

BIBLICAL APOLOGETICS & CRITICAL THEORY: FIELD MANUAL

THE MANDATE

1 Peter 3:15-16 *"But in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame."*

The Task:

- Honor Christ as Lord (presupposition, not conclusion)
- Be prepared to give a defence (ἀπολογία)
- Do it with gentleness and respect (manner matters)
- Expect slander and reviling (spiritual warfare)

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 *"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."*

The Method:

- Spiritual warfare, not merely intellectual
- Divine power (Spirit + Word), not human cleverness
- **Destroy** arguments (not just dispute them)
- Take thoughts captive to Christ

FOUNDATIONAL TEXTS

Scripture's Self-Attestation:

- **Isaiah 8:20** - "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."
- **Psalms 19:7** - "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul"
- **John 5:39** - "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me"
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable... that the man of God may be complete"

The Unbeliever's Condition:

- **Romans 1:18-20** - They suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God is clearly revealed; they are without excuse.
- **Romans 1:21-22** - "They became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools."
- **1 Corinthians 2:14** - "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolish to him, and he is not able to understand them"
- **Ephesians 4:17-19** - "Futility of their minds... darkened in understanding... ignorance... hardness of heart"

No Neutral Ground:

- **Proverbs 1:7** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom"
- **Matthew 7:24-27** - Building on Christ or sand—no third option
- **Colossians 2:8** - "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition... and not according to Christ"
- **1 Corinthians 1:20-21** - "Where is the one who is wise?... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

The Transcendental Reality:

- **Acts 17:28** - "In him we live and move and have our being"
- **Colossians 1:17** - "In him all things hold together"
- **John 1:3** - "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made"

THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL METHOD

The Foundation: No Neutrality

Don't pretend you're approaching this from a neutral position. You're not. Neither are they. Everyone has ultimate commitments that shape how they interpret evidence.

You start with Christ as Lord over all knowledge. They start with autonomous human reason. Make that clear from the beginning. Don't play the game where you pretend to evaluate Christianity from some imaginary neutral standpoint.

"I reason from Scripture as my ultimate authority because all knowledge depends on God. You're reasoning from somewhere too. What's your ultimate authority?"

The Transcendental Argument: Press the Foundations

Here's the key question: **"How do you account for X on your worldview?"**

Not "How do you explain X within your system?" but "What in your worldview makes X possible at all?"

Real Example - Logic:

Skeptic: "I don't need God to use logic."

"Sure you do. You're using the law of non-contradiction right now—A cannot be non-A at the same time and in the same sense. But why does that law hold? On your view, you're just rearranged stardust, the product of unguided evolutionary processes. Why should the chemical reactions in your brain correspond to reality? Why should logic work tomorrow the same way it worked today? You're borrowing from the Christian worldview—that there's a rational God who made a rational universe and made us in His image so we can think His thoughts after Him. Without that foundation, you have no reason to trust your reasoning."

Real Example - Morality:

Atheist: "I can be moral without God. I just follow the Golden Rule."

"Why should you? I'm not asking what your moral opinions are. I'm asking what makes anything actually obligatory. On your worldview, where do moral obligations come from? If we're just evolved animals, why is anything truly wrong rather than just disadvantageous to survival? When you say rape is *wrong*, you mean something more than 'I don't like it' or 'society disapproves.' You mean it's objectively evil. But how do you get from molecules in motion to moral obligation? You can't. You're borrowing the concept of objective morality from Christianity while denying the only foundation that makes it real—a holy, personal, law-giving God."

Real Example - Science:

Naturalist: "Science has replaced the need for God."

"Science *presupposes* God. Every time you do science, you assume the universe is orderly, that natural laws are uniform, that tomorrow will resemble today, that your reasoning is reliable. Why? On naturalism, the universe is the product of random processes. Why should it be orderly? Why should the future resemble the past? Hume saw this problem—there's no naturalistic justification for induction. You're standing on Christian foundations (God sustains creation consistently, Jeremiah 33:25) while claiming you don't need the foundation. That's borrowed capital."

Real Example - Meaning:

Existentialist: "I create my own meaning."

"If you're creating it, it's not really meaning—it's just preference. Invented meaning is no different than invented friends. When you say life has meaning, you mean something is actually significant, not just that you've decided to pretend it is. But on your view, the universe is ultimately purposeless, you're a cosmic accident, and everything you do will be forgotten when the sun explodes. How is that meaningful? You're using the word 'meaning' but you've gutted it. Real meaning requires purpose, and purpose requires a Person who designed you for something. You're borrowing the concept while denying the only thing that makes it real."

The Internal Critique: Show the Collapse

After pressing the foundations, show how their system can't account for what they use:

"Your worldview gives you no reason to trust logic, but you use it anyway. You have no grounds for objective morality, but you make moral claims. You can't justify scientific reasoning, but you appeal to science. You borrow from Christianity at every turn while denying the God who makes it all possible. That's not a worldview—it's intellectual theft."

The Gospel Proclamation

Don't stop at intellectual critique. The point isn't to win debates—it's to call people to repentance.

