

OpenTheo

The Rise of Contemporary Critical Theory with Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

We've heard the terms before: cultural Marxism, socialism, intersectionality, microaggressions, standpoint epistemology, the Frankfurt School, Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, and many more. But what do they mean? Where did they come from? And how should Christians respond? Kevin talks to Neil and Pat about their new book, *Critical Dilemma: The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology*, to try answer these questions and to think carefully about we can understand and engage the dominant ideologies of our day.

Chapters:

0:00 Welcome

1:17 The Critical Dilemma

23:25 Sponsor | Crossway Books

24:00 What is Contemporary Critical Theory

57:30 Sponsor | Desiring God

58:05 CRT: A Worldview or Religion?

1:11:40 A Final Word

1:14:45 Until Next Time

Books & Everything:

Critical Dilemma: The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology—Implications for the Church and Society

Why Believe?: A Reasoned Approach to Christianity

Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age

Foundations for Lifelong Learning: Education in Serious Joy

Transcript

Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin Deung, Senior Pastor at Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina, just outside of Charlotte.

Today I'm joined by my guests, Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, all three of us in the great state, sunny state this morning. Allergy-filled state for me of North Carolina. So glad to have these two brothers on here.

I've had lunch once with Pat and I've had Neil on the program, but I don't think we've actually met in person, but very thankful for both of you brothers. Thank you for your work. And today we are talking about Critical Dilemma, The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology, implications for the church and society published by Harvest House just has come out in the last couple of weeks.

Thank you to both of you. This is a comprehensive work in many ways and excellent work, nearly 500 pages. Thank you for your carefulness, your clarity, your depth of insight and understanding on this book.

So let me just start here. How did both of you get to work together on this project and other projects and how did you each become interested in this topic because it's not an obvious intersection? Let's start with you, Neil. Yeah, good question.

So I became a Christian in graduate school, doing my degree in theoretical chemistry, and I became interested in apologetics shortly after becoming a Christian. So I was interested in sharing the gospel with my atheist, agnostic, intellectual colleagues, and that grew into my first book, Why Believed, Published with Crossway Last Year, which we talked about I think last year on the show. But around 2016, 2017, I was finishing up the first draft of that book and I providentially got to know Pat.

He was doing a PhD in, as will tell you, critical tradition. And I began talking to him about some changes I was seeing in our culture surrounding our conversation on race, class, and gender. And he told me his research into critical theory.

I was like, the light bulb went off. This is what I'm seeing, not only in culture, but in the church as well. So I began reading a lot about critical social theories.

And then he really guided my reading and shaped my thinking. And we've been collaborating ever since writing books and articles on the topic. So did you know each other before that? We were connected by a mutual friend who also goes to our church

and we just became friends that way.

And it was totally out of a blue that we connected. I get to providentially on this topic. Yeah, so Pat, give us some of your background.

It sounds like you had some academic interest in this already, though it's not exactly your academic discipline. But just tell us how you got involved in these issues. Sure.

Well, I was a Kevin. I was actually a banker. I was in the financial services and banking business for about 20 years.

And at a certain point, God began to press me to get into the arena of ideas. I considered about whether he was calling me to the ministry directly or if he was pushing me to go to graduate school and then get into the arena of ideas a little bit more directly. I've been doing lay apologetics for a while.

And I concluded that he wasn't leading me to the ministry, but that he was pushing me to go to grad school, get some advanced degrees and do that along secular lines. And so I got a master's in communication studies. And then I got a PhD in education, will studies and cultural studies, which is in the critical tradition.

Right. And I chose that pathway for two reasons. One, I knew that it would be opposed in many ways to biblical epistemology to the Christian faith.

And I wanted to learn about ideas that were opposed to the Christian faith, to be able to learn them and then be able to be salt and light in that context. And then I also knew that there would be some overlap, at least some common grace and concerns around justice issues that often dovetail with me being a Christian and being concerned about justice issues. And so that led to the degree that I chose and I wanted to teach college in the secular environment and be edifying to my fellow colleagues who are wonderful.

And then also to my students to try to be a mentor to them. And like Neil said, we had a mutual friend that went to our church. He was actually in a Bible study of mine and in a Bible study of Neil's.

And then he said, you two need to meet each other. And so we did. And I think when I went over to meet Neil, we talked for like five or six hours that first day.

And then he drove home late. Yeah, drove home late. And then Neil acknowledged that he began to see some of the issues around critical social theory propping up in the church.

And at first I was a little bit incredulous. Well, what do you mean in the evangelical church? Some of these ideas you feel like are are taking hold. And he had saw some things in a pronounced way that I had not seen yet in terms of specifically churches that

context that he was more connected to.

Although I had begun to see that there was too much emphasis on ethnic identity cropping up in certain places of the evangelical church that began to worry me. Because our identity in Christ must really be first and override any other identity marker. And so that began to concern me.

But our partnership began out of that first meeting. And then as Neil mentioned, we began to write together, speak together, go to some conferences together. We went to a conference on apologetics and in New Orleans at the seminary there, the Southern by the seminary there.

And it was in the airport of leaving that conference that we thought, you know, we may need to write a book on these subjects. And here we are. Neil, you're somewhat active on Twitter.

I'm trying to look at Twitter less and less. But you've been, you sort of made a name for yourself. I hold you up as a really good example of someone who made a name by doing his homework, even though this wasn't your, your academic background.

And putting your ideas out there and interacting with people in a sometimes a playful way. I think that's your personality, but in a respectful way firm, yet never nasty. How, how have you handled the online world? Because from my vantage point, you've, you've managed to keep your sanity to not be a jerk, even though I've seen people be a jerk to you.

I don't always know the gaming stuff you're talking about or the chemistry or the math stuff, but you seem to just have kind of kept your, your wits and your sanity about. I mean, have you been tempted at times to just go off on people or do you go to bed at night sometimes and tell your wife you're really discouraged? What's the online version of this bin for you? That's a good question. Yeah, it has been a hard at times.

I have to step away and just say, Hey, just let it go. It's just online. I do try to always remember that I'm, I remember what Jesus said, we're giving an account for every careless word spoken.

That's every tweet written to. And I mean, man, that's a, that's a, that's a tough verse. And you really think about it.

And so when I say, when I want to lash out, maybe you're getting angry, I just think, man, I'm not the answer for that. So I choose not to rather not answer for that. And in general, I do think my approach has always been, I think it's chosen our book to, we're aiming to persuade.

And you persuade best when you represent the other side fairly, charitably. And in the

book, it comes through, I hope that we let critical theorists speak for themselves. I think one of the things I try to do in online and in my book reviews is I just quote extensively.

I let people tell you what they believe before I even, you know, analyze, interpret anything. So our book has been like 770 plus footnotes. We cite over 200 different critical theorists.

