeah. Yeah.

My training is in theoretical chemistry. So people hear chemistry, they think maybe they think Walter White from Breaking Bad or Test Tubes, Bunsen Burners. And I say, no, I'm a theorist.

So think more like Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory. I have to confess, I haven't seen either of those shows ever, not one episode. I'm just going based on what I've heard about those shows.

But I think how about this? I have seen a beautiful mind with Russell Crowe where you have scrolling equations in his dorm room window at Princeton actually, which is where I did undergraduate. But that's what I do. I'm a theorist by training.

So I went to Princeton as an undergraduate and then got a PhD at UC Berkeley. And it was really, it's really pencil and paper trying to derive the properties of atoms and molecules from the basic principles of physics. So that's what I training is in.

I became a Christian actually at Berkeley. I talk about this in the book a little bit. Three major factors were reading CS Lewis's book, the Screwtape Letters, which I got for free at a campus book table run by crew.

I just grabbed it as a non-Christian freshman, I think, and they never saw hide nor hair of me for four years. But I could not stop reading the book. It was so insightful.

And even as a non-Christian, I asked, how could he know so much about my life, my psychology, what went on in my heart? And of course, the answer is that CS Lewis, as a Christian, was plugged into a reality that I was not even aware of. So that was one factor. Another factor was meeting my future wife, Christina, who was a missionary kid at Princeton.

And she was a Princeton with me in the same class, which was the top student in chemistry in our class. Got the highest score on our organic chemistry class as a freshman. She was a really the first genuine Christian that I ever knew really well.

And so just seeing her life and seeing how different she was was great for me. And then we actually went to graduate school together at UC Berkeley. And I began to go into church with her.

And I just heard the gospel there. And more than that, I saw that people in the congregation were my professors. So I had my quantum physics professor as a first-year graduate student saying in the choir.

And he told us later in class he would wear his first-pres sweatshirt, first-preserving

church of Berkeley sweatshirt to class occasionally. And he told me us later at like a graduate Christian fellowship that was intentional. It was a way of saying, "I'm a Christian.

If you want to talk to me about it, you're welcome to." It was an invitation to do that. So those three things combined to basically make me think, "I have to take these ideas seriously." And for me, the big obstacle was that I was spiritual but not religious. And I thought I had got all figured out and confronting the idea that what if Jesus actually was the son of God? He wasn't just a cool guy or a good moral teacher.

And if that's true, then I have to turn from all of my carefully constructed, build-a-bear spirituality and embrace this historic faith. And actually I didn't like that at the time. I realized because that would mean I'd have to humble myself and admit that I was not this academic brilliant superstar.

I was actually like a child entering God's kingdom, but I did. I just said to God, "Well, if Jesus is who he claimed to be, then I'll follow him." And he brought me into the kingdom. You had no background in Christianity prior to that? Not really.

My mom was raised as Catholic, but then we never went to church. My dad was Hindu, but they kind of were just not anything. Very moral, wonderful parents, but they're just not religious in any sense.

And so I think they tried to read us sort of spiritual books like the Bible and some ancient Indian mythology just to give me some kind of formal religious something, exposure, but it never really took. So I was very clueless about anything religious. I'm going to ask what the title of your theoretical chemistry dissertation was.

I had a, when I was at my last church in East Lansing and we had lots of grad students there from Michigan State and we had a friend in our small group and he was doing a PhD in mathematics. And we'd always ask him, "What's your dissertation?" He would hem and ha. History.

And you can say, "Oh, I studied John Witherspoon." And people say, "Oh, who's that?" And you can understand it. And he would always say, "He's a humble guy." You wouldn't understand it. Well, just try us.

We're smart people. And sure enough, we didn't understand it. It was something about imaginary numbers or something very complicated.

So give us your very complicated title for your dissertation. Well, that's not complicated. There's a funny story behind that.

So the title of my dissertation was topics in quantum computation. Okay. Sounds like the bestseller.

And quantum computation just means, yeah, we were trying to build this whole project at enterprise and academia broadly, trying to build computers that are based not on normal physics, but on quantum physics. So they're using the laws of quantum mechanics rather than the laws of classical Newtonian mechanics. Anyway, but basically my dissertation was just a set of all of my papers stapled together.

So if you look at my actual publication record, it's incredibly diverse would be a nice way to put it. Maybe it's like a mutt. It's like a combination of all these random areas within quantum mechanics.

And so I just had my advisor let me take my five or so papers I'd written the time, just kind of stick them together and write some intermediate material. And that was my dissertation. And do you still do work in that area? Are you teaching? Are you writing in the area of quantum mechanics or theoretical chemistry? No, not really.

Every night before I go to bed, I think about a problem I've been working on in spin physics for the last 17 years, but it helps put me to sleep. Other than that, I don't really do. And occasionally, when the urge takes me, I go to a white board at my local homeschool co-op, when no one's watching, I write down equations and try to solve them.

But no, I'm not doing research actively right now. And then how did you become interested in these other topics, which I think you're most well known for. And did you just start writing and tweeting and blogging and reading? You know, you're one of these guys, I don't want to say it's always a meritocracy, but you just kept reading and writing and writing and writing and people seems like in the last, I don't know how many years, five, six years.

Say, "Oh, this guy's done his homework. He's thoughtful on this. He doesn't seem like he's staying up at night, seething with anger toward everybody.

He seems like a pretty normal guy. I want to hear what he has to say. How did this all start? And have you been surprised how you've become looked at as an expert in something that was completely different from your training?" Yeah, it's a really amazing story of God's providence.

So it goes back to, I think, 2015 or so. So I've got interested in apologetics as a grad student. So I became a Christian, and right away at Berkeley, I got plugged into a campus apologetics ministry that was very active partnering with atheist students, trying to bring them together with Christians to talk about the big issues of life.

So right away I began reading apologetics. When I was at Yale, I was invited to debate an atheist, Yale student, a real graduate, about Christianity. So that got me interested in reading primary sources.

So he recommended some books that I should read by atheist authors, and so I did a lot of that. And that's actually, I think, again, providentially been my approach to critical theory as well, reading the primary sources. Don't read what so-and-so says about this source, but read the source itself.

But doing all that, I was interested in apologetics. I was writing my current book, "Why Believe at the Time?" And providentially, a mutual friend connected me with my collaborator, Dr. Pat Sawyer, who's a faculty member at UNCG, whose PhD is in education and cultural studies. So he's doing critical theory at a professional level.

But we were introduced because we both had a passion for apologetics. So then we just met, we're chatting on email, and it was 2015 or 2016, I think. And I had the sense that something was going on in our culture, and even in the evangelical church, around issues of race, black lives matter, gender, sexuality.