"The reason you know right from wrong, the reason logic works, the reason anything matters—it's because you're made in God's image. You know He exists (Romans 1:19-20). But you're suppressing that truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). The problem isn't lack of evidence. It's rebellion. You need to repent and trust in Christ who died for sinners and rose from the dead. That's not just an intellectual claim—it's a command from the God you know exists."

The Goal:

God granting repentance and knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25). You're not trying to make Christianity more plausible or likely. You're showing that without Christ, nothing makes sense. And you're calling them to bow the knee.

WHAT TO AVOID

Error #1: Playing on Their Turf

Don't accept their framing. If someone says "Prove God exists using neutral evidence," you've already lost. There is no neutral evidence. Evidence doesn't interpret itself. The question is: which worldview makes sense of the evidence?

Don't argue: "Here are 10 evidences for God, now add them up and see if you find them convincing."

Do argue: "You can't make sense of evidence at all without God. You're standing on borrowed foundations."

Error #2: Thinking Evidence Converts

Romans 1:18 says unbelievers *suppress* the truth. The problem isn't intellectual—it's moral. They don't need more facts; they need new hearts.

Yes, give arguments. Yes, engage the mind. But remember: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

You're doing spiritual warfare. Your weapons are the Word and the Spirit, not clever arguments divorced from the gospel.

Error #3: Passive Fatalism

"God will save who He'll save, so why argue?"

Because God commands it (1 Peter 3:15). Because He uses means (Romans 10:14-17). Because Paul reasoned, persuaded, argued (Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4; 2 Corinthians 5:11).

God's sovereignty doesn't negate your responsibility. It grounds it. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

Steel-Man, Don't Straw-Man

Proverbs 18:17: "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."

Represent their position accurately—even generously—before you demolish it. Don't attack weak versions. Go after the strongest arguments they have. When you refute the best case they can make, you've actually accomplished something.

When to Walk Away

Matthew 7:6: "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs."

If someone is mocking, hostile, only interested in scoring points—disengage. You're not obligated to argue with fools. Proverbs 26:4-5 gives both options: sometimes you answer, sometimes you don't. Wisdom knows the difference.

DEFINITIONS TABLE

CRITICAL THEORY TERMS:

| Term | Definition |
|----------------------------|---|
| Critical Theory | Ideological framework analysing society through power dynamics between oppressor and oppressed groups |
| Oppressor/Oppressed Binary | Fundamental division between groups with power/privilege (oppressors) and marginalized groups (oppressed) |
| Standpoint Epistemology | Claim that knowledge is shaped by social location; oppressed groups have privileged access to truth |
| Lived Experience | Authoritative personal experience of oppression that grants epistemic privilege |
| Intersectionality | Framework claiming identity categories (race, class, gender, etc.) "intersect" to create unique oppressions |
| Social Construction | Claim that categories (gender, race, morality, truth) are created by societies, not objective realities |
| Systemic/Structural | Oppression embedded in institutions and culture, independent of individual intent |

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------|--|
| Privilege | Unearned advantages held by dominant groups by virtue of group membership |
| Microaggression | Small actions/statements claimed to reinforce oppression; intent irrelevant, only impact matters |
| Allyship | Supporting oppressed groups through activism and "doing the work" |
| Centring | Privileging perspectives from marginalized groups; deferring to their authority |
| Decolonizing | Removing Western/European/"white" influence, assumed to be inherently oppressive |

BIBLICAL TERMS:

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------|--|
| Imago Dei | Image of God; all humans bear God's image (Gen 1:26-27), giving inherent dignity |
| Federal Headship | Adam represented all humanity in sin (Rom 5:12-21); Christ represents believers in righteousness |
| In Adam vs. In Christ | Fundamental biblical division based on spiritual standing, not social categories |
| Noetic Effects of Sin | Impact of sin on human thinking, causing suppression of truth (Rom 1:18) and futility (Rom 1:21-22) |
| General Revelation | God's disclosure through creation/conscience; renders all "without excuse" (Rom 1:20) |
| Special Revelation | God's specific disclosure in Christ and Scripture, necessary for saving knowledge |
| Biblical Justice | God's righteous standard applied impartially to all (Lev 19:15; Rom 2:11) |
| Corporate Sin | Nations/groups judged for collective patterns; but individual responsibility maintained (Ezek 18:20) |

CRITICAL THEORY OVERVIEW- THE FALSE GOSPEL

What It Is:

Framework that came through Frankfurt School (1930s) → Postmodernism (1960s-90s) → Contemporary applications (CRT, intersectionality, queer theory, etc.).

It analyses everything through power dynamics. Who has power? Who's oppressed? That's the lens for understanding all of society.

It entered the church through liberation theology, social justice movements, academic theology departments, and guilt-driven appeals ("If you don't adopt this, you're complicit in oppression").

Core Thesis:

Society is fundamentally divided into oppressor and oppressed groups. All social relations are about power. Liberation comes through consciousness-raising (recognizing your oppression or privilege), activism (dismantling oppressive systems), and centring marginalized voices. Truth isn't objective—it's perspectival. Oppressed groups have privileged access to truth about their oppression.

