

OpenTheo

George Floyd and Books on Policing, Justice, and Civil Rights

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Originally released on June 2nd, 2020, Kevin DeYoung, Collin Hansen, and Justin Taylor discuss George Floyd, the need for leaders with character, and books they recommend related to policing, justice, and civil rights.

Transcript

This is Life and Books and Everything hosted by Kevin DeYoung, Justin Taylor, and Collin Hansen Greetings and salutations. It is good to have you with us after taking a week off over the holiday weekend. We are back here.

I am Kevin DeYoung and joined as always with my good friends Justin Taylor. Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen. Welcome back.

Gentlemen, good to have you with us. We are recording this on Monday, June 1st. We like to have a wide range of topics that we discuss here from the sublime to the borderline ridiculous at times, but always at some point, resulting in some discussion of books, hence the name, life and books and everything.

While we really don't want this to be a current events podcast, at times there are events going on that we would really be remiss if we didn't say something about. Certainly we want to say something and maybe this will lead into a discussion of some books, but we want to spend some time reflecting on the death of George Floyd. We all agree that it is evil, injustice.

You can hardly exaggerate the senseless injustice of it. I certainly don't want to say there's any good in that. That's not the right word, but perhaps something to be thankful for is that it does seem like, at least in this occasion, almost everyone in the country agrees that to put your knee on the neck of a man who is obviously not resisting arrest there and is just casually with your hands in your pocket, putting your knee there for eight, nearly nine minutes while he cries out for breath and bystanders around urge you

to stop and you see he's then lying motionless.

At least I think we can all agree that that's wrong, that that's unjust, and that the officer has rightly been arrested and charged and we will pray for justice in the ensuing weeks and however long that process lasts. There's a lot of things we could say and we want to start by making that clear and by expressing empathy, sympathy, I know those are two different things and I forget which one's supposed to be good or bad, but at least trying to express rightfully, we always have to guard our own hearts in these discussions that we're not looking to virtue signal and trying to be more outraged and thou, but I think quite genuinely there is a place when it's honestly felt and experienced to express solidarity not only with African-American brothers and sisters in Christ, but with fellow human beings and image bearers in this loss of life and I do think there and then I'll let you guys just give some initial opening thoughts, but I do think there is a word here for you know what we're three, 30 something, 40 something white men who are talking about this and so we've had different experiences and we don't want to pretend to have experiences that we haven't. I do think there is a place and perhaps one thing that we could say to others like us without wanting to pretend we have any expertise is to simply say the anger, the pain that I'm sick and tired of being tired, all of that comes from a very real historical place for African-Americans and you know it is a shame that we live in a time where you know lots of people can manufacture hurts and offenses and yet with the history of slavery and Jim Crow it's certainly not one of them.

This doesn't come from nowhere is what saying and I think that's really important for me, just put myself in the middle for me or someone like me to remember that and to understand when it inevitably won't land on us perhaps in the same way and when people are saying do you see it pastor will you pray about it is this going to show up does this even land on you in any meaningful way? Yes there's a danger of just getting on to Twitter to say something immediately to prove your moral bonafide but there's also a very real place to want to recognize and acknowledge that we do see it and it is wrong and at least it's not an ending place but it's a starting place to state those things. Justin and Colin I'll have some more specific questions in a moment maybe some categories to think of but just on a kind of emotional visceral level what have you been thinking feeling over the last week Justin? Yeah it's not been an easy week and it's painful at so many different levels and there's so many different issues involved. It shouldn't require a video for us to feel pain and to feel it viscerally.

We read about things in history textbooks of course there was no video I mean maybe we'll see a black and white photograph but the fact is that we did have a video and there were people pleading for a different outcome seeing what was going on. So there's something powerful about seeing it in living color and to literally watch a man die. It is painful.

My wife and I when we first moved to Minneapolis it was a week after we were married in

the summer of 1998. I moved into a little foreplex apartment in Powderhorn Park and that's about five blocks from where Mr. Floyd died so to think about a hometown in some sense and to see the aftermath, to see the pain. I don't want to yeah any of those things Kevin that you were saying that you know I'm I have some deep connection there but I think it's the humanity the the civil rights poster board that we see of African-American men standing there with placards that say I am a man.

Before George Floyd was a black man he's just he's a man created in the image of God and to see him killed in that way is it takes your breath away and is deeply painful and is the the father of a African-American teenage boy at Tomanath a special way there as well. Yeah thanks for that Colin. I mean we all have connections in different ways specifically to to Minneapolis a place where I grew up visiting often and visiting my family in the area and I think one of the first things that hit me was oh no not again in Minneapolis after Philando Castile and you could see see how this was going to go.