We have block quotes, not just a phrase here and there. We're like, let them tell you what they believe. And the first section, the first seven chapters is understanding.

It's like, it's just about understanding these ideas, not even criticizing them yet. We're going to first establish what they're saying. And only later do we turn to, well, how should Christians think about these issues? That's great.

So let's let's jump into the book. I made lots of notes in the book, have lots of tabs here, lots of things I want to ask you. We'll see how much we can get through.

But I was it was interesting how you started the book. And not that I disagreed with the very start of the book, but I think there must be some personal experience in conversations because you start the book by saying, this is not a book about the Republican Party. And then this is not a book about the Democratic Party or any other party.

But why did you start the book that way? What were you trying to accomplish with the reader in alerting them to this? And what might be behind that in your own conversations? I wonder, Pat. Well, we wanted to immediately disabuse anybody in the notion that this was some of the things that we were trying to draw partisan lines. And there's a cultural war that's going on that people are very heightened up, you know, that people are heightened up and amped up about.

And we wanted to, in a sense, de-energize that, drop the tone down a little bit and signal pretty quickly that this is going to be a definite response, certainly, where we are taking a side, but it was going to be measured, thoughtful, nuanced. And so we wanted to kind of get some clutter out of the way in terms of how people might be thinking about this type of book, because as you know, Kevin, the books that are being written on this subject often do throw some stones along the political and cultural landscape. And we were trying to show immediately that that's not what this book was going to be doing.

Now, and also we're signaling that we're not going after personalities per se. We do mention some individuals because we want to make sure that this is not some strong man, that some topic we're just making up. But really we're dealing with ideas in a robust way, and we wanted that to come off.

And we recognize that if you, theologically, in a certain place that downstream from theology is culture and downstream from culture is politics. We know these categories

are connected, but we did want to indicate that this book is not just about politics at all. Right.

And I appreciate it too, that what you said there is just not about politics. It's not like you're trying to say we found a position that just rises above all of our political and just you're just saying that's just not what this is about. So if the Republicans want to make this an issue on one side or the Democrats on another side, they can do that.

And your readers can figure that out and determine how important that is. But you're talking about the ideas and how Christians should relate to these ideas. One of the things, Neil, and you both have alluded to this, that one of the reasons for writing the book was sensing already five, six, seven years ago, some of these ideas had come into the Christian church.

And you talk about a few people by name and you're respectful, but you mentioned Michelle Higgins, Christina Cleveland, Dante Stewart, that these were people that to some degree were not to some degree, they were given some platforms. They were people whose books or ministries might be commended by important people within our kind of conservative evangelicalish tribe. And yet within a matter of years, they're writing things or saying things that every evangelical, I hope would agree beyond the pale.

Should we have seen some of this coming, Neil? And how do we think? How do we be discerning in a way that doesn't, you know, sometimes my friends and I talk about the one drop rule of wokeness. If somebody ever said something or recommended the wrong book or the wrong person, there's just one drop of wokeness and they're gone. So and just cancel them in a way that the left would cancel people.

So that's that's not the way to go. And yet we do really need to be discerning because I would argue that some of these folks, we should have seen some of these ideas were already present before they metastasized into their present form. How do you help us, Neil, be discerning with these things without being reactionary? Right.

That's a good question. I do think that in those three cases, there were signals long before they actually landed on their extremely heterodox, even apostasy. It should have been, it should have been coming because they were saying things and signaling things about who they were quoting and the kinds of ideas they were expressing that were very clear to if you understood what they were saying.

I agree also, though, that we shouldn't be so extreme or so reactionary that in one drop of wokeness, one wrong word and you're canceled, you're excommunicated, you're under just a certificate. We don't actually say that in the book that when your pastor says the word oppression or justice, you can't cancel them. And those are in the Bible.

He's just going to be just reading Isaiah. So how do you, where you draw the line? I think we tried to do this book is we've tried to draw the lines around ideas, not people. We say this is exactly what the idea is and why it's unbiblical.

And then here are ways to understand these. Here are the positive aspects of this idea. Here are the things people could say that are within the realm of orthodoxy.

But here's where it goes totally wrong. So when you really firmly articulate that line that you must not cross the Christian, it helps you see people that are either heading towards that line or stepping over it, maybe not stepping over it. So I mean, this example would be something like lived experience.

We'll talk about how that's extremely important concept within critical theory. And the lived experience is given sort of this huge epistemic status. You shouldn't invalidate someone's lived experience.

Bob, Bob. Well, that's that's true. As Christians, we have to say the Bibles are ultimate authority, not your experience, not my ethnic background.

None of that gives me insight into the Bible that's, you know, untouchable. That said, is it always false that lived experience is completely bankrupt? Well, no, of course not. Our experiences do matter.

They affect how you do everything, whether you live your life, how you even, how you read the Bible doesn't mean you're rightly or wrongly, it's going to affect you. So we try to, again, very clear, precise lines and then say, uh, so then you can evaluate people and ideas based on where they fall. And ultimately the Bibles are standard.

We're saying, what does the Bible say about these ideas? Then how should we parse them carefully? Yeah. We'll come back to this lived experience idea in a bit. It reminds me one time a few years ago, I was speaking to a group of, with a group of college students, and these are conservative evangelical college students, but they were maybe some of them were a little skeptical of the conservative.

For lack of a better term stance. I was taking on some of these issues. And I think it was talking about homosexuality or one of these issues.

And the question was something like, uh, well, have you ever wrestled with these desires or can you tell us about any friends you have that are? Gay or have you experienced depression in your life? And I don't even know if the question or knew what she was asking, but behind that was some of this idea of, well, you, you probably think what you do. Because you've had certain experiences and unless you can bring to the table, some of your bona fides with either experiences or maybe some, some victimology, then I'm not sure that you really have a place to speak to these issues, even though the person probably would have said, Oh, yes, of course, I agree with you where you land biblically.

How do we handle those in a very real time in real life? Because both of you are really thoughtful on apologetics.

How do we handle that when somebody asks us those sort of questions and we're sort of immediately put on our heels? Like I, do I have to, you know, make up some, some new sin struggle in my life? If I can be an authority on this issue, how do we handle those sort of retorts? I would say a couple things, Kevin. First off, for me, you know, I enter into spaces that are a part of the critical tradition quite a bit. So some of my personal experience has some receipts around some of these issues.

Let me just begin there. My dissertation is in the critical tradition squarely. My conceptual framework is critical pedagogy.

Another thing is at times protest, I go to situations where there seems to be some corruption that's taking place in our system, saying the police system and it was something that may be happening in my local world, where I think that the police department needs to have some kind of investigation to try to make sure we get an understanding of what's really taking place here and what appears to be an injustice issue. And so I tried to peacefully engage that from a protest standpoint. Also, at times going to, well, I write about white power and white nationalism and I push back against that strongly.