Why It's a False Gospel:

| Category | Critical Theory | Biblical Truth | Key Text |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Problem | Social oppression | Sin against God | Rom 3:23 |
| Identity | Group membership | In Adam or in Christ | 1 Cor 15:22 |
| Solution | Activism | Christ's atonement | Eph 2:8-9 |
| Authority | Lived experience | God's Word | John 17:17 |
| Division | Oppressor/oppressed | Believer/unbeliever | John 3:36 |
| Justice | Power redistribution | God's impartial standard | Lev 19:15 |
| Reconciliation | Political process (no final forgiveness) | Blood of Christ | Eph 2:14-16, Col 1:20 |
| Righteousness | "Doing the work" / activism | Gift received by faith | Rom 3:22; Phil 3:9 |

It's not liberation—it's enslavement. It offers no atonement, no ultimate forgiveness. Only perpetual guilt (if you're "oppressor") or perpetual grievance (if you're "oppressed").

ALL CT CORE CONCEPTS- EXPOSED

1. OPPRESSOR/OPPRESSED BINARY

Claim: Humanity is primarily divided by power dynamics and group identity (race, class, gender, etc.). These categories determine your moral standing and epistemic authority.

Internal Critique:

- Which binary is ultimate when they conflict? Is a rich black woman more oppressor or oppressed compared to a poor white man?
- Who decides which groups count as "oppressor" vs. "oppressed"? And on what basis?
- This framework requires power to enforce—so who has the power to define power? It's self-refuting.

Biblical Response:

The primary division is spiritual: **In Adam (death) vs. In Christ (life)** (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12-21).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

All humans are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). All have sinned (Romans 3:23). All need the same Savior. Social categories are real but not ultimate. The dividing line that matters eternally is faith in Christ.

2. STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY

Claim: Oppressed groups have privileged access to truth about their oppression because their social location gives them insights that oppressors can't have. "Lived experience" grants epistemic authority. Truth is perspectival—what's true "for you" may not be true "for me."

Internal Critique:

- If truth depends on social location, why should I accept *your* truth claims about how standpoint epistemology works?
- Who decides which groups are "oppressed enough" to have epistemic privilege?
- This makes dialogue impossible. If oppressors can't understand oppression, they can't understand what they're being told to repent of. You've just eliminated the possibility of genuine reconciliation.

Biblical Response:

All people suppress truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18)—rich and poor, powerful and weak. All need the Spirit's illumination to understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). God shows no partiality (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34).

Scripture is sufficient and clear: "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). "The law of the LORD is perfect... the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

Truth is objective, revealed by God, and accessible to all through His Word by the Spirit—not determined by social location.

3. POWER AS PRIMARY FRAMEWORK

Claim: All relationships, institutions, and ideas are fundamentally about power. Language, culture, norms, laws, traditions—even reason itself—are tools used by dominant groups to maintain control. The central question is always: "Who benefits? Who has power? Who's marginalized?"

Internal Critique:

- If everything is about power, then your claim that "everything is about power" is just a power move. Why should I accept it?
- On what basis is power-seeking wrong? If might makes right, Critical Theory is just another group trying to seize power—and has no grounds to condemn others for doing the same.
- How do you account for people who sacrifice power for others? Altruism makes no sense on this framework.

Biblical Response:

Sin is rebellion against God (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4), not merely power imbalance. Authority structures are ordained by God (Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:21-6:9). Abuse of power is sin (James 5:1-6; Micah 3:1-3), but power itself isn't inherently evil. Christ had all power and used it to serve and save (Philippians 2:5-8).

Power is a tool. It can be used rightly (for justice, protection, service) or wrongly (for exploitation, oppression). The question isn't "Who has power?" but "Are they using it according to God's standard?"

4. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Claim: Categories we think are objective—male/female, race, morality, truth—are actually "socially constructed." They're ideas created by societies to serve the interests of dominant groups. Everything is fluid, contingent, and can be "deconstructed" (taken apart to reveal hidden power) and reconstructed.

Internal Critique:

- Is the claim "everything is socially constructed" itself socially constructed? If so, why accept it? If not, you've just admitted some things aren't constructed—which refutes your whole position.
- If you deconstruct everything, what's left to build on? Why is your reconstruction better than the current one?

- This makes science impossible. If even biological categories are constructed, you've just destroyed any objective basis for knowledge.

Biblical Response:

God created an ordered world with fixed natures, purposes, and meanings (Genesis 1; Colossians 1:16-17). "In the beginning, God created... male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:1, 27). Jesus affirms this: "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Matthew 19:4).

Truth is objective, revealed by God: "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). "The sum of your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160). Reality isn't constructed by societies—it's created by God and discovered by us.

5. INTERSECTIONALITY

Claim: Various identity categories (race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.) "intersect" to create unique experiences of oppression. A black woman experiences oppression differently than a white woman or a black man because her identities intersect. More intersections of oppression = more moral and epistemic authority.