A unique confluence of factors that make this crime particularly heinous and particularly painful. I think the as you guys have already expressed the seeing it and and watching it and watching it bear out just as a level of which how could you do that and I think um you know this isn't new for us unfortunately that's not the first time. This happens on the second time it's not the third time it's not the fourth time and we also know that it's not a it's not a historical anomaly but the um when I keep coming back to again and again and again is that I was raised in a in a way to understand the United States to be a basically good and just place and that authorities were were basically on my side and um we're going to do right by me and I if I followed the rules everything would turn out okay but as I've watched these videos over the years and moved to the south and listened to other people's experiences it it's come to strike me that that's a a particular narrative that is not unique or exclusive necessarily to whites but it's certainly not the dominant one that my african-american neighbors here in Birmingham Alabama would think and I remember a friend of mine years ago a pastor he was talking about the the way that in a in a majority black city like Birmingham that whites will kind of instinctively respond to the threat of african-americans and he said isn't it interesting speaking about the history of Birmingham who's supposed to be afraid of whom here because it's obviously a city where it's marked by the brutalization of white police officers toward african-americans and so when you have a situation which we're kind of seeing now within the riots where african-americans have a historical and unquestioned grievance there and at the same time then you have whites responding and other people of other ethnicities responding and other african-americans responding with a fear of safety you can see why it becomes such a struggle in this fallen world to be able to make any progress and that's discouraging you know I don't uh I like to fancy myself an answer person that I have a way forward but as I've often thought about the situation here locally and then nationally it's like um pretty much every reason you want to give for the problem is a problem somewhere um you know these things uh these happen in a moment that changes the

world but they don't happen in a vacuum there's a historical context of interpretation there and just by everybody's interpretation at some level is valid but of course just in terms of all the problems that befall race relations in America but the fact of the matter is we continue to see this afflicting african-americans and the message is clear that it's horrible that it needs to end and that it's not uncommon and that some that I think needs to guide uh whatever steps I hope we take from here Colin let me just ask on that last point what do you what do you think is not uncommon you mean historically you mean at present you mean um being yeah it's treated by police officers being killed because that that's that's we'll give a little bit but that's at the heart of a lot of what divides us is that an anomaly or is this common what did you mean by that yeah what I it's a great question Kevin um and the message that I want to communicate here it's the same message that I communicate whenever I have a chance to be able to teach on history and civil rights and and it's that um if you're african-american and whether you live in the south or live in one of those communities african-americans migrated north into there is a particular narrative related to the police and that's contemporary in terms of interactions with police that that you're always fearful of escalating and just speaking especially of the south because that's where most of my reading is um there's simply no way to avoid the plain reality that in many cases I'm not I don't know if it's like most just in many cases the problem was the police it's not like the police were a group of good guys who didn't step in the police were in cases like for example the three civil rights workers who were killed in Mississippi I mean they they were the clan they were the problem they they were complicit and of course that includes um bull Connor most famously here in Birmingham and so what I mean is that it's not uncommon in that if you're african-american you don't trust the police you have reasons to think that's an issue even regardless of your experience which I can't speak to except for what I hear we have a reason to think that historically in a way that I do not have reason to think about historically um and that's what I mean there so I just think it's important to understand that if even if we don't understand that context that that that there's a different narrative that's inhabited by african-americans and of course there's plenty of debate about data and examples and things like that and that's meaningful but it's just if you're if you're scared of the police and you're african-american you have reasons so we'll come back to some of that in in a few moments let's let's talk about this I mean we could talk for weeks and maybe say a few helpful things and probably some unhelpful things because anytime you start talking about race it's difficult and I don't know about you guys but I feel the you know I'm sure it's it's it's a part wisdom and it's part just fearfulness you know we're gonna say something wrong whether it's too far to the right or to the left or missing some sensitivity uh it's just it's an extremely difficult thing to talk about and that's for the the three of us that have you know not had the experiences that all sorts of people have had but let's just look at a couple a few categories and thinking about what's happened over the last week and um you know across the spectrum whether you got an r by your name or a d by your name you can find some examples of people acquitting themselves well and not well and we do see how leadership matters

