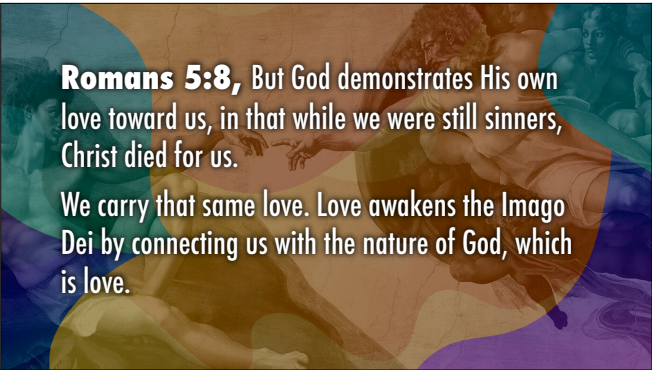


Christians have misunderstood social work and social justice. God uses many activities to prepare people to receive the Gospel of Christ. For example, we cannot preach the Gospel to hungry people until we feed people. We cannot preach the Gospel to persons who have experienced injustice without dealing with the forces of injustice. Whatever injures Imago Dei (Image of God) in people hinders the heart and mind from receiving the word of God. This is why we cannot ignore "secular" factors and only focus on "spiritual" factors.



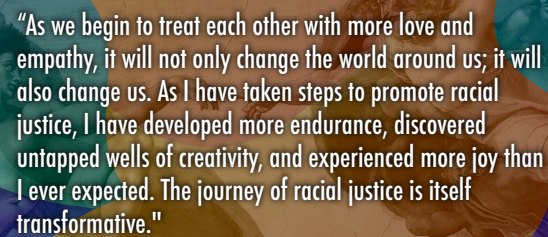
What was impossible, the love of God made possible.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.



Romans 5:8, But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We carry that same love. Love awakens the Imago Dei by connecting us with the nature of God, which is love.



"As we begin to treat each other with more love and empathy, it will not only change the world around us; it will also change us. As I have taken steps to promote racial justice, I have developed more endurance, discovered untapped wells of creativity, and experienced more joy than I ever expected. The journey of racial justice is itself transformative."

(Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, p. 7).



This love helps us not to stumble, or help others not to stumble.

1 John 2:10, He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

Definition of stumble:

σκάνδαλον

Transliteration, skandalon - The Greek word for “stumble” means, “a trap, snare, a stumbling block, any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall. Sounds like “scandal.”

Think of the all the traps and snares that come when we don't receive God's love, or share His love with others.

Realizing **Imago Dei** within ourselves and helping others realize it, **is a function of the love of God.**

First, it is that God loved us, followed by the truth that because He loved us that we can love one another.



The Apostle John wrote

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.



The Apostle John wrote

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

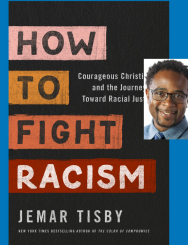
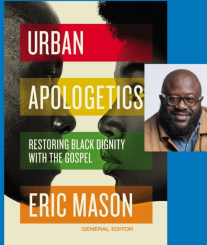


The Apostle John wrote

1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Many believers have misunderstood that social work and social justice is also the work of God and a manifestation of love.

Anything that restores Imago Dei in people is a work of God.



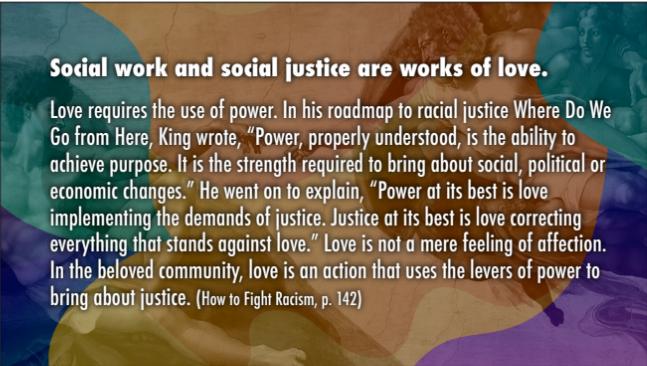
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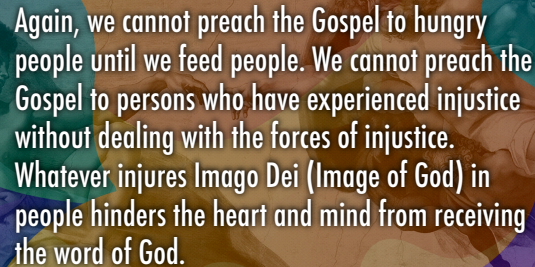
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Social work and social justice are works of love.