Internal Critique:

- This multiplies divisions infinitely. Unity becomes impossible when everyone's experience is incomparable and incommensurable.
- Who has authority when intersections conflict? Does a wealthy disabled black lesbian have more authority than a poor straight white man?
- Creates hierarchy of victimhood, which contradicts the claim that all marginalized experiences are equally valid.
- If my intersections are unique, how can you understand me enough to include me in your categories?

Biblical Response:

Primary identity in Christ unifies all believers: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28).

"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

Yes, we have different experiences, circumstances, backgrounds. But our union with Christ is more fundamental than any social category. The body metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 shows unity coexisting with diversity—different members, different functions, one body. But the unity is primary.

6. SYSTEMIC/STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION

Claim: Oppression is embedded in institutions, culture, and even language itself—independent of individual intent or actions. You're guilty by participation in "the system," regardless of personal conduct.

Internal Critique:

- Systems don't have agency. They're made up of individual people making individual choices. If no individual is guilty, where's the sin?
- If guilt is systemic, how do you repent? You can't repent of "the system." Repentance requires personal moral agency.
- This removes individual responsibility—which is exactly what every tyrant wants. "It's not my fault; it's the system."

Biblical Response:

"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son" (Ezekiel 18:20). Individual moral responsibility is foundational.

"Each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Yes, sin has corporate dimensions. Entire nations are judged in Scripture (Amos 1-2). Cultural patterns can normalize evil (Isaiah 5:20; Jeremiah 6:15). Institutions can be corrupt (Isaiah 10:1-2; Micah 3:9-11). But moral guilt is personal. People create unjust systems. You address sin by calling individuals to repentance, not by blaming abstract "structures."

7. ACTIVISM AS SALVATION

Claim: Since systemic oppression is the problem, liberation through activism is the solution. Justice means redistribution of power and centring marginalized voices. Righteousness is demonstrated through "doing the work"—activism, allyship, self-criticism, advocacy.

Internal Critique:

- How much activism is enough? There's no standard, so you get perpetual guilt.
- Can "oppressors" ever truly atone? Not in this system. There's no mechanism for final forgiveness.
- This is works-righteousness. You earn your standing through activism, not receive it as gift.

Biblical Response:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17; Habakkuk 2:4). "We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:28).

Good works flow *from* salvation as fruit of faith (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26). But they don't earn righteousness. The gospel is: Christ's righteousness credited to you by faith alone. Critical Theory offers: perpetual activism with no assurance, no rest, no final forgiveness.

True justice means doing what God commands (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17)—but as obedience flowing from grace, not as means of salvation.

GALATIANS 3—PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

The Text:

"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

The Context:

Paul is writing to churches in Galatia being infiltrated by Judaizers—teachers claiming Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law to be saved (Galatians 2:11-21; 5:2-6; 6:12-13).

The question: "How does someone become part of Abraham's family and inherit God's promises?"

The Judaizers' answer: Ethnicity (be Jewish) + circumcision + law-keeping.

Paul's answer: **Faith in Christ. Period.**

What It DOES Mean:

1. Soteriological Equality

All people—regardless of ethnicity, social status, or gender—come to God the same way: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

No ethnic advantage. No social status that gets you in. No gender that's closer to God. "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24).

2. Equal Standing Before God

In Christ, all believers have equal access to God, equal adoption as sons, equal inheritance. A Gentile slave woman in Christ has the same standing before God as a Jewish free man in Christ. Both are justified. Both are adopted. Both are heirs.

3. Unity That Transcends Divisions

The gospel creates unity across the very boundaries that divide humanity. Jew and Gentile—historically hostile (Ephesians 2:11-16)—are now one body in Christ. This is miraculous, supernatural work of God that no human effort could accomplish.

4. Primary Identity in Christ

For believers, our identity in Christ is more fundamental than any other identity. We're Christians first—before we're American, African, Asian; before we're rich or poor; before any other category. "Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

What It DOESN'T Mean:

1. Erasure of Distinctions

Paul doesn't say these categories cease to exist. He continues to refer to Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women throughout his letters:

- 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 (remain in the condition in which you were called)
- 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 (Paul becomes like a Jew to Jews, like a Greek to Greeks)
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (men and women distinguished in worship)
- 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (instructions specific to women)
- Ephesians 5:22-33 (distinct roles in marriage)
- Ephesians 6:5-9 (instructions to slaves and masters)
- 1 Timothy 2:8-15 (men and women have distinct roles in church)

The categories remain. They're subordinated to the greater reality of union with Christ, but they don't disappear.

2. Denial of God's Creational Design

"There is no male and female" echoes Genesis 1:27—"male and female he created them." Paul isn't denying sexual complementarity. He's affirming that in terms of salvation, both are saved by grace through faith.

But he teaches sexual complementarity throughout his letters. Marriage reflects Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Men and women have distinct roles in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35). This isn't cultural—Paul grounds it in creation and the Fall (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

3. Interchangeability of Roles

Unity in Christ doesn't mean all roles are identical. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the body metaphor precisely to show that unity coexists with diversity of function:

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many... The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'... God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (1 Corinthians 12:14, 21, 18).

Different members, different functions, one body. Unity and diversity. So too in Christ: we're one body with different roles.