and we're trying to think in this podcast how to help Christians how to help church leaders and uh you know people have said before character is destiny and I do think that's true I mean it's it's not that you can't have bad people do some good things I don't know if you watched the the Lance Armstrong documentary the last two weeks but one of the themes through that was you know is Lance a a good guy who did bad things or a bad guy who did good things because he did genuinely good things for the cancer community and he sure seemed like a big jerk to everyone and lied so uh not saying that we're all mixed okay we all have clay feet but at some point uh you know a crisis doesn't make us into heroic people a crisis can reveal very ordinary people who do heroic things to you know tell a looter to you know get that brick out of your hand and all sorts of things but we see in a crisis at some point your character is going to be how you lead and and and there there's there's nothing we'd like to think that our whatever your favored political philosophy is that it ensures that those people are virtuous but we just know from history and in fact you know that's what our founders you know that's the whole you know emphasis in the federalist papers is we better have checks and balances factions and factions and ambition because we're not going to be governed by angels we're going to be governed by men but when god gives us good men or in our case good men and women to lead in political religious other sorts of spheres we see people who are honest humble self-sacrificing disciplined and if we just pretend that we can set that aside in in looking at who our leaders should be at some point their character is going to be revealed and in that moment of crisis they're not suddenly going to be transformed and I think you know even if you're not an expert on these matters and the three of us certainly aren't I think if you can get people of general honesty integrity discipline sacrifice character convict it's at least it's not a it's not a sufficient cause for for change or healing but it is a necessary one and it's often in short supply how have you guys just following your twitter feed or the news Justin how have you thought about what makes for good leadership in times like this yeah I think the thing that happens when there is a crisis is two things especially if you're in any position of leadership number one you have to speak I mean two to not speak is an application of leadership so you're required to say words right and secondly they tend to be unscripted because by the very nature of being a crisis so when you look at a political leader it's one thing for them to give the state of the union which is very planned many months in advance and it goes through this incredible vetting process but it's quite another thing to to put a politician up let's say at a press conference as the crisis is unfolding all around them there's a limit to which that can be scripted and vetted and so from a biblical worldview it's hard not to think about the sort of things Jesus said when he you know said the good person on the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil for out of the abundance of his heart the mouse speaks so it is a revealer of character it is a revealer of the heart the more that we speak the more we are showing what we are made of and what's inside of us and this is perhaps a different topic for a different time but it is disconcerting I feel conscience found to say it that evangelicals have seemed to have abandoned the character criteria in terms of leadership I don't

think that's a position or a mindset or a posture that will end well to say what really matters is policy and effectiveness and character sort of take it or leave it I think we're seeing in a crisis like this that character really does matter and what you say matters and that ultimately comes I think from the heart yeah and I mean it's it's true I remember someone saying back in the 90s when looking at character and you know evangelicals were talking more about it that you know what what what a person does privately is is gonna matter in what they do publicly and if you're a cheat to people or your uh uh philanderer that you know that says something about the way you interact with people no one's not talking about uh you know people who who come to a point of deep contrition and repentance you know there's there's king david and man after god's own heart and we believe in second chances uh rightly construed and and forgiveness but it is to say that you drop somebody into or a crisis arises around them and you are going to see and it's going to matter the sort of person that that's we're not just talking politics but but in a church kalen how have you thought about this and what's necessary from a christian perspective for leadership and uh pandemics and riots and um all the mess that we have this year yeah I think um a couple things that stand out I I'm increasingly of the belief within the coronavirus um pandemic that a lot of the reaction early on which I'll just go on the record and think and say that my my belief is that it was an overreaction I think the overreaction at the original outset of the pandemic owed a lot to the fact that at some level americans didn't trust didn't trust our own leaders and that the world at some level did not trust global leaders or at least also american leaders in that case and I saw something really interesting this last week um I feel like I've been watching like hate watching um just in and out bill mar for like 20 years do you guys remember our old show he used to do you know like at night this was before the HBO days and as a young christian I would watch him and just get so furious he would always have like an abstinence advocate on there and they'd always team up and um anyway so I just remember getting so upset and so I've never never enjoyed bill mar I've never like found common cause with him but there was something really interesting I saw the other day I was just flipping through channels I saw him talking about the coronavirus and vitamin D and he said what we're seeing all over the place is that vitamin D you know has some major health benefits so why is it that you don't see a major push for people to get outdoors why is it that we keep talking about lockdowns and I mean in the sense that it just isn't good for people in general for their humanity for their health relationally spiritually for them to be at home in front of their computers on social media looking at all this stuff and eating in unhealthy ways and he said it's just very odd and then he said something interesting he said um we all know and this is coming from bill mar's perspective he says we all know that there's a problem with president trump he said but the problem is not it's not less than president trump but it's more where is the why is there this massive leadership breakdown all over the place and that's what's concerning to me I think I've said it before here but if not one of the reasons I love studying history and I love reading about history is because you do see the way character and the character of leaders makes a difference the way that it can shape