I've received some death threats that are pretty significant because I push back and challenge white power and white nationalist groups. And that has even led to going to the protest and pushing back on the organizers there that on a soft, outright, soft white power rally. And so I think part of the response is to get some experience, number one, around some of these concerns.

And then I do have friends and family and colleagues who, in fact, are part of the LGBTQIA plus community. And so a lot of us do have some experiences, but then more importantly, we can't build our lives upon a small data set of experiences and then with them extrapolate to universal perspectives or ideas. And I think that we have to remind the people that we're talking to that our lived experience, while it's important and while it can tell us some things, it is a small sample size and that we've got to get outside of our lived experience to then make some determinations around what truth is in a broader sense.

There was a time that I was challenging a white power person. And I asked them very specifically, how have you come to believe that black people as a whole are inferior to white people? And then over the next 20 minutes, that gentleman gave me five or six anecdotal experiences that he used to determine why he's made these universal conclusions. And I helped point out that don't to him, don't you see how illogical that is and that you don't really live your life that way based with other categories where you do tap into a broader universal understanding.

So I think that we need a mixture of this and our discussion around lived experience and some of our pushback. And then a final thing is that, you know, there's a big, there's a big, you know, social binary that's put out there, oppressor and oppressed. And it's put forth from standpoint of epistemology that the one who is oppressed not only has their better understanding of what oppression is like, but they also have a better understanding of the oppressors perspective.

The oppressed and the oppressor. Now that's a nice convenient, a pistol move there. But sometimes I'm having to remind people that, well, if I am part of that oppressed, pressor status, then that means I have ideas around freedom and emancipation that you don't have because I'm a free and I'm emancipated.

Because ostensibly I'm an oppressor. So actually I have better insight about that than you do since you're oppressed and emancipation is elusive for you. But then I say, don't you see how that's absurd and unreasonable to think in those terms? I think there's a kind of a shock and approach to how to deal with lived experience concerns.

And you know, sometimes it's heads, eye wind, tails, you lose. So if someone who's in the quote, oppressed class starts making arguments that are on the oppressor side, well, then your guilty of internalized oppression, you don't realize why you're saying that because that's just whiteness within you. One of the things I really appreciate about what you just said there, Pat, and it comes through with both of you.

One of my friends who also appreciate your book has commented to me. I get the undeniable sense that Neil and Pat really hate racism. And that may sound like a strange thing to say, but I do think it can be easy on these issues to sort of just clearing your throat like racism's bad.

Of course, this stuff is bad. But but you really viscerally know it's a sin and it's been a part of our American past. It's not fully eradicated though.

Great, great strides have been made, but we don't live in a post racial society. So I appreciate that you're saying that because you warn about some of the reaction or a posture that could say, hey, if anybody even now acknowledges that race could still be an issue or racism may still exist, all of a sudden, then your CRT. It seems like for a number of years, there were folks and maybe I'll just say many white evangelicals, the stereotype who were kind of leaning into these ideas without realizing it because they thought, well, this this is a way to sort of make some steps towards reconciliation.

And I think many didn't realize the intellectual water they were taking on, but now I think some people are so nervous of any of these ideas creeping in that even some very common sense notions they won't acknowledge. And so I appreciate that you've done your homework to say, here are things we can agree with. Here's where racism and injustice is a problem and the Bible speaks against these things.

So we don't need to pretend or be embarrassed by that. I want to get into the the meat of the book. Before we do that, I just want to mention Crossway are one of the sponsors for Life in Books and Everything.

And maybe fitting sort of ties in with some of these same ideas, just to mention Rosaria Butterfield's book I interviewed her a couple of weeks ago, five lives of our anti-Christian age that has to do LGBTQ stuff and feminism and gender roles and modesty. And Rosaria always is very articulate and passionate and commend that book and her work for you. So thankful.

Thank you to Crossway. Neil, you are, you know, both of you here, it's really helpful that you talk about how we can sort of lump all of these terms together. So on page 26, cultural Marxism, socialism, critical race theory, intersectionality, anti-racism, critical theory, Hegelian dialectic standpoint, epistemology.

And it does happen that sometimes maybe well-meaning Christians get a little bit of knowledge. And all of a sudden it's, well, that's the Hegelian dialectic. And you guys are cultural Marxists and you give a very good comical example.

It'd be like somebody in atheists attempting to critique Christianity saying Christianity started in 1517 when Martin Luther was excommunicated for believing in the Trinity. Well, you got Luther, you got a date, you got the Trinity, you got, and everything else is all jumbled up. So you have carefully looked at these different terms.

And then at the very heart of the book, you say, well, we got all these other things, neo-Marxism, second wave feminism, and you've coined a different term, contemporary critical theory. Why do you call it that as opposed to these other terms which you say aren't really identical? One of the problems is that people on the sort of more progressive side tend to play this shell game where every term you use is the wrong term. Oh, that term is the wrong term.

No, that term is your stealing that from black vernacular. That term is a neo-Nazi conspiracy theory. And so there's no term you can use.

And actually, in this literature, you can see that even the critical theorists themselves aren't settled on a given term. It's everywhere. So we just said, hey, let's pick a term that's descriptive that is fair, that's neutral.

There's no baggage associated with contemporary critical theory. You insist on calling it something else you can. Let's focus on the ideas, not the labels.

The other problem is that Christians tend to just firebomb some term. We're going to just firebomb critical race through a firebomb, the term cultural Marxism. What happens if you just do that without focusing on the ideas that they'll just switch the label.

They'll say, well, we're not doing critical race through. We're doing anti-racism now. We're not doing anti-racism.

We're doing whiteness pedagogy. You have to identify the ideas at play. Then no matter how they're cloaked and what language they're cloaked, you can say, well, those ideas aren't on the vocal.

Regardless of what you call them. So we use that term contemporary critical theory, but we really zero in on the ideas and go after those. And then you can spot them regardless of whether they're coming in through feminism, through queer theory, through critical race theory, et cetera.

So let me give you guys an opportunity. I know it's a 500-page book. So I'm asking you to do the impossible and be brief, but I know you guys can do it.

To just talk about some of these big categories, because you really helpfully distill these down into, here's a list of nine affirmations or often it's four. So I want to talk about contemporary critical theory and then CRT and then queer theory. So, Neil, let's just stick with you here, because on the same page as you talk about contemporary critical theory, introduce this as a term, you give these four things.

So we could spend 15 minutes on each of them, but just walk us through what you say are these four characteristics of contemporary critical theory. Social binary, hegemonic power, lived experience, social justice. What are meant by those four things and maybe we've been there, what are some of the problems with them? Sure.