I couldn't put my finger on what it was, though. So when I heard what Pat was doing professionally, I said, "That sounds familiar. I think I'm seeing these ideas popping up in evangelical circles." And Pat just had his mind blown.

He was like, "There's no way. There is no way that biblically oriented Christians are embracing these ideas. They're so patently false and unbiblical." And I said, "No, really.

I really think you should take a look at some of these things I'm reading." And we went back and forth, and eventually he's like, "No, actually, you are right." He got involved in this field to share the gospel with his progressive secular colleagues. He never thought he'd be trying to explain to the church why these ideas were so dangerous. So we met that way, and then we began collaborating.

We've written a number of articles on all kinds of topics. I've written some peer-reviewed articles on critical theory. I have a new one coming out in a law legal journal written with a lawyer on critical race theory.

So I had done a lot of reading, but I've also tried to connect with people who are trained in these areas who can make sure that I'm not just spouting off punditry. I don't know, a couple of years ago, I had lunch when Pat was here in Charlotte and really enjoyed that. He's sort of halfway between where you and I are Durham, Charlotte, Greensboro.

He made it sound like that Neil Shenvie is a genius who just reads things and then he plays some video games, then he tweets some things, then he homeschools his kids, then he reads some more stuff, then he writes things. What's the day in the life of Mr. Dr. Shenvie? I get up 630 with the kids, my youngest on the dot 630 is at bed, and so we start homeschool at 730. My homeschool, people ask me, what's your curriculum? I say Khan Academy.

We just, we do a lot of math. I'm a STEM guy, obviously. So if it were up to me, I would

teach them nothing but science, math, and writing actually, I emphasize the three R's essentially, but we're in a homeschool co-op called classical conversations, which is, I think, very heavily invested in the humanities.

And that's good for me because it balances me out. If they were up to me, the kids would not be learning any no geography. They can learn that later when they're in graduate school, but it's good because they forced me to teach them world history, Latin, English, grammar, things that I would probably push to the side.

So it's a great balance for me to have that kind of ability. So I want to, before we get into all this sort of stuff and talk about your book and talk about critical theory, you did this project, I don't know how many months ago it is, and it seemed to be using some of your STEM background, but you did this massive study of evangelical Twitter. Oh yeah, studying, you know, I didn't track with all of the madness behind the curtain, but you were looking at who follows who and who has shared followers or shared retweets or likes and you had this whole conceptual map.

It was really fascinating and how it was laid out. Can you tell us what you did? And it seemed to me you're sort of trying to link what are some of the tribes within evangelical Twitter. What did you do and what did you find out? Was it just a curiosity or did you come away with that thinking, this is really useful and helping me understand what's going on out there? So it was funny because people got really worked up about this project that I was working on.

It was totally just for me a curiosity. So I was bored. I was like, I should do something besides play video games with my free time.

So I was like, I will learn a new computer language. So the language called R, which is very popular for mathematics. I hadn't learned it as like, I'll learn R. And then I also, I remembered back, Captain America to the Winter Soldier, the Marvel movie.

One of the plot devices is that they divide this algorithm to comb the internet and figure out people's, you know, figure out information about people based on what they tweet and they're buying for all these other information out there in the public realm that they've put there. You can use the evil villains, use that in the movie to identify targets. So you're one of the evil villains.

I'm not well, no. I was like, can we just, that's true. There's all this information out there.

People put it out there on social media voluntarily. Can you really gain information from tweets that they all these things that they tweet? And I was like, well, I'll learn R and at the same time, I will figure out how to data mine, how to mine data from the internet like Twitter. And so I learned all that, learned the language.

I found a library that allowed me to download data from Twitter. And I thought, what can

I do with this? And so I thought a cool idea would be, could I build a conceptual map of Evangelical Twitter? So I put in Twitter users who people just name random people that they are quote unquote Evangelical or Christian Twitter. I put them into this algorithm and it'll identify how many shared followers they have with every other user that I've identified.

So for example, I put you in, I would put Albert Moller in, I would put maybe some progressive Christians and I put all of you into this map. And then let the computer decide how close your accounts were, meaning how many people followed both of you and Al Moller or Al Moller and Jim Wallace, the progressive Christian so jr. So I put that all in the computer and I let it decide whose accounts had the similar profile. And when you do that, it's incredible.

So it created this map and it would link people and sometimes you'd be like, Oh, yeah, obviously these two guys were both presidents of SBCs, seminaries. Obviously, they look very similar in their followers. But then it would link certain people and I was like, this makes no sense.

Why would it link this guy and this guy or this woman and this man. And then I would tweet the map out and the people would say, Oh, that's yeah, that's true. These two people, these are linked is because they did a podcast together 10 years ago.

And they have a lot of mutual followers, but now they're diverged theologically put on the Twitter footprint looks the same. Anyway, so there are all these amazing connections and yet you did see a lot of, I wouldn't say tribalism, but you saw accounts that clearly fit in your intuitive idea of the Oh, yeah. It makes sense that so and so and so and so look the same on Twitter.

Anyway, people got and then the other thing I did that really set people off was I said, okay, is this all just an artifact of the computer? Is it seeing things that aren't really there or are there actual ideological similarity between these accounts? So what I did was also, I would say, look at a given person's followers. How many of their followers have pronouns in their bio? Yeah. How many of their followers have mega hashtags in their bio? And you can see that certain regions of the map were like, here's mega land, here's, here's pronoun land.

And again, there's no, I'm not making a value judgment. I'm just saying, yeah, there are real tribes within even evangelical Twitter that you can benefit the computer itself spits them out. Anyway, that's all I was doing.

But people thought it was somehow an nefarious evil plan that was not my intention. Where can people go to find this or? To find the map. I mean, I've forgotten much about it, but it's on my website.

If you have you go to Neil Shenvie Twitter map, you'll probably find it on Google somewhere. Okay. It was just, it was just for fun.

Well, it was really interesting. As I recall, I was quite low on the percentage of followers with pronouns. Yeah, you and John MacArthur, I think, were like point zero zero one percent.

Okay. All right. I think that was fairly low on the mega hashtag too.

Yeah. Actually, I was surprised. And there were very few mega, you know, people on the evangelical.

Like the highest percentage, I think, was like some account had like point point five percent of their followers had mega in their bio. Whereas pronouns with like some accounts had, you know, 10% of their followers had pronouns. So it was, you know, or, or Black Lives Matter hashtags.

Those were actually coming among in some regions of the map. As I recall the, to look at the map, it made intuitive sense. I mean, you saw sort of a grouping of say, you know, Kristen to May and Beth Allison Barr and those sort of people.