4. Justification for Critical Theory

This text is sometimes used to support intersectionality or Critical Theory's analysis. But that's backwards.

Paul is NOT dividing the church into oppressor/oppressed categories. He's UNITING it in Christ.

He's NOT saying "centre marginalized voices" or "privilege the oppressed." He's saying in Christ, these distinctions don't determine spiritual standing.

He's NOT teaching that Jews (historically powerful) need to defer to Gentiles (historically marginalized) in some kind of epistemic hierarchy. He's teaching that both are saved the same way and have the same standing before God.

The Point:

In salvation, all earthly distinctions are irrelevant. We're saved by grace, not by ethnicity, status, gender, or anything else. In the body of Christ, we're united to Him and to each other in a way that transcends all human divisions.

But this doesn't erase God's created order, the distinct roles He's ordained, or the reality of ethnic and social diversity. It subordinates them to the greater reality of Christ.

Critical Theory elevates what Scripture subordinates (social categories as ultimate) and divides what Scripture unites (the body of Christ).

LANGUAGE RED FLAGS

If you hear these phrases, Critical Theory is likely present:

Epistemology:

- "Speak your truth" / "My truth"
- "Lived experience" (as authoritative)
- "You can't understand—you haven't lived it"
- "Centre [marginalized] voices"
- "Listen and learn" (as command to accept without critique)
- "Who are you to speak on this?"

Identity:

- "Oppressor/oppressed" as primary categories
- "Privilege" (used to assign guilt or silence)
- "Intersectionality"
- "Decolonize"
- "Whiteness" / "patriarchy" (as essential, inescapable guilt)
- "Fragility" (used to dismiss objections)

Ethics:

- "Systemic" / "structural" (used to remove individual responsibility)
- "Complicit" (guilt by association or silence)
- "Microaggression"
- "Words are violence" / "harm" / "unsafe" (applied to ideas, not physical danger)
- "That's problematic" (vague accusation without specific charge)

Soteriology:

- "Do the work"
- "Allyship"
- "Anti-racist" (as active works-righteousness, not merely opposing racism)
- "Silence is violence"
- "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem"

TACTICAL ENGAGEMENT- CRITICAL THEORY

SCENARIO 1: "You can't understand because you haven't experienced oppression"

"So truth depends on who's saying it? That's self-refuting. If I can't understand oppression because I haven't lived it, how can you understand my perspective? And if understanding requires experience, then your whole system falls apart because nobody can judge anyone outside their group. Which means we can't have this conversation at all.

But here's what Scripture actually says: we all suppress the truth (Romans 1:18). Rich, poor, oppressed, oppressor—all of us. The natural man can't understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). The problem isn't lack of experience; it's spiritual blindness. And God's Word is the standard for everyone, not personal experience."

Scripture: Rom 1:18; 1 Cor 2:14; John 17:17; Ps 119:160

SCENARIO 2: "You're complicit in systemic oppression"

"Hold on. You're telling me I'm guilty of something I didn't do, based on categories I didn't choose, for actions I didn't take? That's not justice—that's collective guilt.

Scripture is crystal clear: 'The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father' (Ezekiel 18:20). Each person gives account to God for their own deeds (Romans 14:12). If I've sinned—if I've shown partiality, been unjust, mistreated someone—call it out specifically and I'll repent. But I'm not accepting guilt for being in whatever group you've decided is 'oppressive.'"

Scripture: Ezek 18:20; Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10

SCENARIO 3: "You're racist/bigoted for rejecting this framework"

"Which Scripture am I violating? Be specific. Because disagreeing with your ideology isn't sin. You're using accusations to shut down conversation instead of actually making an argument.

I'm accountable to God's Word, not your political framework. If I've shown partiality or hatred—actual sins Scripture condemns—show me where and I'll deal with it. But rejecting Critical Theory isn't bigotry. It's discernment. 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29)."

Scripture: Acts 5:29; Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 4:3-4

SCENARIO 4: "What about real injustice? Aren't you ignoring it?"

"No. I'm defining it biblically instead of using your categories. Scripture has *tons* to say about injustice—exploitation of workers (James 5:4), partiality in judgment (Leviticus 19:15), oppression of the vulnerable (Isaiah 1:17), corrupt leaders (Micah 3:1-3). I'm all for addressing actual injustice.

But here's the difference: biblical justice means applying God's standard impartially to individuals. Not redistributing power based on group identity. Not assigning collective guilt. And the solution isn't activism—it's the gospel that actually transforms hearts. You can't legislate new hearts. Only Christ can do that (2 Corinthians 5:17)."

Scripture: Lev 19:15; Mic 6:8; Isa 1:17; James 5:4; 2 Cor 5:17

SCENARIO 5: "Words are violence / you're causing harm"

"No, they're not. Words can wound—Scripture addresses sinful speech (lying, slander, cruelty). But words aren't violence. That's a category confusion designed to silence disagreement by calling it assault.

And by your logic, your words are violence too. Who decides which speech is 'harm'? Whoever controls that definition has all the power. So this whole thing is actually about power, not protection.