So just to be clear, contemporary critical theory is this broad category, the umbrella category. And then you have sub disciplines like critical race theory, queer theory, critical pedagogy, postcolonial theory that are expressions of these four ideas in narrow ranges like race. So critical race theory plays these four ideas to race.

Queer theory applies these four ideas to sexuality and gender. Critical pedagogy applies those four ideas to education. It's a rough approximation of what we're dealing with.

The four ideas are social binary. It says that, society is divided into oppressor groups and oppressed groups along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality. So you have white depressing people of color, you have men oppressing women, you have straight people oppressing LGBTQ people, you have Christian depressing non-Christians and so forth.

You have physically abled people oppressing disabled people. So that's going on the social binary. People hear that and they say, that's crazy.

I'm not oppressing people that are in a wheelchair. Just because I happen to be able bodied. Well, then the second idea is hegemonic power.

So critical theory has redefined the word oppression, to refer not just to tyranny or cruelty, but to refer to the ways in which the ruling class, whether it's whites or men or heterosexuals or Christians, impose their values and norms on society. So in their view, whites impose white norms and white expressions and white values on culture so that everybody in society absorbs these values in the water and therefore it marginalizes people that are non-white, that have white values. Men through the patriarchy impose their ideas on culture and that oppresses women.

Straight people impose their heterosexual ideas on culture that oppresses LGBTQ people and so on. So that's why you can look around at society that looks kind of, not, people aren't killing each other usually and still say it's deeply oppressive because we've redefined the word oppression. And of course everybody, whether they're oppressor or oppressed, gets socialized into these oppressive ideas that we all are in a sense brainwashed into the patriarchy, to what's supremacy, into heterosexism.

So how do we get out? The third idea is lived experience. Live experience gives oppressed people insight into social reality that oppressors don't have. So we need to then affirm and validate and center this courses of oppressed groups with whether it's people of color or women or LGBTQ people or the disabled because they have real insight into reality.

And finally the end goal of critical theory is social justice which they define as dismantling the systems and structures which perpetuate the social binaries. They want to tear down these discourses, these norms, these values that elevate straight white men the expense that everyone else. That's their goal, the end goal and the right side of history.

That's really, really helpful. Neil, do they apply these to different countries or governing institutions that are not white, Christian, heterosexual? I mean there would be enclaves even in America where city councils are probably, you know, have a lot of LGBTQ representation. Certainly go around the world, caste system in India or the way that, you know, most other countries, I think of China, I think of other places in the Far East would be incredibly discriminatory towards those who are not a part of the majority ethnicity.

So do these ideas get applied globally or is it just where whites and Christians and heterosexuals can sort of be the oppressors? This is an important point. And part of the reason we began the book by saying this is not about politics is because this is global. We get calls from Japan, India, Kenya, Ghana, the UK, South Africa asking what are we, what's going on here? We don't, something's in our culture, you're exporting this poison from the US to our country, take it back because it, critical theories contextualize differently in different countries, but it's like a parasite, it invades the host matter where you are.

So in other countries, it's not, the main route is not through say race, it's through

intertribal conflict of oppressor tribes and oppressed tribes in India. Or oppressors, yeah. Yeah, in India, it's oppressor cast and oppressed cast.

The critical theory will latch onto the most salient feature of conflict in society and explain it quote unquote via the social binary. So you can't just say, well, how does it map onto Republicans versus Democrats? Well, the other countries, they don't even exist, but you have to understand the ideas and how they jump from host to host. And that's even, and then in terms of our country, of course, we put it in the book, it is a major problem in the sense that critical theory fails to realize that all these privileges are contextual.

So in some context, it's not the LGBTQ person who is quote unquote oppressed as minority. It's actually the straight white male Christian who's completely alone. Pat in his program, I think, is a minority.

He's an old white straight male. So he, if anyone's experiencing sort of being othered, it's him, but they see it all in terms of, they would say it's about the structure of society as a whole. So even if they had, they might admit that, okay, maybe in some really progressive college town, the conservative evangelical is othered, but in society as a whole, it's not that way.

So that's how they would get around the problem of this social binary. Yeah, go ahead, Pat. I just wanted to mention to help our listeners that it's important to keep in mind just as a, this is very basic, concise way to put it.

But we want to think about historic critical theory from the Frankfurt School in the 1920s and 30s where the term critical theory originated, historic critical theory, and that's of a social institution in Frankfurt, Germany in 1920s and 30s where a lot of theorists were coalesced. Historic critical theory is both an extension and an amendment to Marxism. Critical social theory today, like critical, and the various critical social theories that comprise a critical race theory, critical pedagogy, queer theory, postcolonialism, etc.

Critical social theory is an extension and an amendment to historic critical theory. Our convention of contemporary critical theory is us pulling those four main ideas that Neil mentioned from critical social theory, but we want to be careful to say that those four ideas are not all that critical social theory talks about. It's those four ideas that are contemporary in the moment that are having the biggest impact on the church and on society at large.

And that's why we have created the term or using the term contemporary critical theory and then putting those four ideas associated with that term is because those ideas are having the most power on the ground and the most influence, but it's not because we're saying that that's all that there is to critical social theory. It's important to make that distinction. Yeah, that's really helpful.

I want to keep going with that, Pat, because as you guys have explained nicely, critical race theory is really a subset of what you're talking about with this helpful term contemporary critical theory. Though CRT is probably what most of our listeners, that's one that's got the most play. And I always think it's ironic even here, who wrote the forward? Carl R Truman.

CRT. Can you believe it? Carl Truman. Whatever I see.

I've been talking about that. We, you know, I used to just in shorthand refer to him, you know, with a text or something CRT. And I can't do that anymore.

Carl, you're to blame for all of this. But just unpack these four things. And it's really applying these bigger four issues.

But you say on page 154, four central ideas in critical race theory scholarship. And Pat, just unpack whichever ones you can. One, racism is endemic, normal, permanent, pervasive.

Two, racism is concealed beneath ideas like colorblindness, meritocracy, individualism, neutrality, objectivity. Three, lived experience is critical. We've talked about that.

And four, racism is one of many interlocking systems of oppression, including sexism, classism, heterosexism. Maybe those first two in particular, we haven't quite talked about yet. Racism is endemic, normal, pervasive, and it's concealed beneath these other ideas.

Just help us understand some of these central features of CRT. Sure. First, let me just back up a tad bit.

CRT is dealing with a number of things. One of the things that we talk about is how it is thinking about law. And that is very important.

And then that's how it began, right? Critical legal. That's right. And then how critical race theory thinks about law.