And then you might see Vodie and John MacArthur and right G three kind of. And then you would see Ligon and Kevin and I mean T4G sort of world. And there would, you could, it wasn't as simple as saying a right to left spectrum.

Yeah. But for the most part, people clustered where you kind of thought, were there any real surprises with how people landed again, not making a value. It's not doesn't mean they agree with all these people.

It's just saying something about the people that want to follow a number of the same sorts of people. Were there any big surprises? The only, yeah, the real big surprise was that, um, that Mark Driscoll and John Piper were closely, not closely linked. They were probably loosely linked.

And but one of the reasons is I realized they were actually a number of really humongous accounts. Yeah, that's right. Like Driscoll and Piper and Tim Keller.

They were just, they were just so big that they looked like other big accounts. If you, yeah, big enough people follow you just because you're big. They don't follow you because they agree with you.

They says, Oh, yeah, everybody follows this guy because he's huge. So that's, again, that makes sense. But it's also not telling you much about their beliefs.

They're just, it's happened to be big and they get grouped with people like Beth Moore and. Other people that have these million follower accounts. Yeah.

People follow her not because they agree with her because everyone else does. Yeah, right. There's, there's the evangelical accounts that are 40, 50,000.

That's a lot of it. And then the hundred to 200. And then, yeah, the.

Million. Keller. Piper.

Beth Moore that are the million. Well, interesting. I mean, when I'm bored.

You know, maybe Neil go out on a run or something or watch a baseball game or learn a new computer language. Well, I didn't. And people got upset.

They got triggered. I just try to learn R. You just try to learn R. Okay. Well, good for you.

So tell us about why we believe a reasoned approach to Christianity. Are you trying to get into intra evangelical apologetic debates about classical apologetic, surveying, silly and apologetic? What are you trying to do in this book? So this book came out of actually a book table that I helped with at Yale. So at because I was heavily impacted by receiving a copy of Lewis's screedip letters as a freshman at Princeton from a crew book table.

Because of that, when I went to Yale's a postdoc, I helped with a crew book table at Yale. It was handing out again free books at their main freshman dining hall. And one of the books that we handed out, I bought a box of Tim Keller's Reason for God.

And I handed them out. And I told the people that were working with me. I said, Hey, you know, some people just grab the book walk away.

You don't see them again. I said, Don't worry about that. I did that.

You never know what God will do with anything that you do, you know, probably actually. And I used to pass out Bibles at Berkeley. And the verse in the front cover was Isaiah 58.

I think I don't remember the verse. You'll know it. But it was that, you know, the word that goes out of my mouth will not return to me void.

It will accomplish the purpose for which I have. And that was my again, I was like, this is why we give Bibles out. We give out books because God will use them to do his purposes, fulfill his purposes.

So anyway, so I was giving out these copies of Reason for God, but I was like, I can't keep this is getting expensive. I can't afford to buy hundreds of copies of this book and give them away. So I thought, maybe I will write a book and I can just self publish it and give it away for free.

But my goal was just to get a book that I could give out. They would be. So I wanted

several things.

Number one, I want it to be accessible. I wanted it to be the kind of book I could give to a motivated high school student who would get something from it. But then I also wanted it to be intellectual.

This is a hard balance to strike. There are books that I really think are good, helpful books, like a great example is J Warner Wallace's book, *Cold Case Christianity*, where I think the content is very helpful and good. But the book itself contains hand drawn cartoons.

Yeah. And if I gave just for help to help people understand these ideas, but if I gave that book to a Nobel laureate, theoretical chemistry professor at Duke, they would take one look at the cartoons and say, this is ridiculous. I'm not going to read this book.

I'm embarrassed to read this book. Exactly. Which even though, even though if you gave it a chance, you say, oh, this is actually really good.

So I wanted to write a book that just immediately strikes you as a book written by someone who's done their homework. So my book is full of footnotes, not endnotes. It contains heavy interaction with atheist scholars, people like Bart Airmen, Paula Fredrickson, Sean Carroll, Vic Stanger, Jerry Coyne, you know, people that have PhDs, they're scholars, they're scientists, they're biblical studies, folks.

And so you read the book and I think I cite, I think I looked it up. I think the number one most cited author in the book is C.S. Lewis. Number two is Richard Dawkins.

So I've clearly, people reading it hopefully will say this is someone who's read the other side and is giving me the best arguments for atheism and against Christianity in this very book. And I wanted to be a book that your college student could handle their professor and not feel embarrassed. So that's one accessible to intellectual.

The other thing I wanted to be was gospel centered. So I didn't want to write a book about how some kind of God exists. I wanted to write a book that pointed people to Christianity.

The Christian God exists. The God of the Bible exists and he calls you to repent and believe the gospel. So that's a big part of the book.

Another point is comprehensive. I treat a huge range of arguments, the trilema, Jesus, either Lord, liar, lunatic. Did he rise from the dead? There's evidence that yes, historical evidence, Jesus did rise from the dead.

Does God exist? What kind of God exists? So how can we know that God exists? Can miracles happen? I wanted to respond to the most prominent objections to Christianity

and to God's existence, like the problem of evil, evolution, divine hiddenness. And then I wanted to tie it all together by saying the gospel itself is the best argument for the truth of Christianity, that the gospel alone among the message of all world religions speaks directly to two humongous existential questions in our heart, which is what's my main problem and how can that problem be solved? And so I argue, in over the course of three chapters, that Christianity correctly identifies our main problem as sin and rebellion against God and the only solution is redemption through Jesus. So, yeah, it's comprehensive.

And then finally, it's systematic. You can see one, two, three, four, five. I go through things very systematically.

And so, I think that, in fact, when I was writing about the book, I was writing about the book that I was writing about, and then I was writing about the book, and then I was writing about the book. And then I was writing about the book, and then I was writing about the book, and I was writing about the book. But one of the things that, and this is why I think people have followed you and read your stuff.

You have that scientific background, but you write very clearly and very excessively. So it is an intellectual book, and there are footnotes and you interact with these people, but anyone who reads the first 15 pages, they're not going to feel like a theoretical chemist is talking down to me. There's a very, in a good way, colloquial kind of conversational tone, even as you're talking about intellectual issues.

So I think you're right. I think a motivated high school student could read this. And a college student could give it to a professor who'd say, "Oh, this is, this guy's thoughtfully considered some of the objections and has responded to them." So I think you hit that sweet spot well.

