

CBC Sunday School
Critical Race Theory: Is Critical Race Theory a Helpful Framework?
May 15, 2022

I. Discussion Question

From experience, study, or previous lessons, what is your current understanding of CRT?

II. Where CRT Is Consistent with Scripture

- A. It recognizes that the concept of “race,” whereby we classify people according to skin color, is a social construct.
 - 1. The world has not always classified people by skin color.
 - 2. Classifying people by skin color is problematic and inconsistent at best, and downright evil at worst.
 - 3. Revelation 5:9; “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...”
 - a. When Scripture speaks of “different” kinds of people, it never uses skin color as a means of differentiation.
 - 4. There is one “race” of humans, who live in different, permeable tribes/cultures/ethnicities, etc.
 - 5. Any attempt to classify people by one physical marker (whether skin color, hair color, hair type, height, etc.) is doomed to fail, and doesn’t accord with science or Scripture.
 - a. “...race itself is a construct, an interpretation of nature rather than an unambiguous marker of basic natural differences within humankind. Race is in the eye of the beholder; it does not enjoy a genuine claim to be regarded as a fact of nature.” Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, p. 3
 - b. “...geneticists have shown that there is more genetic variation within Africa than there is in the rest of the world put together... According to the eminent geneticist Kenneth Kidd, ‘no human population is genetically homogenous – high levels of genetic variation are ubiquitous, even in small, isolated populations.’ Such findings demolish the notions of racial purity much insisted upon by generations of racists.” Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, p. 6
- B. It recognizes systemic sin and injustice, that sin and corruption don’t just exist in people individually, but can affect institutions and groups of people.
 - 1. We who believe in original sin and pervasive depravity should have no problem recognizing that sin can affect whole groups of people.
 - 2. We also see in Scripture that whole groups of people are even plagued by specific kinds of sin, and that certain sins can be woven into the laws and systems of a culture.
 - a. See Exodus 1 and the Egyptian oppression of Israel.
 - b. See the collective wickedness of Nineveh in Jonah 1:2.
 - c. See Genesis 18:22-33 and the collective sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - d. See Ezekiel 16 and the systemic corruption of Israel.

- C. It intends to be sympathetic to those hurting, oppressed, and downtrodden. It calls for justice, just as Scripture does.
1. A repentant heart will seek to right wrongs done.
 - a. Luke 19:8; “And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”
 2. Scripture constantly calls us to be merciful.
 - a. Matthew 5:7; “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
 - b. Isaiah 11:4; “but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...”
 - c. Proverbs 106:3; “Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!”
 - d. Proverbs 29:7; “A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.”
 - e. Psalm 82:3-4; “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”
 - f. Proverbs 14:21; “Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.”
- D. It is sympathetic to the realities of different perspectives and lived experiences. It calls us to listen to the stories and pain of others.
1. Exodus 23:6; “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.”
 - a. Scripture recognizes that class and status often impact how people are treated.
 - b. Scripture focuses on justice for the poor, recognizing that the poor are most often the victims of corruption, and have little social power.
 2. Scripture calls us to weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. This calls us to place ourselves in the shoes of others, and be sensitive to their experiences and testimonies.
 - a. Proverbs 21:13; “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.”
 3. We are called to be hear others.
 - a. James 1:19; “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger...”

III. Where CRT Is Inconsistent with Scripture

- A. It perpetually divides people by skin color. Very often it stops at naming the problem in “racial” injustice, but provides little means by which we may be reconciled and unified.
1. True reconciliation is not found in constantly separating out people by skin color, and assigning privileged or oppressed status.
 2. True reconciliation and unity are only found when people lift their eyes to One who is above, confess their sins to Him and to one another, forgive one another, and walk in humility and love united in Christ.

- B. It overemphasizes differences of perspective to the point that truth becomes relative, and objective truth, laws, and standards are negated. For many CRT proponents, the gospel itself is a “white person’s” religion, and therefore should be rejected.
1. Scripture itself can cease to become the standard, and replaced by the subjective lenses of those who are oppressed, as truth becomes dependent on who is saying it.
 2. That is, if an oppressed person is saying it, it must be true. If a person in authority is saying it, it must be corrupted.
 3. “While divinely inspired, we deny the Bible is inerrant or infallible. It was written by men over centuries and thus reflects both God’s truth and human sin & prejudice. We affirm that biblical scholarship and critical theory help us discern which messages are God’s.” Union Seminary statement on Scripture, posted on Twitter, Sep. 5 2018¹
 - a. Here Scripture is submitted to the authority of critical theory.
 4. God’s Word is true. And God shows no partiality. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s truth, regardless of who perceives Him. And anyone can receive Him!
 - a. Luke 20:21; “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God...”
 - b. John 17:17; “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”
 - c. Psalm 119:151; “But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true.”
 - d. While Jesus often speaks confrontationally to the powerful, ruling religious class, Jesus also isn’t afraid to correct someone who is of the “oppressed” class. See his theological correction of the woman at the well in John 4:21-22.
- C. It sees all authority and power as inherently corrupt (hegemonic power). Scripture does not.
1. Certainly, those in power can use their power to hurt those not in power. See Ezekiel 34, where God condemns the shepherds and leaders of Israel for their corrupt leadership.
 2. However, the Bible recognizes there can be good and righteous authority.
 - a. God Himself is a righteous authority.
 - b. God calls all leaders – husbands, parents, masters, etc. – to exercise authority rightly. This assumes it can be done, and that good authority can be a blessing.
 3. We are even called to submit to authority, for God uses it for good. See Romans 13.
 4. Scripture does not allow us to see all dominant cultural forces as the exercise of unjust hegemonic power. Some culturally dominant forces are and can be good.
- D. CRT, according to its own chief proponents, necessitates the affirmation of ideologies and movements that are contrary to Scripture, such as the LGBTQ+ movement.
1. If we accept the CRT framework that sees oppression as all about “hegemonic power,” then we will believe that all minority cultures are oppressed, and need to be affirmed, accepted, and “liberated.” This inevitably means that the LGBTQ+ community must be affirmed, as they have oppressed status.
 2. Romans 1:26-28; “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion

¹ <https://twitter.com/UnionSeminary/status/1037346517936472070>

for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

- E. CRT, along with many critical theories and the modern social justice project, defines justice in a way foreign to Scripture.
 - 1. Modern CRT and social justice movements often call for an advancing of the oppressed over against the oppressor, and call for the elimination of any kind of economic or social disparity.
 - 2. Biblical justice does not call for siding with the rich or the poor. Nor does it demand equitable outcomes for all people, regardless of moral righteousness. Biblical justice calls for the elimination of unjust oppression and corruption, and righteousness and integrity in the application of laws and justice.
 - a. Leviticus 19:15; “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”
 - b. Zechariah 9:5; “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”
 - c. Deuteronomy 1:17; “You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s.”
 - d. Proverbs 17:23; “The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.”
- F. CRT, along with many critical theories and the modern social justice project, often redefines salvation and our purpose in life.
 - 1. It sees our fundamental problem as earthly oppression, and our fundamental goal to be liberated from this oppression.
 - 2. While working for justice is a good endeavor (themes of justice and oppression are all throughout Scripture!), liberation from earthly oppression is not the ultimate problem or objective of Scripture.
 - 3. CRT offers no eternal, ultimate, or godly perspective. When does the project end? What does “heaven” look like? Is it achievable?
 - 4. While many adherents will claim it is not a comprehensive worldview, it often functions like a religion, calling for religious devotion.
- G. It often excuses the sins or injustices of those who belong to the “oppressed” class.
 - 1. Just because you are not in a dominant group, it does not mean you are not also capable of great sin, and in need of salvation.
 - 2. Romans 5:12; “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...”
 - 3. Romans 3:23; “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”
 - a. Consider Paul’s agenda in Romans. He seeks to unify the Jews and Gentiles in

the church. He does this not by showing how one group is oppressed and the other is dominant. He works toward unity by showing how all have sinned, and no one is innocent or righteous, and all need (and can have!) salvation in Jesus Christ.

- H. CRT, along with other critical theories, tends to see all forms of privilege or advantage as “injustice.” Scripture does not.
 - 1. Proverbs 10:4; “A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.”
 - 2. Proverbs 21:5; “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”

IV. Discussion Question

Considering the ways in which CRT is and is not compatible with Scripture, do you think it can be a helpful tool for Christians, and should be used as a framework for analyzing racism?

V. Is CRT a Helpful Framework or Tool?

- A. All truth is God’s truth.
 - 1. If something is truly true, then it is consistent with God’s truth and the way He made this world.
 - 2. Even belief systems totally contrary to Christianity have elements of truth in them.
 - a. Muslims are monotheists, as are Christians.
- B. Even “Christian” tools require discerning interaction.
 - 1. We should not read systematic theologies, Bible commentaries, or Christian authors without critical thought.
 - 2. Scripture alone is our ultimate authority for faith. So all manmade frameworks require discerning interaction.
- C. CRT partially focuses on matters outside of the scope of Scripture. Namely, Scripture cannot and does not intend to teach us the legal and social history of the US.
 - 1. To the extent that CRT may teach us truths we did not know, it may help us.
 - 2. Could we learn these same lessons and history without the use of CRT?
- D. Should we “eat the meat and spit out the bones” of false religions and ideologies like Baalism, Gnosticism, Mormonism, etc.?
 - 1. What would we gain for life and faith, that we could not also receive from Scripture, by studying false religions?
 - 2. Has God not given us all that we need for faith and life? Is the Bible not sufficient?

- E. We should take care to not presume we are more discerning than we actually are. We do not always discern when we are taking in and believing untruth.
1. There is a reason we don't let toddlers decide which liquids to drink. They don't yet know how to discern between nutrition and poison. We also should be careful not to feed false teaching to those unprepared to discern it.
 2. Scripture repeatedly calls us to be careful to put forward good doctrine, and put away false teaching.
 - a. 1 Timothy 1:4; "nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith."
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:16; "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."
 - c. 1 John 4:1; "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."
 - d. Philippians 4:8; "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- F. Can we preach against racism without employing a troubled framework like CRT? Does Scripture give us the sufficient tools to address the sins of racism and partiality?