Truth offends. Always has. The gospel is offensive (1 Corinthians 1:18). Jesus was killed for His words. Paul's preaching caused riots. I'll speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but I'm not going to be bullied into silence by claims that disagreement equals harm."

Scripture: 1 Cor 1:18, 23; Acts 4:20; Eph 4:15; Col 4:6; Jude 3

SCENARIO 6: "Galatians 3:28 means all distinctions are erased / supports egalitarianism"

"Context matters. Paul is talking about *justification*—how we're saved. He's saying Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women—all saved the same way: by grace through faith. No ethnic advantage. No social status that gets you in. That's the point.

He's not saying these categories disappear. He refers to them throughout his letters. He still teaches distinct roles for men and women in marriage (Ephesians 5) and in the church (1 Timothy 2). The

unity is spiritual—we're all one *in Christ*. But that doesn't erase how God designed creation or the different roles He's ordained.

Read the whole letter. Paul is demolishing the Judaizers who said you need circumcision plus faith. He's saying: no, faith alone. That's the argument."

Scripture: Gal 3:23-29 (in context); 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:34-35; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2:11-15; Col 3:11

SCENARIO 7: "Can't we use some Critical Theory insights?"

"What insights? That power can be abused? Scripture already says that (James 5, Micah 3). That people's experiences differ? Obviously. But you can't cherry-pick CT's conclusions while rejecting its foundations.

Critical Theory is built on power as ultimate, social construction of truth, collective guilt, and activism as righteousness. Those foundations are anti-Christian. And here's the thing: CT can only make moral claims by borrowing from Christianity. It steals concepts like human dignity, objective justice, and moral obligation—but it has no way to ground them on its own terms.

If something's true, it's in Scripture. You don't need CT to find it. If CT teaches something Scripture doesn't, you don't need it. If it contradicts Scripture, reject it. Don't try to synthesize. 'See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy... not according to Christ' (Colossians 2:8)."

Scripture: Col 2:8; 2 Cor 10:5

SCENARIO 8: "What about systemic racism/sexism/etc.?"

"Define what you mean by 'systemic.' If you mean there are unjust laws or cultural patterns that need to change, sure—Scripture addresses that (Isaiah 10:1-2; Micah 3:9-11). If you mean individuals are guilty regardless of personal actions just by existing in a system, no—that's collective guilt and Scripture rejects it (Ezekiel 18:20).

Systems don't sin—people do. Yes, people can create unjust institutions. Yes, cultures can normalize evil. But you fix that by calling individuals to repentance and righteousness, not by assigning guilt based on group membership.

And here's the key: the ultimate solution is gospel transformation. When hearts change, systems change. That's what happened with slavery—Christians like Wilberforce applied Scripture and changed an entire society. Not through Critical Theory, but through the Word."

Scripture: Ezek 18:20; Isa 10:1-2; Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:17

SCENARIO 9: "Colour-blindness is racism / You're erasing identity"

Response:

"So treating people as individuals rather than representatives of their race is... racist? You've redefined what Civil Rights leaders fought for (judge by character, not colour) as oppression. That's Orwellian.

Scripture teaches ethnicity is real but not ultimate. Yes, Paul refers to Jews and Greeks. But 'there is neither Jew nor Greek... all one in Christ' (Galatians 3:28). That doesn't erase ethnicity—it subordinates it to union with Christ.

When I treat you as an individual made in God's image rather than primarily as a representative of your race, I'm honouring what Scripture teaches. That's not erasure—it's dignity."

Scripture: Gen 1:27; Acts 17:26; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Sam 16:7

SCENARIO 10: "Intent doesn't matter, only impact"

Response:

"So guilt is determined by subjective feelings? That destroys justice. Every legal system distinguishes murder (intent) from manslaughter (accident). Why? Because intent is central to moral responsibility.

By your logic, if I'm offended by what you said, you're guilty—regardless of intent. Do you accept that?

Scripture consistently considers intent:

- Cities of refuge for **accidental** killing (Numbers 35:22-25)—intent determined guilt
- 'Lustful intent' = adultery in heart (Matthew 5:28)
- Distinction between unintentional and wilful sin (Leviticus 4-5)
- God judges motives: 'Man looks on outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7)

Yes, impact matters. If I accidentally harm someone, I should make it right. But **intent determines guilt**. Your framework removes intent, which means no distinction between accidents and malice. That's not justice—it's tyranny of the subjective."

Scripture: Num 35:22-25; Matt 5:28; Lev 4-5; 1 Sam 16:7; Matt 18:15

SCENARIO 11: "You're tone-policing / using civility politics"

Response:

"So I have to accept abuse because you claim to be 'oppressed'? You're using 'anger' as a shield against accountability. You want freedom to be hostile without being called out—but when I speak the same way, it's 'violence.' That's a double standard.

If tone doesn't matter, why do you police mine? Either it matters for both of us, or neither. Pick one.

Scripture on anger and speech:

- Righteous anger exists: 'Be angry and do not sin' (Ephesians 4:26)
- But most anger is sinful: 'The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God' (James 1:20)
- Manner matters: 'Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt' (Colossians 4:6)

- Even when defending truth: gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16)

If your argument requires hostility to work, it's probably not as strong as you think. Truth doesn't need venom."