So what do you think, Neil, about the task of apologetics? Do you see it mainly for Christians to be bolstered in their faith? Do you see it mainly for trying to prove something? Or do you think, "Well, we can't really prove these things, but it helps to create plausibility structures for the non-Christian." There's lots of just conversation about the approach we take, and the reason for apologetics. What do you think about the task of apologetics itself? I think it's twofold. So I think it's both for Christians to strengthen our faith and also for non-Christians to challenge their assumptions about Christianity and to call them to repentance.

And so I think it's, you don't have to play those against each other. I think they both happen at the same time. And I do think, in terms of methodology, are you an evidentialist or classical? I don't get into that in the book, obviously, but I would personally classify myself as a soft positionist, meaning that I'm not going to just ask by what standard for ten chapters.

But I am going to always have an eye to people's assumptions. They're presuppositions about reality. Do those make sense? Are they consistent with each other? A lot of it flows from my theology.

I am reformed in my... I'm a reformed Baptist. I have to caveat when I'm talking to Presbyterians. Reformed.

I know you've been scared quotes. It's right for people on YouTube, but it's in scare quotes. I'm reforming in scare quotes.

The point is that, yeah, I do think our task is not to prove intellectually that God exists because Romans once, as we all know, deep down that God exists, then we suppress the truth and unrighteousness. So our task is to reveal to people that they're living with this dark, unspoken fear and hatred of God in their hearts that should be brought into the light and exposed, not in a nasty way, but in a way, hey, I can tell you the true story of reality that makes sense of all of these hopes and fears and hidden sins in your heart. And that ultimately is what will bring regeneration is the preaching of God's word.

And so that's why the last three chapters of the book are all about the gospel. Yeah, and I really like that because I do think that is unique in this book that you're appealing to the conscience in a way. And we understand as Christians, even if non-Christians don't recognize it about themselves, they are made in the image of God.

They do have eternity written on their hearts. They've suppressed the truth and unrighteousness. But we ought to appeal to what we know is there, even if they don't know that that's there.

And that's to appeal to this sense of something is wrong. Virtually everyone has some sense, whether it's our carbon footprint or it's the food that we eat. There's something wrong in the universe.

There's something, there's some way we need to be right with the universe or some maker of the universe. And so I really appreciate that you're giving people the gospel. You're telling people where this answer and how Christianity meets this deepest need.

And I also, you know, you use that phrase right there, soft presuppositionalism, which I think is a good way of describing it and resonates with what I think is a wise approach that on the one hand, we do realize people have presuppositions. We're not trying to say if I could just convince you of the unmoved mover and convince you of these five ways, then you go from here to theist to classical theist to Christian to Protestant. I can just reason you all the way down.

We can just pretend that we just put the Bible behind my back and we just get there. That sort of crude. I don't know if anyone actually does it like that, but that's not what we're doing.

We understand we're trying to understand their own assumptions and show their incoherence. And yet, you know, you said, it's not just 10 chapters of by what standard and just telling people. Well, you don't know God and your own beliefs are a leap of faith in themselves.

And there you go. I think most people instinctively understand. There's a place to say, Hey, I can't argue you into the faith.

I'm not going to give you five reasons for the resurrection, and then you bow the knee to Christ. But I can show you that a lot of smart people have thought about these things. And there actually are really good reasons for believing that the Bible is trustworthy for believing that God exists for believing that the resurrection happened for understanding the Canaanite genocide was not genocide as we would use the term.

There are reasoned rational explanations for these things. I use Turretin in my systematic theology class, and he has a number of guidelines for how we use reason. But one of the things he often says is Christianity is above reason, but it's not against reason.

That is reason. There are some things that look impossible to reason miracles look impossible to read. So we don't let reason be the final standard of judging whether something is possible.

But some Christians embrace that and then they say, Oh, well, Christianity then must be against reason and sometimes Christians have a feeble approach to Christianity. I just believe this because I believe it and that's what I'm asking you to do. Well, that's not the way the Bible presents the material.

That's not the way the Reformed tradition has traditionally understood how to defend the faith. It's not a compromise with the world to say, here's where our beliefs are rational, where there's good reason, where there's good evidence. Even Calvin will say, ultimately, you need the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit to convince you of these things.

But then he goes on to say, why we can trust the Bible, why there's a God. And I think you followed that same kind of approach in the book. Did you have any certain models in your head of how you wanted to look at this? Or you just imbibed it from Lewis and reading a lot of other good stuff? I think probably the latter.

One of the first apologetics books I've read was John Frame's "Apologetics to the Glory of God," which just gave me. And it's basically all about frameworks, what framework are you using? But I think he would absolutely qualify as a presuppositionalist. But if you look at how he practically explains how that looks on the ground, it doesn't strike you.

He's not asking by what sinner, by what sinner. He's actually laying out evidence. And

then when the non-Christian says, "Well, I can't believe that because he's okay, when you say you can't believe that, let's look at your assumptions now." So he goes, "Actually, I think, I get methodologies are not my area of expertise by any means.

But when I've looked at the way that presuppositionalists actually go about these conversations, I think many of them, even very hard, presuppositionalists, do still lay out things like evidence and reason. And then the only one they get pushed back, they say, "Well, now we have to turn to why you're rejecting the evidence." So I'm taking a similar approach I just start with, "Well, here's the evidence. It seems pretty clear." And then when you meet resistance, like, "Oh, well, miracles just can't happen, though." And then I have to step back and ask why you believe that, and does that make sense? So I think, again, that's not easy to put that into the category of, "Are you doing evidentialism? Are you doing classical apologetics?" Right away.

So I said, "I think that category fits, well, Greg Cokal is another model where he's not the key column self-appreciate of a piece of positionalist, but he also understands the real importance of assumptions and presuppositions that will inevitably influence how you interpret everything." So yeah, I think it's not an uncommon approach from a lot of people from different "camps of apologetics." Great. So the book once again is why we believe a reasoned approach to Christianity by Crossway from Neil Shenvie, so check that out. I'm going to jump to our next topic in just a moment.

I do want to mention another book, *The Pastor and the Modern World* by Westminster Seminary Press. If you haven't checked out Westminster Seminary Press, obviously it's connected to WTS. They're doing a lot of good stuff, both republishing classic works and some newer works.

Pastoral ministry has always been hard, but the stress, isolation, and conflict of recent years has been too much for many pastors, and they are burning out, quitting, resigning at an alarming rate. Often they simply haven't been prepared to minister in the world as it really is. This is a short book.

You'll find three short chapters by experienced pastor scholars that help you understand your context, your calling. So it's very short, and you can order a copy of *The Pastor and the Modern World* at wtsbooks.com or Reformation Heritage, Christian Book Amazon. Alright, Neil, I want to talk about critical theory.

I have three objections that I want you to respond to. First, critical theory is just legal theory. It's just an analytical tool for trying to understand how racism, and I know critical theory is a broader topic.