It's kind of a, you know, is a substrate underneath all perspectives relative to critical race theory. Critical race theory also has another macro topic of the tenets and the ideas and the characteristics that permeate it. And in the scholarship, there are about 15 individual tenets and characteristics and themes that are promoted in critical race theory.

And we go through each of those 15 tenets. We mentioned them in our book. And then the four ideas that you're mentioning are kind of a combination of those tenets.

And oftentimes you'll see in the scholarship a combining of those tenets. And so the first one would be that that race certainly is endemic. It's pervasive.

It's broad in our society. It's normal. And it's been with the U.S. Society from the beginning, and it is still here.

And that while racism changes and morphs in terms of how it is applied or how it is manifested, it never goes away. And essentially it will never go away. It just changes how it is manifested in society.

And so that is a constant feature of critical race theory that you see in the scholarship. And it's critical race theory is strong in its acknowledgement and its press that racism is happening. And it's happening almost whether you realize it or not.

And so the reason why critical race theory says that it's happening whether you realize it or not is because part of CRT's push is number two is that racism is concealed in concepts and in perspectives like competition, egalitarianism, meritocracy, colorblind perspective, and that racism is hard to recognize at times, particularly if you're white and you're not used to thinking about race. And so that is a major push of critical race theory. And we do acknowledge that sometimes racism is hard to see.

We do acknowledge that racism still exists. Back to number one, that it does still exist not only individually but also institutionally. And we do understand that and acknowledge and assert that, for instance, egalitarianism and competition and meritocracy could be those ideas could be weaponized in a way to act as if the playing field is now totally legal and what's the big deal? Why is there any concern about whether one group doesn't have the same kind of opportunity that whites or other groups have? And we recognize that colorblind ideology can be something that is not the best approach to think about racism because colorblind ideology puts forth this notion that I don't see color.

Well, if you're a person of color, you want to be seen. And sometimes not seen color erases some of the cultural distinctions of people of color that ought to be honored, celebrated, and appreciated. And so colorblind ideology is not necessarily the best approach to race.

However, we would say that particularly coming out of pro in the 70s and 80s as white certain whites began to adopt the colorblind ideology, what they were in fact doing was saying that I'm not going to judge you negatively based upon the color of your skin. And that is a very good thing. That's a good thing.

I mean, the the lady justice is often blindfolded because that's how justice is supposed to work. It's not supposed to be take partiality. And that's very biblical.

Neither the rich nor the poor are supposed to be favored. You're supposed to as imperfectly as we can do here on earth give you justice under the law. So I think at best that's colorblindness, but you're yeah, keep going.

And I would say that we need to think about the era, the time, the moment, the zeitgeist

that we're in, if we're in the 70s and 80s, and you're a 57 year old white woman, and you've come to this, and you grew up connected to Jim Crow and Jim Crow, and now you've come to this perspective that hey, it's terrible. It's horrendous to judge somebody negatively based on the color of skin. So I'm going to not see color.

I'm going to treat people the same. Well, in the 70s, 80s, 90s, that is a very good idea that should be heralded. Now we're sitting in 2023 where there's been more sophisticated discussion around how to think about colorblind ideology.

We've gone through iterations of identity politics relative to our society. And it might be wise to now start to think about whoa, wait a minute, we don't want to slap that colorblind perspective on every single thing relative to race. And in fact, it might be flawed at certain points.

So we need to be wise and we need to be sensitive to those dynamics and not now shift how we're thinking about colorblind ideology. But those two things that racism is pervasive, it is operative, it is normal, it is customary. That's a big push of critical race theory.

And it hasn't gone away. It's just morphed and how it's applied. And in fact, some people would say that it's even more insidious that it's ever been.

Now, I push back sometimes I'm with a one time I was with a colleague who told me as I was taking him to lunch, he told me that he didn't think that there was any real change between Jim Crow and today. And that it's absurd to think that things have improved dramatically. As he and I were having a conversation in a restaurant where the cost of the items were the same for both of us, and me as a white guy and a friend was picking up the tab and paying for his lunch.

And so we push back on the absurdity that there hasn't been real changes and that racism is still in the same. It's not codified in the law, Dejiro racism, nearly what it used to, in fact, it's almost totally absent in the United States. There have been material changes.

So we obviously push back on the first perspective of number one. And then we also push back around the notions of meritocracy and competition of egalitarianism and colorblind ideology, masking things. While there's some truth to that, we impact that.

We push back against that as well. And then of course, there's two more lived experience and interlocking systems of oppression that need to be impact either. Neil can take that or Kevin, if you want me to continue with that, I can.

It's up to you. Yeah, just give us a brief, a brief summary of those two. Okay, and Neil's already talked about the reality of lived experience being one of our four big things that we talk about relative to contemporary critical theory in general.

This is a strong feature of critical race theory that lived experience of people of color, give them special insight into social analysis around race, and then also social analysis in general on some level. That if you're part of that oppressed class of people, that oppressed group of people, that your lived experience does, in fact, give you special insight. And that certainly would apply to people of color.

And that if you're not, if you're white and if you're not a person of color, then your lived experience has given you a deficient understanding of social analysis. And therefore, you need people of color to help you along and to bring you along. The fourth item that racism is one of many interlocking systems of oppression, here we find out that critical race theory is not just about race, as it turns out.

Critical race theory to be an authentic critical race theorist, to be someone who is authentically about anti-racism, then you have to onboard all these other oppressions that ostensibly are present in society and push back against those as well. So you must adopt, for instance, the agenda of the LGBTQIA plus community. And you must recognize that the gay community has been oppressed relative to sexuality and gender.

And if you're going to be a true critical race theorist, then you have to pick up their concerns. And you have to push back against any type of homophobia, whether that's a legitimate or not coming from somebody that is interrogating homophobia. You have to adopt that perspective wholesale and push back against so-called oppression that is happening with the gay community.

Because the sexism and able-bodiedism and issues around sexuality in terms of homosexuality and gender, issues around even how in education environments, critical pedagogy is concerned about pushing back against capitalism and class. And so all these oppressions are interlocking. They're connected to one another.

You can't rightly deal with one of them according to critical race theory unless you rightly deal with all of them. Because these oppressions are part of ultimately intersectionality. They're connected to an intersectional framework that is connected together, all these different axes, all these different identity markers from class to gender to sexuality and race and so forth.

And since they're all connected, now we have to fight back all these oppressions at once. In order to actually do critical race theory, you will have to be pushing back against all these oppressions because they're interlocking. And so that's that fourth feature.

And all these things are elaborate. They're more nuanced and are more robust than what I've just said here. And we impact this in our book.

Right. And great detail. It's really helpful.

I want to underscore one of the things you did there in both of you do well in the book.