history under God's providence in specific ways and you can't just substitute any individual in and out and get the same results at least on this side of that and and I look now and I see um I mean just at so many different levels at the at the police level at the health official level at the national level at the state level um I mean I look from state to state and for my friends up north by the way up north from here means Tennessee right so my friends up north in Tennessee I'm jealous you have better leaders than I have in Alabama um and just it makes a difference football coaches or no no not those leaders I mean leaders but even if it really matter but even if Tennessee wants to claim that they have better football coaches their football coach came from Alabama and I think if we wanted him back he'd come back someday anyway so um thanks Jeremy Pruitt good luck so no I just it's it makes it it makes a big difference and I just I see a massive breakdown when people do not trust their leaders they turn on each other I think that's what we're seeing right now a good old word for us is magnanimity and uh you know a magnanimous person is someone who doesn't bear grudges doesn't wallow in self-pity does not demand penance from everyone does not advertise suffering does not stoop to settle every score you know someone who bears hardships uh with fortitude and patience and uh those sorts of public leaders seem to be in short supply and you look at history and I think I would say that the president who did the best with this was Abraham Lincoln you know with magn and that's why you know most people and I know there's a whole scholarship side that thinks Lincoln was a terrible president and expanded federal powers and so we're not gonna turn this into a Lincoln podcast but we could do that though we could like another not ready but most most people would agree there's a magnanimity there in the way that he addressed both sides and was not was it seemed genuinely seeking uh certainly the union uh but following that piece I wonder maybe a transition here is to think we talked a lot on this podcast before about social media and you know what one of the positive things perhaps is you know I don't I follow a few hundred people but even down there I see people to pretty far to the right and pretty far to the left so there is something perhaps good with seeing how a lot of different people are viewing these same actions in incredibly different ways but I think what can be so divisive and so harmful and you know two things come to mind one is the say something you know Justin you said if you have a public platform there's you know there is some responsibility at some level but so often it's you need to say it you need to say it right now you need to say it loudest you need to say it first if you don't your silence speaks volumes get on now and I was going to tweet something on Saturday but I thought that's gonna look ironically self-defeating if I tweet it but I was gonna say pastors you ought to be spending more time crafting your pastoral prayer and what to say to your flock then crafting your social media statement and I was really speaking to myself because I could find my own self thinking what what am I gonna say and I think far more important is what I need to say to my my people and how I need to lead them in prayer and thinking about this but social media can just twist what really matters and then the other danger there's many is it is so easy to think that is reality when especially twitter all sorts of studies have shown this you know it's it may be influencers so-called but it's a very small

what 10 percent of people are on twitter I mean it's a very small slice and it tends to be angry that's what it does and you can think that is reality now it's not I mean they're real people well some of them aren't they're bots but a lot of them are most of them are real people tweeting things so it's not disconnected from all reality and yet if you think that's what America is my twitter feed that that is going to be depressing and it's going to produce in us a lot of anger and fear and you know I just find for my own sanity you know I want to follow the news and soften I do it through to it but I need to I need to step away I need to step out and I I don't know how some of our friends get in there and mix it up and they may have a different calling and I can't you know judge their motives on that they may do some good but for me I know it becomes very unhealthy very quickly perhaps one helpful thing we could do for just a few minutes is to talk about some books and some books that may help us try to have some better understanding of what do you want to call it interactions with police or racial reconciliation and there's a lot of of books here so I'm not I'm not asking for your top 10 books about the civil rights era though maybe that's one that you think is helpful or books on the broad state of race in America but perhaps just thinking about the issue of policing in African-American communities and what we've seen with George Floyd and now what we see with protests and riots which are two different things and it seems like maybe not even the same people doing those so books and here's a couple that come to mind for me one and this was I wrote about this on my on my blog a few years ago and it was a book recommended by Ed Copeland who's a friend of mine and probably of yours too African-American pastor in Rockford, Illinois I serve on the board of TGC with him yeah he's a friend and I've learned a lot from from him on these issues and he he invited me several years ago to to read it's called don't shoot and it is by a Kennedy what's a David Kennedy and he's white and he's a self-described liberal it's not a Christian book but he writes about race relations in the police and he has one particular about 15 page section which is very powerful and just a few lines from it he says the real issue was the police thought the community was completely corrupt from top to bottom the real issue was the community thought the police were predators deliberately doing them horrendous harm the real issue was the way the relationship between the police and the community was being poisoned by toxic racial narratives here things get real ugly and Ed recommended this book to me and Ed actually is mentioned in the book is one of the people who's who's helped to try to bridge some of these gaps between the community and law enforcement and what I found helpful in the book is you know he's not David Kennedy it's coming from someone who has an experience with both communities over a long time and he's really trying to give both communities I think the benefit of the doubt to say I've not encountered racist police officers I've been in these communities they really do want safe communities and yet there are these narratives which make things so difficult for for anyone to come to some common ground and so I found that very helpful you know on listening to the police and their perspective listening to these communities and their perspective and then what role it certainly racialized but it's a more complicated picture than simply there's racism and there's good guys and there's bad guys so that was a very helpful