Let's just think right now, critical race theory. It's not the same thing. It's a subset of a larger thing, but just critical race theory is just a legal theory.

It's just for analyzing some texts, and it's just a hermeneutical approach to the past. That's all that it is. Agree or disagree? Why? Hard disagree.

And the reason why, I would just say, listen to what critical race theorists themselves say about critical race theory. So if you look at the number one most prominent text on critical race theory is Delgado and Stefan Chick's book CRT. There you go.

You have it. I have it. I've read it.

Oh, but not to what, the preface, I think it's page 11, the X-I, the preface. It's Angela Harris. It's a critical race theorist.

And she says it used to be that critical race theory was this esoteric, sparsely read legal theory, but today, this is like, she's running in, I think, first edition was 1997. Today, it is read by sociologists, by philosophers. It's working into healthcare.

It's read everywhere. And the authors, Delgado and Stefan Chick say the same thing. It's influencing all kinds of policy.

It's in the government. It's in healthcare. It's in theology.

If you look at Chiara Bridges as a UC Berkeley law professor, her excellent book. It's really helpful as a, as to understand CRT. It's called CRT, a primer, 2019.

And she talks about just how influential CRT has become. In fact, in Delgado and Stefan Chick's book, at the end of it, they say, this is in 1997. It was first edition.

Third edition was in 2017. But they ask, with their critical race theory, what's going to happen to it in the future? They're writing this in '97, maybe. And they say, one possibility is that it becomes, quote, the new civil rights orthodoxy, right? And it's just in the water.

And it's where you think everyone, everyone might, might one day think in terms of CRT without even knowing it. And I'd say, that's where we are. So if you actually read what critical race theorists say, they will brag about how it's no longer just legal theory.

It is absolutely being applied and used by all kinds of people. And so that, again, actually, and then here's the other thing I'll say. Timon Klein and I, he has an MDiv from Westminster.

He's a, as an JD from Rutgers. He's a lawyer and has a theology degree. We are publishing a forthcoming law review article on the title is, What If CRT Were, quote, Just a Legal Theory, A Christian Critique.

You should read the article, it's accessible article, but it begins with the idea, this hypothetical idea. What if it were just legal theory? And then examined only on those

terms, it would still be totally incompatible with Christianity. Because, for example, I'm going to try to pop some quotes, but critical race theorists deny that there is some universal abstract set of principles of morality.

Or right and wrong that undergird the law. They straight up deny that. They think that law just is a way to enshrine the values of the white ruling class to make those part of society and to preserve white privilege.

So here's Derek Bell, the godfather of critical race theory writing in Crenshaw's anthology CRT, *The Key Writings*, that shaped the movement. And he says this, precedent, it's a legal precedent, rights theory and objectivity merely are formal rules that serve a covert, a hidden purpose. Even in the context of equality theory, they will never vindicate the legal rights of black Americans.

And again, Delgado and Cifanjik say that CRT, unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment, nationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. So CRT rejects the idea that there's some objective moral framework that is then supposed to be enacted and reflected in the law. They reject that view.

They think law is just a mechanism for preserving white power. And again, that's, you can't, a Christian can't believe that laws just a mechanism of coercion, because God literally gave illegal code to Israel. There you go.

Right off the bat, God gave Moses a legal code that was not just a way to, you know, to secure Israelite power. It was, it was God's law. This is from critical race theory, the introduction.

Yes, this is from the forward xvi. And it says critical race theory has exploded from this is what you're referring to from a narrow sub specialty of jurisprudence chiefly of interest to academic lawyers into a literature read in departments of education cultural studies English sociology comparative literature political science history and anthropology around the country we could add now around the world. It not only dares to treat race as central to the law and policy of the United States and dares to look beyond the popular belief that getting rid of racism means simply getting rid of ignorance or encouraging everyone to get along.

So not simply a legal theory. Here's second objection I want you to respond to. Look, we can't nobody really knows.

It's a massive topic. No one really knows what CRT is everyone just throws around CRT. They're slapping labels on it.

Neil Shenvie you don't even have a degree in this isn't even your specialty you don't

even have a PhD you don't really understand what it is if you understood what it was and you were real expert you know that it's something different so all of these Christians talking about it no one really knows what it is. Yeah so one thing I'd say is that there are people out there who don't know what CRT is either true you're just using it as a label throwing it around at CRT you know the CRT is in the room with you right now it's hiding it's under my bed. Okay there are people like that who are using it just as a shibboleth to say are you woke or not.

That said I have an article called what is critical race theory on my website and it is there's zero commentary it is about a 2000 word article with nothing but quotes from primary sources. I've seen it many many times encourage others to look at it and it's it's just quotes from primary sources by critical race there's we're not just spouting off their own opinions. It's their list of the defining elements that's a quote from Matilda at all words that wound at the defining elements of CRT and it spans 30 years.

One of the things I do is I don't just quote all these primary sources these highly respected sources so one of the articles I quote is Yasu's whose culture as capital has been cited like 6000 times it's the tremendously important article and she lists the I think the core tenets of critical race theory but the point is I don't just cite all these prominent articles. I go back to the earliest collections of these defining elements so I said Matilda at all the words that wound was an anthology with four co editors Matsuda Lawrence Crenshaw and Delgado who are all co founders of CRT. And it's written in 1993 which is literally four years after the movement sort of emerged in around 1989 and they list the defining elements of CRT they give six points.

And if you look at those six points they are constant over the next 30 years everywhere you turn you'll find those those in the various forms in four points five points seven points but it's always the same things laws mechanism of legal power. Racism and sexism and heterosexism are all interlocking forms of oppression that must be dismantled simultaneously. You'll see that all over the literature.

And so this idea that no one knows what the subject actually is well they do presumably I mean Crenshaw coined the term critical race theory in 1989 or social you know that's what she she and bridges both claim that she was the one who invented that term. So surely she knows what it means and she'll tell you if you listen to her. Yeah so let's come back to what some of the characteristics are you just rattled off some let me get that's a good response.

Let me give you the third objection there. Okay so maybe it's not just a legal theory it is this whole warping move okay and you can read it and know what it is but really this is not you're telling me that this is the problem. In our churches you can go to the rank and file SBC PCA churches the sort of people who like what Neil Shenvie or maybe like what Kevin DeYoung says none of these people are reading CRT it's not an issue for them.