Scripture: Eph 4:26; James 1:20; Col 4:6; 1 Pet 3:15-16; 2 Tim 2:24-25

"THE CHURCH BACKED SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM"

Response:

"People misusing Christianity to justify sin doesn't indict Christianity—it indicts them. Slave owners quoted the Bible. Abolitionists used the same Bible to end slavery—Wilberforce, Quakers, Finney. So which group was reading it right?

And on your worldview, why is slavery objectively wrong? If we're evolved animals, why is power imbalance evil rather than just nature? You're borrowing Christian foundations (human dignity, objective morality) to attack Christianity."

When they pivot to "But the Bible endorses slavery":

"Ancient debt servitude ≠ chattel slavery. Israel's laws were revolutionary in context:

- 7-year maximum (Exodus 21:2)
- Killing a slave = death penalty (Exodus 21:20)
- Injury = freedom (Exodus 21:26-27)
- Kidnapping for slavery = death (Exodus 21:16)—condemns slave trade
- Runaway slaves NOT returned (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)

Compare that to Hammurabi, Egypt, Rome—brutal, permanent, zero protections. God was 'tightening the noose' on slavery even in the OT.

NT: Paul told masters and slaves they're equal before God (Ephesians 6:9), undermining the whole system from within. Result? Christians abolished slavery. If the Bible endorsed it, why did Christians end it?"

On the Crusades:

"Islamic armies conquered 2/3 of Christian territory for 400 years before the First Crusade—Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Jerusalem. The Crusades were defensive, not unprovoked aggression.

Did Christians sin during them? Yes—violating what Christ teaches. But don't rewrite history. Muslims conquered for four centuries first."

Scripture: Rom 3:23; Exod 21:2, 16, 20, 26-27; Deut 23:15-16; Eph 6:9; Gal 3:28

LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S FALSE JESUS

Claim: "Jesus stood with the oppressed against Rome. He was a social justice warrior fighting systemic oppression."

Response:

"Jesus explicitly rejected political revolution:

- **John 6:15** - Crowds wanted Him to be king and overthrow Rome. He refused.
- **John 18:36** - 'My kingdom is not of this world... my servants would have been fighting'
- **Luke 12:13-14** - Refused to settle inheritance dispute (economic justice!)
- **Mark 12:17** - 'Render to Caesar'—paid taxes to the oppressive regime

What He came for: 'The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10). 'To give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). He came to deal with sin and death—the ultimate oppression.

His 'marginalized' friends: Tax collectors were wealthy Roman collaborators (oppressors in CT categories), yet Jesus called Matthew. He didn't validate their lifestyle—He called them to repentance. 'I came to call sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32).

The cross: Not a political martyr. Substitutionary atonement—"He bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). The cross was about reconciling sinners to God, not overthrowing Rome.

When you make Jesus a social justice warrior, you've missed the gospel."

Scripture: John 6:15, 18:36; Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45; Luke 5:32; 1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5-6

"SCRIPTURE'S CONCERN FOR THE MARGINALIZED PROVES CT IS RIGHT"

Response:

"Biblical justice ≠ Critical Theory's 'social justice.' Watch this:

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 neighbour.'

God commands impartiality in both directions. Justice = applying God's standard fairly to everyone. Not 'side with the oppressed by default.'

What Scripture condemns:

- Economic exploitation: false weights, withheld wages (Amos 8:4-6; James 5:4)
- Legal injustice: bribery, perverted judgment (Isaiah 10:1-2; Micah 3:9-11)
- Violence and fraud (Ezekiel 22:29)

These are **objective, measurable wrongs**—not 'privilege,' 'microaggressions,' or collective guilt based on identity.

Jesus' 'Blessed are the poor': Matthew 5:3 says 'poor **in spirit**'—spiritual poverty, not economic status. It's about recognizing you're spiritually bankrupt before God and need His grace.

The solution: Gospel transformation (2 Corinthians 5:17), not political activism. Repentance changes hearts, which changes cultures.

Don't confuse God's concern for justice with CT's framework. Scripture cares for vulnerable individuals. CT elevates identity groups. Scripture holds everyone to the same standard. CT assigns collective guilt. Scripture transforms hearts. CT demands activism without atonement."