book for me you can google it I wrote an article on my blog across the race divide about that about four years ago and interestingly another book that's you know not a Christian book but just for maybe information for some people I didn't grow up around police officers I grew up around mostly white people but I probably grew up around more African-Americans than police officers it's just a very small number for both and so I'm you know new to even understanding the world of law enforcement and now I have probably a dozen law enforcement officers in my church but I read back when Ferguson happened this book by Lee Laughlin called police procedure and investigation a guide for writers it's an interesting book for people who are trying to write crime stories about how policing actually works and for somebody who's a novice like me just to read through it and talk about typical policing procedures was just eye-opening again it's not a book it's not trying to take any sides on any of these particular issues but I found those two helpful and there's other ones but I'll let you guys jump in Colin yeah few books Kevin come to mind then and from a variety of different perspectives related to that issue of policing and minorities one of them is that overall I would just commend for a lot of people the book factfulness by Hans Rosling and it's a pretty popular book Bill Gates had picked up on it and other people liked it and you wonder how is that exactly connected to this issue well Kevin you and I and Justin we've all talked quite a bit online and offline about like how people would size up the state of racism today how serious is this how much progress have we been made I think Ron Rosling gives people a category to be able to say things can be better and not good and I think that'll help people to be able to have better conversations with each other to say somebody over here might be saying but hey don't you see how things are better and somebody else can respond and say yeah but they're still not good and they can both be correct and so I think that mentality would help a lot of people another book a new book kind of a reissued book came out last year called Consumed by Hate Redeemed by Love by Thomas Terrence this is a Christian book about there's no other way to say he was one of the most notorious white supremacist terrorists of the south in the civil rights era and went on to become president of I think the C.S. Lewis Institute and a born-again Christian and one of the things that's remarkable this book is I'm so grateful that the Lord preserved Terrence's life through what he went through what he had done and I mean again we're talking about a an actual terrorist here I mean assassination attempts prison breaks all kinds of different stuff but I think it's kind of interesting in this context because it makes you think how in the world I mean would they ever have allowed a man who had done things like this in Mississippi who was black to ever survive any of this you know you'll often hear about even how horrible criminals are treated differently if they're white or they're black that's just a subtext within Terrence's book but more than anything else it's a story of God's transforming grace in his life.

The last one I'd mentioned just briefly is one that I recommend most commonly called carry me home by in Diane McWhorter it's about the civil rights struggle of Birmingham in 1963 one the Pulitzer Prize one of the reasons I recommend this one so often and I

don't know how you guys feel about this exactly but I'm gonna go down I'm gonna go down swinging on the premise that a re one major reason we don't we have so many problems here is because people don't know they either choose not to know out of deliberate ignorance or they've never been taught or they've been taught bad history or something but if if somebody were trying to understand my own cities problems then they wouldn't just go back and pick out 1963 they would go back to 1923 and they would look at the relations between the police and labor unions in Birmingham and so I mean that's I'm just I'm gonna stick to the premise that one reason a lot of people don't see eye to eye is because they just don't know and so my my inclination as a teacher who loves to read this stuff and loves to talk about it is that I'm just going to assume that when we do talk about it that people do change I know that's naive it doesn't always happen that way but I'm gonna assume that if you get the right hand right books in the right hands of people that lord uses that means to change lives I've seen it happen my own life and in others just in so a few books that come to mind for my end uh not so much along the policing route but just more generally about race things that I've found helpful over the years um I know divided by faith is kind of the 101 level bible for a lot of people on uh these sort of issues I wasn't as big a fan of that book but George Yancy who's a black sociologist uh beyond racial gridlock I think is helpful in a lot of ways especially if you think color blindness is the the key to moving forward he's just a very thoughtful clear writer uh from a fiction standpoint meals from Mars did you see highlighted that a few years ago did a nice review the author's name I'm not sure how pronounce the last name something like Ben and shock uh shock member of my is a member at my church all right a fictional narrative and a young black man who gets into trouble uh I think it's a great entry level book just on empathizing and trying to look at things from different people's points of view all right let me wrap up this podcast with a it a few miscellaneous thoughts on everything that's going on right now and just to let everyone know we were having all sorts of technological glitches in recording this podcast and so things uh may feel a little patchy at times and uh unfortunately when Justin was talking things started going haywire so you may have less Justin Taylor than we would all like and in fact we couldn't quite finish the whole discussion that we wanted to have and so I'm flying solo now for these last few minutes but given this date of everything going on in our world in our country uh we didn't want to end it abruptly so let me just try to offer maybe uh a smattering of thoughts I've been thinking a lot about what's what's what's making this so difficult and the this in that statement refers to racial issues in this country uh making sense of what's happened in the last week in the last five years and the last generation but in particular thinking about this last week as we are now on night seven of I mean just mind boggling destruction in some of our cities and so what what how did we get here what what is going on I don't know the answer to that but here's just some thoughts uh what what's making it worse maybe that's the way to say what is making this worse number one there's a tremendous amount of I'll just call it my side ism uh that happens on on both sides on all sides that every time we have I mean it's coronavirus it's the economy it's politics and now it's literal life and death and