And in fact the only reason we're talking about CRT is because maybe Fox News gendered up or Christopher Rufo it just became a conservative talking point it just became a political wedge issue to make up CRT in order to either just get white votes or maybe even more nefarious to tap into latent suppressed hidden white racism this whole thing even if it's as bad as you say it is it's vastly overblown it's not the issue in our churches and it just has been invented to try to get votes and try to divide people and it's working and so you should move on and talk about something else. Sure and so I always say I'm not going to rank heresies I'm not going to rank problems and say well this is the number one threat to the church as a whole what do you mean the church as a whole obviously everyone's in different context so I actually probably would agree that some rural church in a deep red county of Nebraska. Right there number one problem is probably not critical race theory probably they probably have a lot of people in the congregation who are reading Robin D'Angelo in a Brooks Kendi and getting these ideas from the coach probably not they probably have other problems maybe racism itself is the main problem in that church.

I don't know the church that said there are churches who have the opposite context if you're in a deep blue county if you're in the middle of Manhattan if you have if your churches filled with people who are in the corporate world or in academia this absolutely is a major problem I'm not saying it's the worst problem I'm just saying it is a problem. And one of the things I'm actually working on a book right now with Dr. Sawyer Pat on critical theory broadly which includes critical race theory critical pedagogy queer theory these are all critical theories critical social theories. We explain that these ideas are everywhere the people in your church are not getting them from reading Crenshaw or Derrick Bell they're getting them from their knitting group or their book club and their and their and we give examples and I am notorious for not naming names I'm not attacking some person.

But in our book we do go through these prominent examples of evangelical Christian leaders who are being platformed by like Christianity today and campus crusade for Christ crew and inner varsity and that have literally apostasized the example I use is so glaring is Christian Cleveland who was writing a column in Christianity today in 2016 on a race. And now just came out with a book called God is a black woman. And it is and she is actually literally abandoned the Christian faith and now worships a being that she calls the quote sacred black feminine.

So she is now just openly abandoning and she will tell she gave a talk in 2019 entitled, I think it's called the global missions as the heroization of a whiteness and in that talk she explains how critical race theory by name is the framework through which she understands things like missions and race and justice in the church at the time I think she was still professing to be a Christian now she's not. And but you can see this happening frankly all over the church. Now whether that's the biggest problem for your church in your context I don't know I don't know your church, but it is a problem and we

can't pretend it's not even there.

There are examples like this that are just prominent figures whose theology has been completely shattered by these ideas. Really really helpful let's talk about what some of the core tenants might be and let me just throw this out and see what you think and you can add to this subtract to it you can go into more depth. I've been trying to think how to simplify this.

And so I have an acronym and the acronym is actually pride which I don't mean to automatically say it links with all of the but sometimes it does but I just happened to work that it. So here's my five words that form the acronym pride power intersectionality. No I'm doing it out of our power revolutionary intersectionality disparity and everywhere let me just put some power you said this that the moral standards the legal standards are about the lording of power of one group over another.

Revolutionary what I mean by that is the quote you gave earlier not incrementalism not objective standards because there is no objective standard but what we need is not incrementalism not just that we need radical in the sense of down to the very roots it requires a revolutionary change in how our entire society so it's not this Western project is got most things right slavery racism bad let's change laws change hearts no the whole enlightenment project has been wrong Western civilization has probably largely been wrong so that's the intersectionality which is the belief that you have this matrix of oppressive identities or oppressor identities so I score very highly on oppressor identities. I'm married to a woman I'm white now I'm middle age I just I got all of the bad you're sort of a mixed bag kneel you got a few good ones you're half Indian and then disparity the idea that disparities are always so I'm talking about racial disparities are if they don't match up with the population itself percentage those disparities are always examples of racist structures and systems which is how Kinsey defines it and then everywhere meaning racism is not abnormal it's normal it has not been eradicated in fact it may not have improved much at all since the 1960s in fact it may actually be worse because it's more subtle and it's more underground but racism is everywhere so power revolution intersectionality disparity and racism is everywhere that's just my trying to get if I had to give five words what else would you say or how would you double click on any of those concepts I think that's basically right if you look at if you look at my article what is critical race theory you can have critical race theory saying those things in their own words so for example the number one most common tenant of CRT in all the literature it's often listed as the first tenant of CRT here's a quote direct quote from words that wound critical race theory recognized that racism is endemic to American life you know it's this a words like normal permanent pervasive it's endemic sent from his reading quotes central endemic permanent and a fundamental part of defining explaining how US study functions this is totally standard as the number one quartet of critical race theory racism is everywhere it's ubiquitous intersectionality the idea that racism sexism sexism heterosexism ableism classism all these various oppressions are

interlocking and they must be dismantled in a radical way again words that wound talks about how critical race theory is a quote critical race theory measures progress by a yardstick that looks to fundamental social transformation the interests of all people of color necessarily require not just adjustments within the established hierarchies but a challenge to hierarchy itself and they list gender class and sexual orientation as forms of these hierarchies anyway so everything you said I totally agree the only one that is a little bit squishy is the disparities candy ever mixed candy the author of how to be an anti racist will say very very clearly that race that disparities are solely the result of discrimination if you deny that if you think that even a little bit of disparities are explained some other way any other way than you are a racist he says that flat out his books other critical race and he's maybe a pop critical race theory he talks about how he's been heavily influenced by intersectionality how it undergrids his work that said other critical racers would pull back would hedge on that last issue and would say for example I think Crenshaw says that they presume is a quote critical race theorists adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage along racial lines but they say that's a presumption given our history but they don't go out and say no it's all it is but in practice if you look at their analyses it's always structural they never say oh well this disparity is due to some other factor that's not on their horizon it's always how does this disparity show the subtle ways the insidious ways in which the racial power has operated to the disadvantaged people of color so again I would pull back and say they're people that are not candy talking about a little more nuanced a little more nuanced but in practice how it actually looks on the ground it looks pretty similar that's helpful so Neil do you think can Christians in any way appropriate the concept of structural racism systemic injustice if they can how do they do that in the right way and what's the wrong way sure so I have a whole article on this topic called does systemic racism exist and I basically explain how critical race theory conceptualizes the term systemic racism and explain that it is inseparable from their views on how power operates disparities operate and so you the way that they conceptualize that term you have to reject that because they're just wrong they basically do take the approach that if you see disparities it's the result of this nebulous floating insidious pervasive structural systemic racism but we can't that's just not true some disparities are the result of other things and I go into that in the article but they're I mean I quote an economist like Thomas soul who showed that there's disparities of all kinds that are not the result of discrimination and then from innocuous things like birth order right that you know no one's discriminating against fifth born children right but they do so anyway what I would say is I do not like the phrase eat the meat spit out the bones people often use that critical race my point is it's and I would say this is in complete seriousness if you want to use that phrase to describe CRT you should be equally comfortable using that same phrase eat the meat and spit out the bones with respect to queer theory it's not the same kind it's it's literally there's different species the same genus they are both descended from the critical theory broadly and there are differences in their origin I get my whole book will deal with this I'm out with