Scripture: Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; Exod 22:21-24; Isa 1:17; Amos 8:4-6; James 5:4; Matt 5:3; Ezek 18:20; Mic 6:8

KEY BIBLICAL CONTRASTS

Anthropology:

CT: Humanity divided by oppressor/oppressed; identity = group membership **Scripture:** Humanity divided by in Adam (death) / in Christ (life) (1 Cor 15:22); all image-bearers (Gen 1:27); all sinners (Rom 3:23)

Epistemology:

CT: Truth perspectival, shaped by social location; oppressed have epistemic privilege **Scripture:** Truth objective, revealed by God (John 17:17; Ps 119:160); Spirit illuminates all believers equally (1 Cor 2:10-16); all suppress truth (Rom 1:18)

Hamartiology (Sin):

CT: Sin = social oppression, systemic privilege, power imbalance **Scripture:** Sin = rebellion against God (Rom 3:23; 1 John 3:4); lawlessness (1 John 3:4); individual moral responsibility (Ezek 18:20)

Soteriology (Salvation):

CT: Problem = oppression; Solution = activism; Righteousness = "doing the work" **Scripture:** Problem = sin against God; Solution = Christ's atonement (Rom 3:23-26; 1 Pet 2:24); Righteousness = gift by faith (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 3:22; Phil 3:9)

Justice:

CT: Power redistribution to oppressed; collective guilt; intent irrelevant, only impact **Scripture:** God's impartial standard applied to individuals (Lev 19:15; Deut 16:19; Rom 2:11); individual responsibility (Ezek 18:20; Rom 14:12); just weights (Prov 11:1; 20:10)

Reconciliation:

CT: Political process; no ultimate forgiveness; perpetual division between oppressor/oppressed

Scripture: God reconciling world through Christ's blood (2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 2:14-16; Col 1:20); vertical reconciliation (with God) enables horizontal (with each other)

Unity:

CT: Unity through shared activism and identity politics; intersectionality multiplies divisions

Scripture: Unity through union with Christ (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13); diversity in function, unity in body (1 Cor 12:12-27); "Christ is all, and in all" (Col 3:11)

Authority:

CT: Lived experience of oppressed; deference to marginalized voices; "listen and learn" **Scripture:** God's Word alone (Isa 8:20; 2 Tim 3:16-17; John 17:17); "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16)

ESSENTIAL VERSES TO MEMORIZE

The Mandate:

- **1 Peter 3:15-16** - Always prepared to make a defence with gentleness and respect
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** - Destroy arguments, take every thought captive to Christ
- **Jude 3** - Contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints
- **Acts 4:20** - We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard
- **1 Corinthians 9:16** - Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel

The Foundation:

- **Proverbs 1:7** - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge
- **Colossians 2:8** - Beware lest anyone take you captive by philosophy... not according to Christ
- **Acts 17:28** - In him we live and move and have our being
- **Colossians 1:17** - In him all things hold together
- **Isaiah 8:20** - To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn

The Unbeliever:

- **Romans 1:18-22** - Suppress truth in unrighteousness; futile in thinking; darkened hearts

- **1 Corinthians 2:14** - Natural person does not accept things of Spirit; cannot understand them
- **Ephesians 4:17-19** - Futility of minds, darkened in understanding, ignorant, hard hearts

Identity:

- **Galatians 3:26-29** - All sons of God through faith; baptized into Christ; neither Jew nor Greek... all one in Christ; Abraham's offspring if Christ's
- **1 Corinthians 15:22** - In Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive
- **Colossians 3:9-11** - Put off old self, put on new; Christ is all, and in all
- **Genesis 1:26-27** - God created man in his own image; male and female he created them
- **Romans 5:12-21** - Through one man sin entered; through one man righteousness
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** - If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation

Justice:

- **Leviticus 19:15** - You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great
- **Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34** - God shows no partiality
- **Ezekiel 18:20** - The soul who sins shall die; son shall not suffer for iniquity of the father
- **Micah 6:8** - Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God
- **Proverbs 11:1; 20:10** - A false balance is an abomination to the LORD

Reconciliation:

- **Ephesians 2:14-16** - He himself is our peace; has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
- **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** - God... through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation
- **Colossians 1:20** - Through him to reconcile to himself all things... making peace by the blood of his cross
- **1 Corinthians 12:13** - For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body

Truth:

- **John 17:17** - Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth
- **Psalms 119:160** - The sum of your word is truth
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable... that the man of God may be complete
- **John 14:6** - I am the way, and the truth, and the life

Salvation:

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - By grace you have been saved through faith... not a result of works
- **Romans 3:22-24** - For there is no distinction: for all have sinned... justified by his grace as a gift
- **Titus 3:5** - He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy

FINAL POSTURE

Your Authority: God's Word alone. Not tradition, not experience, not ideology. Scripture is sufficient for all of life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

Your Method: Presuppositional—start with Christ as Lord, expose false foundations, show that only the biblical God makes sense of reality, call to repentance.

Your Goal: Not winning arguments but demolishing strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4-5), that God may grant repentance leading to knowledge of truth (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Your Manner:

- Gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16)
- Patience, able to teach (2 Timothy 2:24)
- Truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)
- Speech seasoned with grace (Colossians 4:6)
- Boldness without compromise (Acts 4:29-31; Ephesians 6:19-20)

Your Hope: "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Remember:

- Critical Theory is a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), not just flawed sociology
- It offers no atonement, no ultimate forgiveness—only perpetual guilt or grievance
- Where CT enslaves, Christ sets free (John 8:36)
- Where CT divides, Christ reconciles (Ephesians 2:14)
- Where CT offers works-righteousness, Christ offers grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16)—it needs no supplement

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16)

"Stand firm therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth... and take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:14, 17)

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36)

Soli Deo Gloria