And that's to think very carefully about our language and our words and the language that people are sometimes using against us or against Christian ideas. For example, just in that discussion there in that first core tenant of CRT, that racism is pervasive.

I can imagine somebody saying, hey, racism is everywhere. It's in every institution. It's the air we breathe.

And then somebody saying, hold on a second. I don't think that's true. And then the person coming back and saying, wait, you don't think there are still racists in the world? Well, that's not the same argument you just made.

And I love you even have a little picture of this. It's called Mott in Bailey. And it the Mott in Bailey argument is and why it's really important for Christians to spot this.

Because it just happens that quickly. You give the example in your book. Somebody says, all whites are racists.

Well, that's an extreme and on the face of it absurd question. But then somebody maybe quickly retreats to say, well, you don't think that white people still struggle with racism? Well, that's a very different thing than you just said. So what is this Mott in Bailey argument? Why is it so important to recognize it? Where does it come from? So that term goes back to a philosopher, named Nicholas Schackle on a paper he critiqued, he was critiquing postmodern scholars who did the same thing.

So Mott in Bailey is an old medieval castle design where they had the Mott was the lower level place where people lived, like the town. And then but when the town was attacked, it was not well fortified. The town's people would run up a bridge to the Bailey, which is a very fortified castle on a hill.

So his comparison was that postmodern scholars, and we argued critical theorists today, will make these outrageous nonsensical claims like all white people are racist. That's the Mott. That's the Bailey backwards.

The Bailey is the the big town which's hard to defend. It makes it's outrageous hard to defend claim like all whites are racist the Bailey. But then when they're attacked and say, wait, that's crazy.

That's not true. Then they retreat to the more modest, defensible Mott. It says, Oh, all I'm saying is that whites struggle with races like everybody does.

But then it's they're like, well, that sounds more that's true. And once you repel that attack, you retreat right back to the Bailey and you live there and you keep saying whites are all racist. So the key to defusing that strategy is to identify it say that, Hey, you're using a Mott in Bailey, you're saying these outrageous things and when you're at challenge, you retreat to some more reasonable thing, you identify that strategy.

And then you basically burn the bridge. You can't retreat. You got to defend your crazy claim.

You can't just retreat to a more reasonable claim. And so the key is identifying it and not letting them get away with that equivocation. Yeah.

And what's key there is they don't really abandon the more extreme claim. So you're to use the medieval analogy from whence it comes. If you're retreating to the fortified castle, well, then you've abandoned this village in this town and you're back here.

But really, what happens in the argument is the person hasn't really abandoned it. They could go back as if they've now established the more absurd claim by the more reasonable claim. So another example, you know, just to talk about kind of the lived experience, somebody says, well, you just believe that because your heterosexual cisgendered male, then you say, no, wait, I believe that because of the Bible, because of reason.

And then someone says, no, no, well, you don't think that you're affected by your own upbringing and lived experience? Well, no, of course, we're all affected by our experience. But that wasn't the claim that you initially just made. So that's the Bailey.

And you just retreated to the moi. I think this happens all the time. And in this kind of discussion in particular, I wonder, Neil, can you unpack another one of these? What is a bolverism? Where does that come from? And why does Twitter so specialized in bolverisms? So bolverism was a term coined by CS Lewis in an essay.

And he talked about how people today, and that was written in the 60s even, but today definitely in the 2020s, people will rather than attacking the truth or false of a claim. So you make a claim like, you know, I have 1000 pounds in my bank account, that was Lewis's claim. So when it says I have 1000 pounds in my bank, someone will not actually challenge the claim by going to your bank records and saying, no, you don't, yes, you do, but just say, Oh, you're saying that as wish fulfillment, you wish you had 1000 pounds in the bank.

And therefore they're debunking your reason for making that claim rather than actually going to the evidence, saying what does the evidence say? And Lewis pointed out this is completely invalid reasoning. Well, today that happens very in a different way. People you invoke bolverism to explain away your statements about what the Bible teaches, for example, you'll say like you just said, the Bible teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman for life.

Oh, you only believe me say that because you're a straight white male. And we could just take a time and say, let's see that we're true. Let's say my claim is like, logically, the only reason I'm making that claim is because I'm a straight white male.

I'll grant you that. Is it true or false? Let's go back. What does the Bible actually say? So trying to do an end run around the Bible and run around the evidence to somehow make your identity invalidate your truth, your claim.

And our point in the book is, Hey, my identity, the person making the claim cannot either validate or invalidate the claim being made. You have to actually treat the claim on its own merits, look at the evidence and look at the argument behind it. So yeah, so the Bolvarism is this this term that Lewis coined that you you describe somewhat and you you try to remove their arguments, not by dealing with their arguments, but by casting a dispersion often on their motives or their psychological state.

And so I'm sure you you both have had this. I've had this all the time. You know, I was thinking I wrote a negative book review.

Well, I've written that many negative book reviews, but a major one a year or two ago against an egalitarian scholar. And the one of the arguments pushing back was, here you see Kevin Deung is so desperate to hold on to his patriarchal power. Again, like you said, all right, maybe you know my own heart better than I know myself.

I wasn't aware that that's why I had these ideas. But even if that were the case, that you've to you've had divine insight into my own psychology in my own motivation. That doesn't change the very arguments.

And let's let's be fair. This can happen from any direction. Somebody could say, well, that's typical.

That's what I that's what I'd expect from the evangelical industrial complex. That's there's big Eva added again. This bolverism happens all the time.

And I just implore our listeners, our watchers, don't be guilty of those things. And don't be cowed by those sorts of arguments. But do like this book does, and you guys model in your own ministry and life.

And that's to actually think about the arguments. If anything, can we as Christians show a better way by actually dealing with arguments and not just determining that we understand the psychological makeup of people to make their ideas seem ludicrous. Have you had to I mean, Pat, you you interact with lots of critical scholars who probably don't agree with you.

And how do you handle this? Do most people treat you fairly and respectfully? Or do they come at you on a personal level? You know, I would say that among my colleagues, in terms of my faculty, and I go to a number of conferences that are part of the critical tradition, I would say that there's often a lot of good discussions. There's some of the cultural warring that you see, particularly like in social media context and Twitter and so forth. In my personal world with my colleagues, that type of thing is is not taking place.

There's a lot of other oriented perspective, a lot of careful one another appreciation of each other. Certainly things come up where we're dealing with the dynamics of people are sitting in certain intersectional categories. And that means certain things are that signal certain things.

Obviously, that comes up and it's it's happened to be you have a certain percentage of Cherokee in me, but that doesn't immediately show up or necessarily automatically give me a certain extra level of credibility. So obviously, I'm an older white guy who's somewhat conservative and an intentional Christian on pro life. And these things are known in the context of my work life.