though everyone virtually everyone can agree that the death of George Floyd was was a murder and it was an injustice after that everything becomes a talking point for one side or the other and uh I saw uh Philip Holmes very thoughtful and appreciate what he says he uh he pointed out that something I'm summarizing now something you know perverse starts to happen in in our hearts that you you root for the other team to to do something evil and he was saying you know if you find in your heart that you want the officer to have have turned out to be the worst possible you know white supremacists you find that in your heart you want that to be true or you find in your heart you want it to that George Floyd was was on drugs and he had a police record and he was you find that in your heart and in the human heart wants to find those sort of because then it can feel like okay our our side doesn't have egg on its face and I mean this has been happening for a long time it's just been made worse in the last number of years that you know there's there's certain sides and uh you know you you so you want to show that the real people doing all the bad stuff are the anti-fascists or it's the white supremacist and yeah those things do do matter but all we're trying to do is prove that your side is the one that makes everything wrong and that's not going to help so that that's one thing just the constant my side ism and so we just feel like we're just we're wearing these jerseys whatever they even represent anymore and we're just trying to find a way that our side whatever that is our side are the ones being victimized our side are the ones who are being put out your side is the one that's wrong uh second obvious reason why this is so hard is just personal history I mean anytime you talk about race and and I'm not going to pretend to certainly have have that history or or understand that history except I want to listen and I want to understand and I want to act appropriately based on what I hear and understand I know that there comes a point when uh African-American friends and neighbors say okay you know we want you to listen and want you to sympathize and then we want you to be with us so there's a personal history to it that is uh you know you you can't do away with and you wouldn't you know some sense you don't want to do away with it you want to do away with you know injustice and and then with that we have to you know there's a tremendous amount of guilt there's guilt that that white people feel and we have to be honest with that and does that mean that every you know white person who is really adamant about uh the cause of justice is doing it to a suage white guilt well no of course we're not impugning people's motives but it does mean there there's a personal side to it whether you are black or whether you are white that we bring to it these intense emotions uh and experiences and in some sense trying to prove who we are or who we aren't and so it's it's never never just and you know it's dispassionate intellectual discussion about facts we're always interpreting them so it's it's intensely personal um you know third we're we're in this lockdown and you know we'll we'll see in two weeks I guess whether the lockdown how necessary it was or whether all these crowds are super spreaders or whether we were locked down inside and didn't really need to be but certainly that's something you have all this stress you have all this economic upheaval and you're not supposed to go anywhere do anything and now the weather's nice and it's summer and you pent up and certainly that's