that and the thing is that you would pull back you would you would recoil from saying that about queer theory because why because it's core tenets are so antithetical to a Christian view of reality we can't risk you know leading people astray and saying oh it's looks like a Christian view of reality is that you can affirm certain things you can affirm certain things you can affirm for example that there is a legacy of historic racism in our country absolutely there's a legacy you can see it on maps you can see how certain neighborhoods were predominantly black or Hispanic because of real estate practices like redlining you can see how wealth differences are perpetuated by inheritance and buy and they go back to like things like the again redlining Jim Crow GI Bill things like that I mean not directly but just in a very loose sense yes there's some effect of the history on today's disparities but I would not want to use the term systemic racism to describe that because people will be confused you're using a term that today means you're buying into CRT and we can't do that so again I have a whole article called does systemic racism exist where I pull apart I desegregate these various ideas and show when Christians can and can't use them yeah that's really good because as you said are we talking about there are continuing legacies of racism undoubtedly there are or are we saying that every every one of us comes into the world and not just comes into the world but we have by virtue of our opportunities in the world a whole set of let's call them advantages and disadvantages and that I still think America is more of a meritocracy than almost any other place on earth that there still is an American dream but it's not yeah it's simply not the case that everyone just go work hard and everyone will be rewarded there's a whole set of things and my objection has been not that some people want to identify that sex or race may be one of those things that provide advantages my contention is sometimes they do no doubt sometimes being a white male has been an advantage and if I were trying to get a tenure track position at a secular university it would undoubtedly not be an advantage Thomas Sowell's phrase the quest for cosmic justice if we were God we could understand how everything has contributed so there are I have no problem saying I have privileges I had parents who love each other I was raised in a safe neighborhood I went to a good public school lots of advantages such that if I had made a failure of my life I would have had to try hard to have failed where some people have to try very very hard to succeed that is undoubtedly true and so Christians ought to be able to recognize that and speak in that way but the danger with structural racism systemic racism systemic racism as you say or injustice is it's borrowed from these other conceptual worldviews and while some people are quick to just slap Marxist label on everything it is true that this is this is downstream from a Marxist view which had to do with class oppression and then this is a different kind of racial oppression then you add the intersectionality and there's also sexual or orientation oppression so it is related to a Marxist way of looking at things I don't know if you've read if you've gotten your hands on Edward phasers new book all one in Christ the Catholic critique of racism and critical race theory I have not yet yeah it just came out it's it's it's short it would he's reading all the same stuff you are and it's you know obviously Catholic critique but one of the phrases he uses which was helpful he says often critical race theory is our guilty of

the fallacy of hypothesisation so what he means is giving personal agency to impersonal ambiguous forces so for example you could just look and say the average baseball player in America I don't know pulling the average teacher salary is \$45,000 a year and then somebody says I don't want to live in an economic system that values baseball players at \$2 million a year and values teachers which is that's the hypothesisation that is giving a hypothesis giving a an identity you might say a substantiation personalized personalizing in personal forces when actually there is no great and powerful eyes behind the scenes that saying we value baseball players you know 50 times more than we value teachers and actually if you looked at that you'd realize well the reason baseball players make that much is because there's only a few hundred of them that can do this at this level in the whole country and there are thousands and ten thousands of teachers who do this so it's a it's a supply and demand and that was very helpful because I think the systemic social racism and justice often takes forces that whether good or bad are the product of so many historical cultural free personal choices and makes it into something I sometimes reference a line from Mo the bartender on the Simpsons where he says to Homer you know what I blame this on the breakdown of society that's just sort of the answer this society has done this how do you see that how do you respond to that in any other before we have to bring this into any other core problems that Christians should recognize with CRT. Yeah I agree that there is a some people call it the reification fallacy yeah there's they make real make concrete these abstract concepts so example I thought of when you're talking is whiteness and actually people even talk about it this way whiteness is like a toxic gas that seeps into everything it's just around you it's in the air you breathe it you it seeps into your veins and it's make it's almost like the Christians talk about the demonic or the world right it's like it's a system that we're in the matrix and from the movie but they they they in again I'll talk about this in the book with Pat but in some ways in some ways the reason that this ideology of critical theory broadly you know queer theory critical race theory decolonial theory all these I the reason it has a purchase on the human soul is that it's actually a parody of Christianity right it's a cosmic battle between good and evil and there's evil all around you have to purify yourself from the world and and the way to do that is through cleansing yourself to vesting yourself of your whiteness and your male privilege and you can do these things and feel pure and clean and you're not you're on the light side of lightness and goodness you're there are there are sacred texts and all of that and we go in week if we go through but James Lindsay and Helen Pluck Rose and their book cynical theories who are atheists talk about how there are now there's now a gospel of social justice with holy texts and a priest so and Carl Truman lots of people David French Elizabeth Corey have talked about how this whatever you want to call it critical theory intersectionality there's no name for it unfortunately but whatever it is it's functioning like a pseudo religion and it's meeting people's spiritual needs that's why one of the reasons why it's so effective it's it's speaking our hearts language and our need for justification how can you be pure how can a man keep his way pure by washing himself according to Robin D'Angelo's word right that's that's essentially the message they're