And so sometimes that does come to bear. I'm sometimes in meetings where the way the meeting is being described, particularly historically in my PhD program, which was strongly part of the critical tradition. Sometimes the way things are being described, it's clear that I'm someone who is part of that oppressor status and that privilege status.

But it hasn't been something that has been highly negative for me. In fact, I feel like I've been treated very graciously and kindly in the context of my education and then also in my work life. I really have some wonderful colleagues and I appreciate them.

And so that's been a lot of my experience. Even though the very thing that you're talking about is certainly not absent theoretically as part of our discussions. And at times, I've been at certain conferences where I've been positioned a certain way at lunch or something.

But I take it with a grain of salt and we move forward. And even in those conversations, they tend to be fairly positive. It's good.

We're coming up on an hour. If you can stick around for just a couple more questions each, I want to mention a second sponsor, Desiring God. Thankful for their sponsoring of LBE, a new book by John Piper Foundations for Lifelong Learning Education in Serious Joy, which will be available at the end of October pre-order.

I encourage you to get it from our friends at Westminster Bookstore who do so many great specials and sales. So anytime John Piper has written something, especially when it has the word joy in the title, you want to look at it. So thankful for DG and for John and for this new book.

Let me try to wrap this up. There's so much more in the book by asking each of you one or two more questions. So Neil, unpack for us on 282.

You're looking at worldview questions. Who am I? Fundamental human problem? How does that problem get solved? What's our moral duty? There's a couple others. And you're making the case that in some ways, this contemporary critical theory is a kind of replacement religion.

Now it's not a religion in every sense of the word with weekly worship and sacred texts, but it fits in many ways and you're thinking of it through a worldview lens. And one of my concerns as a pastor with these ideas you unpack in your book is that Christians may think and they may still have in their head in orthodox statement of faith. Like nothing's changed.

But this other way of seeing reality is so all consuming and so comprehensive that it really can function as a kind of rival worldview to Christianity. So explain what you mean by that and how contemporary critical theory answers these big worldview questions differently than Christianity. So I think I've seen a recently a pushback against the very concept of worldview from progressive evangelicals, a whole book called *World You Whiteness in the Future of the Evangelical Faith* by Kuggan and Cook.

And what I would just point out is you don't have to use the language of worldview. You can just say that as a Christian, you have to answer certain questions about like who am I? Where did I come from? What's my main problem? Call it a worldview or a meta narrative you want to, but it's unavoidable that a Christian have to see our main problem as sin. That is just a biblical narrative.

And critical theory obviously sees the big problem with reality as oppression. Certain groups have seized power and are imposing their values on culture. And the solution obviously within Christianity is redemption to sin.

Jesus had to come and live a perfect life and die on the cross for our sins and rise from the dead to reconcile us to God to He's in a new creation one day. But critical theory takes a very different solution which is activism that we have to divest from our privilege. We have to support the emancipation of marginalized groups.

We have to dismantle these structures of oppression. So and this is one of many ways in which Christianity and critical theory are fundamentally looking at the world differently. I think what you said is absolutely true.

I like that actually this in our last interview stuck with me that you can't just have the nice even create sitting up in your attic somewhere gathering dust. You can saw I still subscribe to the nice and create, but if your heart on a daily basis is going after these other ideas, if you've moved more by oppression narratives and if you get your truth primarily on lived experiences, more than you get it from the Bible, more than then something's gone wrong. And Pat's analogy is great.

Pat talks about how contemporary critical theory colonizes your mind. It's pushing it's it really is functioning like a world of unit wants to take more and more and more territory in terms of how you think about all these different areas. So it may be another analogy would be like a cancer.

Cancer starts small, really small, but if they go unchecked, they just spread they don't there's no such thing as you can't control your cancer and slow limit it is it either eat you or you're gonna cut it out. But there's no sense in which you can coexist with cancer for a long time. In the same way, these ideas will get in underneath your professing orthodoxy and would begin battling for dominance with it.

And so you're gonna have to choose between them. There's really no halfway syncretism you can come to and say just stable agreement or I'm gonna sort of do half and half critical theory in Christianity. It's not going to work out.

I had something. Yeah, go ahead. Along those lines, it's important to remember that critical social theory has a tailos.

It has an ultimate goal and ultimate aim. Also, it answers big questions around epistemology. How do we know what is true? How do we know what we know? Ontology, what does it mean to be a human being in time and space? Phenomenology, lived experience and day-to-day existence, critical social theory is addressing all those questions.

And so if you're going to be doing that, you're doing worldview and meta narrative. You just are and it's unavoidable. And so it's important that we recognize this.

Yeah, one of the responses I've heard from some people is, hey, as Reformed Christians, look, this is just critical theory is deep Augustinian anthropology or it's reformed. Shouldn't we expect as Reformed Christians that people who are in power are going to abuse their power, that sin runs very deep, that we can never fully eradicate ourselves. And there's some things I would push back, but I'm willing to say, yeah, that is what we understand about the human heart.

My critique is that's not nearly comprehensive enough that critical theory, one, it tends to, it not tends to, it sees it on a horizontal, that's the difference between horizontal people, rather than ultimately it's vertical, that there's a God we have offended. And then it doesn't go deep enough meaning, it slices up on a select, and you mentioned this, Neil, a select set of identities, race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, you know, there's five or 10 of them. But there's a lot of different ways that people have power in our world.

And the way you look, how tall you are, in some groups, if you are from a quote, oppressed class, it's a way of wielding power connections, networking. So there's lots of ways that people have power. And a true biblical anthropology tells us that everyone has that infection of sin.

And it doesn't just working on preaching through revelation in last week, in Revelation six, the wrath of the lamb. And it gives the sevenfold description of those who are, who

are being judged. And the last one is, is everyone slave and free.

So I just made the point, it's, it's the oppressors, but it's also the oppressed group on that day that their status of being oppressed has not saved them from the judgment to come, unless they've turned to Christ. How do we help people get this in a way that doesn't seem like we're just, you know, I mean, I'm the intersectional nightmare of middle age, white, all of these things. How do we help Christians see some of these realities? I think one of the big points to make in the book is that we have to listen to what critical theorists actually say.

I think there's this tendency to just need your tendency to say, oh, this is culture warring. It's no big deal. We can kind of fit critical theory into a Christian anthropology.

And I'm like, only if you ignore what they actually say, right? It's similar to the, you know, can't we eat the meat and spit out the bones of critical race theory? And the answer is only if you ignore what they tell you about it. So an example would be that one of the defining elements of critical race theory since its inception, as it's codified by its founders in 1993, I mean, we have dozens of sources in our book, but consistently they will say that racism, sexism, and heterosexism are interlocking systems of oppression. And that is a defining element of critical race theory.