something uh for we are in the fog of war now I don't I don't use war hopefully this doesn't escalate any further but it's really scary but I just use that as an expression and Justin has said that a number of times that in the fog of war you get all sorts of misinformation and it may be intentional misinformation but oftentimes it's just things are happening quickly you don't know it's outsiders it's it's people from Minnesota well what's the truth there what's going on what what are the reports happening you just there's just a big fog and so we're bound to want to believe what our narrative already says is taking place and there's so much information we just don't know uh a fifth thing this is a really this is a scary time I know it's I was talking to an African-American friend that said not I'm scared I'm scared to go I'm scared what this means I know hearing from friends in Minneapolis that they're they're I mean scared not irrationally but but but very understandably in so many of our cities and it's scary to think that um what's gonna happen uh when and we pray very soon that that these are quelled and they calm down you know will the cities evacuate will will people go out will will crime run rampant you see just what a what a gift civilization is and that it's not something that comes naturally it's something that has to be worked for and defended and preserved and it only takes a small handful of people and perhaps leaders who are not up to the challenge to see all of this uh unravel very quickly and I don't mean the whole nation but I mean a lot of really hard things so these are scary times and when you get that and they're and people are angry and we understand why they're in there are frightened this and everything is on video and you have instant communication with everyone this is a recipe for a very difficult time I don't know what what number I'm on here that was maybe five or I just got two other things here a bit more intellectual it just thinking more broadly about why race in this country and and thinking here about people of goodwill thinking about people in your church of a different color think about people who agree on so many other things and you sing the same songs and you really love Jesus together and you read the same Bible and you really are together for the gospel so why why is it so there why is it so divisive well one this is number six I guess we're not sure what our history is as a country I think everyone acknowledges that it's our history like any nation is is filled with high spots and low spots that's a not a controversial thing to say and there are great accomplishments and there are great injustices but beyond those sort of platitudes is the history of America and I'm going to put this as you know neutrally as I can but is the history of America basically 400 years of systemic oppression the white people having all of the benefits and black people being systematically oppressed and treated in in human ways such that the the founding statements of this country were window dressing for a larger more nefarious project and those are certainly good things we're thankful about our country to tell the story of our country is to essentially tell the story first and foremost of bigotry and everyone who might be complicit in that that's one way to tell our national story there's another way to talk about America as a land of hope and opportunity with many blind spots grievous ones that have oftentimes not lived up to our own ideals and the things written down in our founding documents and nevertheless can say I'm proud to be an American and there are on the whole believe the country has

been an exceptional country and one that is been used for good in the world now I know lots of people would say well you know some people say I want to say both of those things are true well yes we all understand there's good and bad in the country that's not controversial but the basic story that we're telling I don't think we agree on and it's not the point of this podcast to try to say which is which year and then related to that and this is a at the seventh big picture point in most your main to what we're going up there's and again I'm talking about Christians about like-minded people of goodwill of good faith in the church we don't agree on the current state of racism in America so put it very crudely suppose that the experience of slavery in this country you got to scale zero to a hundred hundred is absolute horrible racial injustice bigotry evil and zero is heaven okay well we're not gonna have zero on earth but say chattel slavery in America was an experience of 90 to 100 and say Jim Crow was an experience of 80 to 90 now you're gonna get almost everyone to say that some things are better than they used to be and you're gonna get almost everybody to say yes racism still exists in places those are big ideas people can agree on but if we were to put a number on it I know we can't but do we think that the state of racism in America privileges accrued to whites the the disadvantages and oppression personally or systemically against blacks if it was 90 to 100 and then 80 to 90 with Jim Crow is the number now 75 or is it 25 and if if you're depending on how we're walking around if we have the number 75 in our head then all of the you know that is a framework for interpreting all sorts of other events that happen that are events that are not standalone events but are part of a broader narrative from slavery to the failure of reconstruction to Jim Crow to redlining to mass incarceration to police brutality and it fits in this this narrative story I'm not using any of those terms pejoratively likewise if somebody thinks well racism still exists but you know it's it's it's going down overall and you know maybe we're at a 30 or a 25 or a 20 then they will see these incidences as standalone incidents and bad cops and then mostly good cops and some bad experience tragedies and injustices but not the story writ large not mainly what's happening in America now you're saying uh Kevin okay you're just laying out these options and you're not telling us what you think and I'll just be honest I do not know I don't know and uh I know that I can't make my experience and what I've seen to be the total sum of the American experience I know what I hear from others I know what I read and to be honest I want to learn and listen and try to make sense of it because I think at the heart of a lot of in the church at least when these incidences come up can agree on this one thankfully it's wrong in in in injustice but the broader story of what's going on is one that you know we we're not sure about and we really we don't agree on and because the whole issue comes up in these moments of great uh emotion and tragedy it's never really feels like okay now's a good time to sort of let let's let's talk history let's uh look at economics let's look at studies it just all all of that then seems out of place but I think we need to have the sort of trust and love and fellowship with one another that even if we don't finally agree on well the number is 75 or the number is 25 that we we do at least look together and try to assess as best we can so for all those reasons I think this is it intractably difficult so boy I'm wrapping this up rather long-

