

“Dealing With Divisiveness in Our Mission”
Sermon Notes

➤ **Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit demands that we deal with divisiveness in our midst**

**3 steps to dealing with divisive people...*

1. Be practiced at spotting them in the church (v. 10a; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14a)

2. Be purposed to win them if God wills (v.10b; Matthew 18:15-17a; Galatians 6:1-2; Timothy 2:23-26)

3. Be prepared to lose them if we must (vv.10c-11; Matthew 18:17b-18; 1 Corinthians 5:5, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14b)

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of June 28th - July 4th

This study, though lightly edited and updated, first appeared as a community group study guide on September 18, 2018. Though a lot of water has passed under the bridge since that time, it still functions as a worthy introduction to the topic of the critical theory, social justice, and the evangelical church.

Getting Started

1. Over the last several years, there has been an increasing amount of attention and discussion among evangelical Christians around the topic of “social justice”. If you are aware of these recent discussions, what have you heard and what do you see? How might you assist the group in getting a sense of this issue?

Digging Deeper

2. How do you define “social justice”? A large part of the current controversy has to do with the definition of this term. Is social justice merely a synonym for love for one's neighbor (Matthew 22:39) or good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:1, 8, 14)? Or is social justice inherently and unavoidably connected with unbiblical concepts, policies and practices? ¹

Here's another hot question: “Is social justice a gospel issue?” Pastor Kevin DeYoung wisely replies: “Is social justice a gospel issue? That depends on what we mean by 'social justice' and what we mean by 'gospel issue.’” ² Touche. So, what do you think? If we can define social justice, we ought to be able to ask and answer this next question. Is social justice a gospel issue? Why or why not?

Open Your Bible to Luke 18:1-8...

3. Read through this parable together as a group. How many times does the word “justice” appear? In context, what is justice (vv.3,4,7 and 8)? How ought we to define it biblically? Is biblical justice different than social justice? According to this passage, who is responsible for establishing justice?
4. As a group, go to <https://statementonsocialjustice.com/> . Read and discuss the introduction to the statement. As time permits, read through the 14 affirmations and denials found on the site (including the section on the history and formulation of the statement). What are your initial thoughts? Do you tend to agree or disagree with the statement? Why?

¹ Such as critical theory, liberation theology, cultural marxism, intersectionality, etc. If these terms are new to you, please listen to this helpful interview that radio host David Wheaton gave with Phil Johnson two years back. Wheaton and Johnson do an outstanding job unpacking these concepts:

<https://www.thechristianworldview.org/topic-are-you-awake-to-the-woke-movement/> .

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/social-justice-gospel-issue/> . Accessed 9/14/18 @ 3pm.

5. While we would not be surprised to see the concepts of critical theory and social justice championed in our broader culture or in theologically liberal churches for that matter, what has been alarming is to see these very same concepts increasingly entertained within conservative evangelical circles. How does Titus 3:10-11 provide a practical, biblical grid for thinking through how we ought to respond to this issue among God's people? Walk carefully through the sermon outline, paying particular attention to the scriptural cross-references provided. What do we learn?
6. We confess in our EFCA Statement of Faith that we desire to "live out our faith with...compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed." How ought we to approach and pursue these biblical mandates ³ without falling into that which the Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel cautions and warns us of?

In 2018, the national EFCA Theology Conference topic was: "The Gospel, Compassion and Justice, and the EFCA". If you're interested to know where our broader movement falls with respect to this issue, these two links will be of some help. Here are each of the main sessions of the conference: <https://www.efca.org/resources/document/gospel-compassion-and-justice-and-efca> , and this link will take you to a post-conference discussion featuring Greg Strand who serves as the Director for Theology and Credentialing of our national movement: <https://www.efca.org/blog/reaching-all-people/where-do-we-go-here>

7. Close your time together as a group by praying through Luke 18:1-8. At the same time, pray for more light to be shed on this discussion as well as for the preservation of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace among conservative evangelicals (Ephesians 4:1-3). Pray, too, for our EFCA movement, that we would walk a faithful path as we seek to engage with this issue biblically.

Resources for Further Study on Critical Theory & Social Justice

- **Neil Shenvi** is the single finest mind in the evangelical world writing and speaking on this issue today. His website is a treasure trove of resources. <https://shenviapologetics.com/intro-to-critical-theory/>
- **Darrell Harrison & Virgil Walker** are the hosts of the "Just Thinking" Podcast. For several years now, they have brought increasing clarity to matters related to social justice as they seek to expound and apply Scripture in the context of robust Christian dialogue: <https://thebarpodcast.com/JT/> .
- **James Lindsay** is an author and a cultural commentator that you don't want to miss: <https://newdiscourses.com/translations-from-the-wokish/> . Though he is an atheist (and therefore we want to take his observations about biblical Christianity with a grain of salt - perhaps the entire saltshaker), the resource he has become for the evangelical church in the social justice controversy is nothing short of stunning. Check out this 3-part interview: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZJe-MWy0cYfcPwUzLnGqqLCFoSo05JeK>
- Finally, if you haven't yet seen it, this two-hour documentary from Founders Ministries called "**By What Standard**" is eye-opening: <https://founders.org/cinedoc/> . It seeks to chronicle and confront the present shift in the Southern Baptist Convention toward critical theory and social justice.

³ For example, the biblical case for our mandate to live out our faith with justice for the oppressed is strong: Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 21:3; 29:7; 31:8-9; Jeremiah 22:16; Isaiah 1:16-17. This is merely a sampling of such commands. Can you think of others?