So when Christians say, well, can't I just eat the meat and spit out the bones? I'm like, well, some of the bones you're spitting out are the defining elements. It's like saying, well, can I be a Christian is neither resurrection? No, that's defining element of Christianity. So you can, what you can do is you can say, well, I think some of the things they say are true.

You can say that I think some of the things that Muslims say about, I don't know, moral ethics, right? That could be true. You know, a Buddhist or a Muslim or an atheist could have true insight into how your car works. Absolutely.

Right. Does not make Judaism or Islam or Hinduism compatible with Christianity. In the same way, when you start spitting out the bones, you're realizing the very essence of critical race theory.

So I think we have to, I don't, I think we have to get, we have to stop. We think we're being charitable. We're basically being charitable in the sense that we're ignoring what they're actually saying.

It's like the guy who says, Oh, all religions are equally true. You know, you're a Christian, you're a Muslim, you're a Hindu, but you're all saying the same thing. I just want to shake that person saying they're not saying the same thing.

You're not critical. Theirs are not just deeply Augustinian. They're not Augustinians.

They're not saying those things. They'll stop putting words in their mouth. Preach it.

Let me ask each of you one last question. Pat, I want to ask you about this in the response to some of these ideas, especially in their most potent form. And so you quote from a book.

So you want to talk about race here on 308. And this author writes, if you are white in a white society, you are a racist. If you are male in a patriarchy, you are sexist.

If you are able bodied, you are ableist. If you are anything above poverty in a capitalist society, you are classist. You can sometimes be all of these things at once.

How do you think that kind of rhetoric is driving people, and in particular, a number of men to say that Andrew Tate is the world, or a kind of illiberal post liberal rights or alt rights, because I think a lot of people, if they're being fed that message, especially men say, well, if I'm going to be all of these horrible things, then all right, I'm going to find somebody one who tells me that it's okay to be male and white in all of this. Or if I'm going to be a sexist, no matter what, I might as well be a real straight up sexist. How have you seen this? What caution do you give? How is that kind of message? I don't want to say it's producing the other extreme because we're all, you know, have human agency, but how is it enticing some people to other sorts of un-Christian ways of being? Yeah, I think that phenomenon is real, Kevin, which you are bringing up.

And I would say that because I've partly seen that. I mean, obviously that phenomenon is real in certain ways when we think about people like Andrew Tate and that kind of toxic masculinity that it's being just fully embraced now. Okay, but I would bring up the notion of white supremacy.

When in critical race theory, the first major thing that we're talking about, I was talking about earlier, that it's permanent, that it's endemic, that it's normal. Well, it's partly that way because that term white supremacy is no longer siloed and no longer tethered to just white nationalism and hardcore white power groups. That definition of white supremacy now has an expanded definition that now puts every white person essentially being complicit in racism relative to privilege.

And since that is operative in my connection in studying research relative to white power groups and white nationalist groups, they in a sense are appreciative of this idea because they see the typical person now that has not historically been given to white power or white nationalist concerns. That typical John Doe out there is going, well, you know what, if I'm just this racist, like I'm being told that I am, well, perhaps I may need to listen to this white power and white nationalist group that is actually now viewing me not negative viewing me in a positive way because of my whiteness, because evidently I've been told I can't escape from my whiteness at all. And that all that is on boarded now the ideas and perspectives, the horrible things that are now populating this term whiteness,

well, if that's what I am, well, then I might as well think about what this group over here that is all about whiteness is saying that are good things and positive things and now tethering to whiteness things like being patriotic or being concerned about the nuclear family or about being a leader in your home as a father and a dad.

You know, this discourse is popular in white nationalist groups. And so it is having that effect that. And so it's pulling those people that otherwise are not interested in in white power and white nationalism.

It's pulling them towards those abhorrent perspectives because now if you just meet these intersectional identity markers, you're automatically all these things relative to an oppressor status and person. And so that is a concern that phenomenon that you mentioned is real. Yeah.

And then, you know, I've said, there can be a right wing kind of wokism that says now we're the oppressed group because those things are really happening. And then you play by the same playbook that the left has been playing by and how you have power and how you wield power. I want to give the last word to you, Neil, to end us on a positive note so that the subtitle ends by saying implications for the church and society relative to these issues.

What is your word to probably most of our listeners, our Christians, they're probably somewhat serious Christians. If they're listening to a podcast like this, what encouragement and or exhortation do you have to sincere Christians out there surrounding these critical dilemmas? My exhortation is that you need to understand these theories. I think we've talked about how it's not quite a religion, but I do think we've shown also that it's basically a functional religion.

People ask me, well, have we hit peak woke yet? I mean, we're recommending gender mutilation, genital mutilation to teenage girls where it seems crazy where we've gotten to. So we've got to hit peak woke now. And I say, I don't know, I'm not a prophet, but wait until the kids are currently in high school right now in 2023, become your pastors, your judges, your senators, your presidents in 10 to 15 to 20 years.

So don't please don't say these ideas are all yeah, right. Don't think that we've hit peak woke yet. I do not think we have yet.

And the people in your church, the kids in your church, if you think you're snow, oh, it'll blow over to FAD. Do not think that it's time to get on the ball and to understand these ideas and to begin to explicitly address them in your church. Now is the time, do not wait.

The second thing I'd say though, is that we're not just giving you in the book, we don't just give a purely negative assessment of critical theory. We also put a positive biblical

way forward. So we want to emphasize that all that we need to understand these ideas and also to offer a better alternative is in the Bible.

Bible explains to us how we should think about race, class, gender, morality, justice. And especially it presses on us the doctrines of human solidarity, mainly through Christ for Christians that we are united in Christ, that everything we do has to be lived out of Christ for identity in Christ. So if you're a pastor and you're confused, A, try to understand these ideas, do some reading, but B, never feel like because you only preach the Bible that you're insufficient.

The Bible, the gospel is enough to answer all these issues. So yes, do your homework if you can, but never feel like, oh, I'm not a PhD, I can't understand this, just preach the word and let God do the work. I'd love to hear that.

Thank you, Neil and Pat. Thank you for this book. Again, critical dilemmas, the rise of critical theories and social justice ideology just published by Harvest House publishers.

Get a copy of the book and you can Google either of these guys and find lots of free resources and book reviews and other things online that could introduce you to these ideas in a 10 minute read. But thank you for the book. Thank you for the work that you're doing.

Hopefully we can all converge sometime before too long in the state of North Carolina. But grateful for your work. Thank you for being here.

Thank you. Kevin. So want to thank our listeners again, glad that you could join us, life and books and everything is a ministry of clearly reformed.

You can get episodes like this and other resources at clearly reformed dot org. So until next time, glorify God, enjoy him forever and read a good book.