winded lead let me end with something perhaps just trying to be a little more positive though we need to stare at the the negative before we can look at the positive just leave you with three quick thoughts and maybe some some encouragement one we ought to consider and here I know there's people overseas listening to this but I'm thinking about Americans uh we ought to consider that we don't we don't know what is real America and I say that because I don't want to gloss over major flaws in faults and yet it is so easy you know just over this past week you know you look through social media and you find stories of black protesters protecting a white police officer because they're protesting in good faith they're protesting to work for change and to be heard and not to seek violence you hear stories of you know a white sheriff who gets down and marches with the protesters and says I love you I'm listening to you I want to change uh what happened in Minneapolis is wrong so is that America is that the state of race relations uh get not saying that the the bad stories aren't true but but let's not go the other side and say well none of the good stories are true either or they don't tell us anything about uh what it's like in America it's so easy to take the worst of the stories and the worst injustices and the worst incidents and the worst sorts of people and and think well that's what it's like and when they're you know we're not going to hear about the thousands of people from all over Minneapolis who got up the next morning um from churches and probably from synagogues and just from all walks of life it's our cleaning up the streets uh we're not we're not going to know their names so what is the real America we don't have to settle that it's just the worst pictures and the worst stories that we see uh the other thing is to just come back to let's not miss what we really do agree on so I went through a bunch of things we may not agree on we may not you know tell the history of America in the same way we may not assess the current state of racism in America in the same way but don't miss that I mean it is something and it is a change from 50 60 years ago virtually everyone wants uh I mean that we want it into police brutality we want it into uh racism we want people to be valued to be treated the same way we don't want people to be fearful for their lives we don't want there to be unnecessarily harsh interactions with police officers we don't want stores to be looted and destroyed we don't want police officers to be spat upon now you can find you know people on extremes in either direction who say I do want those things and that's part of the revolution but look that's that's not where most everyone is so let's not miss what we do really agree on and if coming out of this can be a real heartfelt effort to say we we don't want this to happen again and we and you know there's there's 330 human beings in this country so bad things will happen again but if we can do uh if there's ideas out there if there are ways to to make it I think there's a great amount of will to see these things uh there's all sorts of things we don't agree on and we're so easily polarized and politicized but there are a great number of the most important things that if we could get the my side is them out of it we really do want to see happen and then finally just for Christians what do we do and I know this is going to sound like you Kevin you're being a a pietist here but I was seeing Karen Ellis tweet this today and I appreciate it she's saying don't let people tell you that prayer isn't doing something there may be things to do after you pray but but

pray and we know as Christians that to pray is not prayer is the work prayer is the wrestling against not just flesh and blood but powers and principalities prayer is not just you know thoughts it's not mindfulness it is talking to the god of the universe who cares about us and cares about his creation and cares about those made in his image and yes cares about the United States of America and so we pray and we pray in Jesus name believing that God will listen and we pray for humility before we think of all the other sins that someone else has to repent of and all the ways that they're be knighted in their thinking what if we would start we would pray for a week I found that this is one prayer the Lord always answers in my life lord show me my sin what what have I missed expose my the dark places of my heart would you give me humility toward others and then what what can I do knowing that we have different vocations we have different spots in life and you know someone who's on doing legislation on Capitol Hill has a different calling than someone who's busy at home as a mom but what might I be able to do and then boy this is going to sound last thing I promise this is going to sound absolutely like I'm just doing a Beatles song all you need is love but look don't don't let the world steal that from the church so I know sometimes you know perhaps fairly Christians can get criticized for only thinking in a personal dimension so I'm not suggesting that we just go out and hold hands with neighbors from six feet away and all problems go away again I get it there's culture there's legislative there's all sorts of things but look if we as Christians it gets a point where we're embarrassed to say love is what we need to do then we we've missed what it means to be a Christian love God and love your neighbor and we know as Christians that we know the definition of love and it's not unconditional affirmation it's not you know just warm squishy feelings love means you're patient and you're kind you do not envy others you don't want to take away blessings they have you don't boast like the blessings that you have are because you deserve them you're not arrogant you're not rude to other people you don't insist on your own way you you you want to listen you want to learn you want to understand you you come with a posture of humility you're not irritable you're not resentful you don't rejoice at wrongdoing you're not looking for the other side to screw up because then it makes your side look better and you want to rejoice with wrong doing because ha ha shame on you that's a point for our side you rejoice with the truth whoever whoever the truth whoever it comes from whoever says it you want the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love never ends so now faith hope and love abide these three but the greatest of these is love we know love because the Lord Jesus loved us first he gave his life as a propitiation a wrath atoning sacrifice when we deserved the father's just anger against us we deserved to be treated as criminals when we had nothing to our account that we should be given a second chance or a millionth chance because of his great love with which he loved us while we were yet sinners Christ loved us and he gave up his life for us and so we who have been loved surely ought to love one another god bless stay safe pray read your bibles and we hope to be with you again next week

[Music] [Silence]