Love requires the use of power. In his roadmap to racial justice *Where Do We Go from Here*, King wrote, "Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political or economic changes." He went on to explain, "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love." Love is not a mere feeling of affection. In the beloved community, love is an action that uses the levers of power to bring about justice. (*How to Fight Racism*, p. 142)

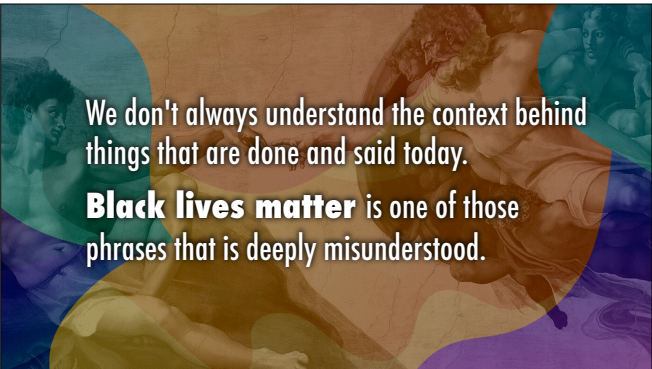
Last week I finished the book by Jamar Tisby, "How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice"



Again, we cannot preach the Gospel to hungry people until we feed people. We cannot preach the Gospel to persons who have experienced injustice without dealing with the forces of injustice. Whatever injures *Imago Dei* (Image of God) in people hinders the heart and mind from receiving the word of God.

This is why all forms of trauma and abuse or so damaging to adults and especially children. The devil comes to steal kill and destroy to prevent people from seeing and receiving life from Christ.

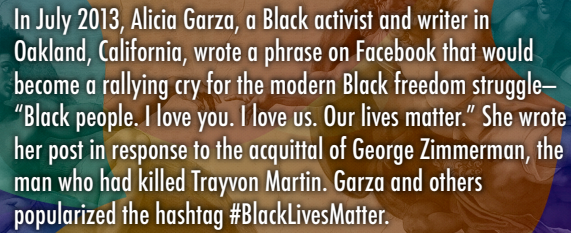
Evangelical Christians have erred greatly in separating the work of social justice from preaching the gospel. Mini reject inquiry such as critical race theory by framing it as a Marxist conspiracy. Again, whatever closes the heart in mind hinders the presentation of the gospel.



We don't always understand the context behind things that are done and said today.

Black lives matter is one of those phrases that is deeply misunderstood.

The phrase, and human concern, "Black lives matter" has been largely rejected by evangelical Christianity, which has put them in the sad posture of being irrelevant to matters pertaining to racial justice in our society.

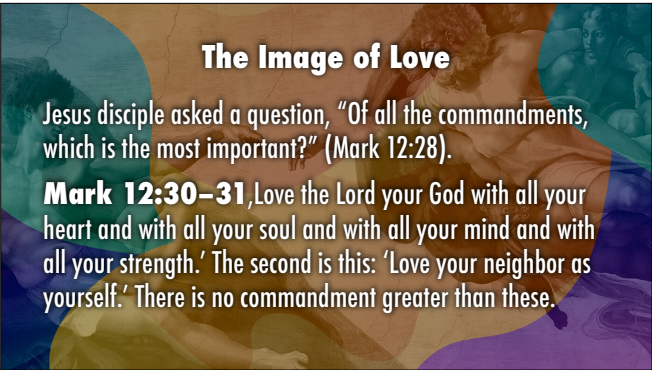


In July 2013, Alicia Garza, a Black activist and writer in Oakland, California, wrote a phrase on Facebook that would become a rallying cry for the modern Black freedom struggle—“Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.” She wrote her post in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the man who had killed Trayvon Martin. Garza and others popularized the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.

(How to Fight Racism, pp. 27-28)

Garza’s fellow activists Patrice Cullors and Opal Tometi popularized the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.
How to Fight Racism (pp. 27–28)

The Image of Love

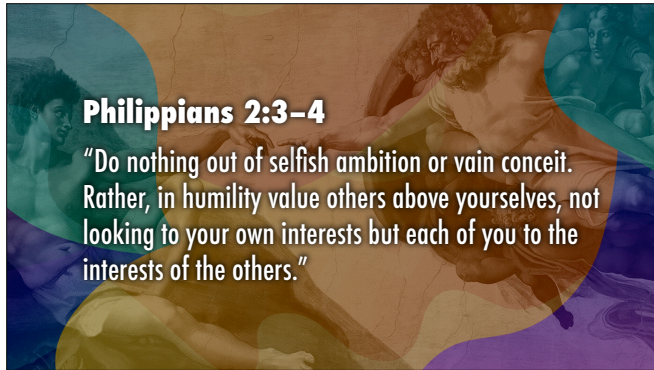


Jesus disciple asked a question, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” (Mark 12:28).

Mark 12:30–31, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.

Jesus encapsulated the core of Christianity as love for God and love for neighbor. This love animates the call for racial justice. Notice that Jesus juxtaposes love for God with love for neighbor. The greatest command is to love God with your entire being: heart, soul, mind, and strength. No part of us should be withheld from devotion to God. This is true love for God. But how do we and others know that we love God with our whole selves? Love of God is demonstrated through love of others. loving God and loving others, he does not separate the two. It is impossible to love God and hate those whom God has created in God’s own image. The apostle John put it this way: “Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister” (1 John 4:21). Or as Fannie Lou Hamer put it, “Ain’t no such thing as I can hate anyone and hope to see the face of God.”⁵

Tisby, Jemar. How to Fight Racism (p. 144). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.



Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." This is the mindset we must have as we pursue racial justice as a way of life and not simply a pastiche of isolated actions. Fighting racism is ultimately about serving other people from a wellspring of love. A spirit of loving service has to be infused with a spirit of humility that puts the interests of others before our own.

Tisby, Jemar. How to Fight Racism (p. 183). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.