telling you and so I do think that that is part of it and there but there are many it's not just there's one problem people often say it was just a Marxist view of race and I'm like it's sort of to a zeroth order approximation but if you look at the actual history you're drawing on postmodernism on radical black thought on womanist thought on and so it in the end it doesn't really matter it's just right it's wrong but understanding how this is drawn on all these different schools of thought can help you understand understand that get in their heads essentially why do they think that I can't know the truth because I'm a white male or you at least but we'll be cut here's why they're drawing on the work of so and so anyway so yes I do agree with with phaser and there's a lot more to it than that and I'll just finally say one thing I really the one bug I recommend in a bad way to people is Oslem sensei and Robin D'Angelo's book is everyone really equal I have a ton of quotes from it on my website but if I actually wrote a couple years ago when I first read it it was like discovering the dead body at the bottom of the well that was poison the town's water supply it is just a it and they I mean it's explaining what they call critical social justice is its core tenets how it applies to race class gender sexuality physical ability etc they have diagrams of different matrices or oppression but it's if you want to understand in their own words what they believe about reality read that book by Oslemans sensei and D'Angelo it's good it's really helpful but yeah that's I just I'm just pleading with Christians to take this problem seriously please do not just dismiss it as oh it's a bunch of culture warriors no reason I got into this issue as a theoretical chemist was because I was seeing these ideas destroy the lives of people that I knew personally I was seeing it shipwreck their theology that's why I care about it so much and it's not because I am here to get you to vote for Trump in 2020 whoever's running I'm not that's not my goal my goal is to make sure that your theology is rooted in what the Bible teaches and is not destroyed by these unbiblical ideas yeah that's really good let's just finish it this way I'm thinking of two types of people who are maybe listening to this and maybe there's someone probably if they're listening to us they're inclined to agree that's why they've found their way to this podcast so I'm thinking of the person that maybe agrees and it's really stirred up fired up this is a huge problem this is everywhere I'm going to my school board I'm going to the library this is is there anything to that person who's already convinced this is a big maybe one of the central issues of our time and in the church and they would see it everywhere is there anything you think we need to say to that person particularly sort of a pastoral word to their heart the person who's really really already convinced this is a major major issue yeah the first thing I'd say is I agree with you the first thing I was not saying no no hold on I would just say yes you are totally right you are seeing that are very pernicious element of our culture that we must expose and reject I agree the second thing I say would be that you should definitely try to understand the people the Christians evangelical Christians your brothers in Christ who are being seduced I mean that word they're seduced by these ideas try to understand them I don't say you should agree with them I don't see you shouldn't speak out against these ideas try to understand them and then the last thing is try to win them now there's a point at which the cancer is so bad you have to amputate the limb there is a point I'm

not denying that there's a point where you say like this person is beyond my reach but also they're hurting other people we have to simply say you cannot follow this person because they're just so enamored of these ideas but there are other people who even stay are still on the fence try to win them and again not by downplaying the problem but by saying I want to understand you talk to me how can I convince you that I do care about racism I do hate it there are things that I do have to learn maybe that I have never thought of that before I'm totally open to that but how can I convince you that really I'm not doing this because I hate you because I'm just a white supremacist I'm doing this because I genuinely care about you and the church so that's what I'd say but I think people sometimes they hear that word of admonition and they say you're just trying to downplay these problems you're trying to be a third way I know I'm saying I agree with you but we still want to win people right these are your brothers and sisters in Christ their family you don't want them to wander away you want to bring them back to what's solid biblical understandings of these ideas so that's mine and the way to do that is and you've modeled this well carefully read quote don't turn up the temperature unnecessarily don't shame people that rarely works in getting people to agree with you again that may be sort of the amputation approach but while there's still a chance to reason and I think you would agree with this not to slam every attempt at I mean good gospel attempt at racial reconciliation or your pastor quoted from MLK in a sermon or mention that actually slavery was really bad it's not a benign institution and actually white people did bad things in the past these sort of things that I think used to just be no one got upset about I think because CRT is so pernicious and has become so pervasive sometimes we've lost the ability to say no the gospel should bring people to use those words it does not make you guilty of CRT so let's go after what the problem is what it isn't and so here's my follow up question and you already hit on it so if that's the person who's really fired up and we want to affirm you're seeing the problem let's try to win people what about the person is listening to this and you know they're not they're not way off and you know smashing windows or something but but they're not really convinced and they're sort of I know you guys are you guys are really conservative and you're into this but you know I don't think it's quite that bad and actually they do find a lot of meaning and purpose in combating racism and they see that it's a major problem in our history and it's a real passion for theirs what sort of final word would you give to them and again I would say you need to listen to people on the other side this is for both sides there's no there's no especially with other Christian other genuine believers when is listening not allowed you're always supposed to listen be slow to speak and quick to listen I'm not saying agree I'm saying listen so for the people that are sympathetic to quote unquote quote unquote wokeness or critical race theory I would say well at least listen he'd listen to the the people telling you this is really bad stuff and then I do think there's a lot of because I'm obviously on the very alarmed side of things I think that there is a lot of root not need for people to be scared straight in a sense and I would say the book I'd recommend number one would be Christina Cleveland's God is a black woman read that book that she just published this year and realize this is someone who

literally five years ago was being platformed by life way Christianity today the diversity crew all these major major conservative evangelical organizations were platforming her and now five years later she is saying things like above all else we need to be not be transphobic because if God is a black woman then she is definitely a black trans woman that's actually a line from her book and that's just one example but read the entire book to see exactly how her political her beliefs are today and how she attributes that whole way of thinking to critical race theory and that you like well that's just one I'm unfortunately she's not the only one and again I'm notorious sometimes for not naming names but there are many figures like that her on that same trajectory right now and it's not about rejecting individual bad apples it's about recognizing the ideas behind that trajectory and saying those ideas are false and drawing a line in the sense that I cannot affirm these ideas that's really important and if you ignore that warning you're going to be pushed in that same direction yeah serious good word and as you said earlier you know it's not even it is it is the the intellectual ideas but most I mean human beings were driven by our hearts and it is on an even deeper level often a a rival animating spirit I think that's what you see and so you do find what used to kind of get you up in the morning as a Christian sort of what you see about the problem in the world the solution in the world you said the very beginning talking about your apologetics book so Christians say the problem is sin and an offended God therefore the answer is we need a savior oh there's lots of other problems obviously but that's the fundamental one and the one from which all others flow when you set up a a a rival set up you may still hold to these same statement of faith somewhere in the attic you say well I don't deny any of those things but you're animating your energizing spirit is now the problem is environmental degradation the problem is the sort of oppression that instead of moving vertical David saying against you only have I sinned even though he's sinned against almost everyone it moves entirely horizontal and so the offendedness is just here and when that line goes there then you have good guys and bad guys in our world oppressors instead of fundamentally where sinners and we're need of a savior and that that's what I would want I don't want people to stop being passionate about speaking out against racism the Bible gives no quarter to racism or people in the majority to have open humble hearts to consider ways things they don't see all of that is what we should do as Christians as you say we should be quick to listen and slow to anger slow to speak but we ought to be discerning and this is pastorally the concern that pastors ought to have we ought to be concerning when young people in particular but it's not just young people find in their hearts the sort of rival energy they don't quite call it a religion but what's getting the most animated most exercised is something other than this old old gospel story and of all the people out there who have just done the yeoman's work on reading this stuff digesting this stuff publishing this stuff you've done such a great job so thank you for that blessings to you and pat as you work on this really important book that's going to talk about CRT but also critical theory more broadly I know you're reading a lot of the gender and sexuality stuff and then once again just to mention the apologetics book why believe a reasoned approach to Christianity Neil I hope since we're

just a few hours down the road we can be in the same place at the same time but thank you for coming up with us and I hope you'll be able to see you next week for coming on the program this morning good thank you Kevin thank you until next time glorify God enjoy him forever and read a good book you

(dramatic music)

(buzzing)