FOREWORD BY JOHN PERKINS



12 QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS
SHOULD ASK ABOUT
SOCIAL JUSTICE

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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

## **The God Question**

- 1. How much of your justice-seeking energy is focused on giving God his due as your Creator and Redeemer? What are three ways our justice efforts would look different from today's popular visions of social justice if we made revering God the number one priority?
- 2. What is something you could do every day this week to demonstrate true reverence for God? What long-term habits could you form to orient your life around glorifying God first?
- 3. Why do you think God *commands* rather than *suggests* that we do justice? What do such commands have to do with God's character, with our chief end to glorify him, and with the mission of the church?

## The Imago Question

- 1. Why is it sometimes so difficult to see people as divine image-bearers? Why does this make Paul's prayer for Christians to "increase and abound in love" so important for us to pray ourselves?
- 2. Are there any particular individuals you have a challenging time seeing and treating as image-bearers? For you personally, what might it look like to start treating them as divine image-bearers?
- 3. Are there any particular groups defined by inside-the-box categories—race, political persuasion, mental or physical disability, economic status, religion, etc.—whom you tend to look down on? What can you do this week to show love for anyone in those groups?

## The Idolatry Question

- 1. Of the idols explored in this chapter—status quo, stuff, solitude, sky, skin tone, self, state, social acceptance, or sex—which are you most likely to bow down before?
- 2. Are there any other idols in your life or in the broader culture that can distort our vision of true justice?
- 3. What are some metrics or barometers we could use to discern when we have crossed the line and turned our political convictions or affiliations into idols?

## **The Collective Question**

- Try to identify five major differences between what the church is supposed to be according to the New Testament versus according to the tribalism of our culture.
- 2. In your own words, how does the biblical doctrine of universal human depravity prevent us from falling into tribalism or identity politics, left or right?
- 3. What can we as Christians do practically to live out our shared "in Christ" identity with those from different tongues, tribes, and nations?

## The Splintering Question

- 1. Why it is so easy for us as humans to blame our life troubles on other people groups?
- 2. Think of specific people groups who have been made scapegoats in our society today. How can you be countercultural by loving people in those groups this week?
- 3. One powerful remedy to propaganda is spending time with people who disagree with us, deliberately escaping our echo chambers. What are the current echo chambers you may be occupying, and how can you venture beyond them this week?

## **The Fruit Question**

- 1. We all from time to time may experience something like the rage bell hooks expresses in her essay "Killing Rage." In those moments, what specific Christian truths can we preach to ourselves to replace rage with the kind of grace and love we see in Corrie ten Boom?
- 2. How do you think preaching the gospel to ourselves every day—reminding ourselves of the amazing grace God extended to us when we were hostile to him—could impact our approach to social justice? How might excluding the good news of God's forgiveness from our daily thought lives and emotions pollute our passion for social justice?
- 3. In our social media age of daily online warfare and polarization, what are some specific ways to embody the fruits of the Spirit online with those who disagree with us?

## The Disparity Question

- 1. There is real systemic injustice in our fallen world. What are three reasons it is so important, as we seek to love the oppressed, to distinguish between inequalities that are unjust and sinful and those that have other explanations?
- 2. In many spheres of our culture—in much of our media, entertainment, and higher education—you aren't allowed to question whether discrimination is the best explanation of most disparities without facing serious consequences. Why is it important for the church to be different—a place where we can graciously ask hard questions—as we pursue justice together?
- 3. C. S. Lewis warns us about clinging to damning explanations and taking pleasure in thinking our enemies are as bad as possible. In today's political climate, that has, sadly, become the norm. Are you guilty of an assume-the-worst mindset? If so, take it to the cross of Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to generate love, peace, and patience in your heart.

## **The Color Question**

- It is true that segments of the church through American history have championed or been complicit in vile forms of racism, including slavery, lynching, and segregation. Clarify three to five biblical doctrines that refute such white racial supremacy.
- 2. How does a biblical worldview enable us as Christians to say "black lives matter" in a manner more profound and expansive than the doctrines of today's secular movements that bear the Black Lives Matter label?
- 3. Why are claims such as "whiteness is wicked" and other charges that emerge from critical race theory unhelpful if the church seeks to be an every tongue, tribe, and nation witness of the unifying power of the gospel to the watching world?

## **The Gospel Question**

- 1. Paul teaches that the gospel of God's saving grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus is "of first importance" and warns us with stern and passionate language against those who preach false gospels that seek to add human works to God's grace. In what ways might social justice become a false gospel?
- 2. Why is it important to clarify that justice flows from the gospel but is not identical to or part of the gospel itself? What is at stake?
- 3. What does it mean to keep the gospel as our first thing? What habits can we form to keep the gospel first in our daily lives? How can participation in a local church, taking the sacraments, investing in our prayer lives, and preaching the gospel to ourselves and others keep us from turning "the gospel first" into an empty slogan.

## **The Tunnel Vision Question**

- 1. What is the kernel of truth in Tribes thinking, an insight Christians should take seriously?
- 2. State three ways Tribes thinking distorts our vision of justice.
- 3. What are three ways Tribes thinking conflicts with a biblical world-view? How might you winsomely explain those conflicts to a brother or sister in Christ who may have embraced Social Justice B?

## The Suffering Question

- 1. Lived experiences matter. It would be easy to write off people's stories if we immediately associate them with political ideologies we disagree with. How can we resist this urge and be more present with people in their pain? How can we bring the gospel to bear on their pain?
- 2. God commands us to be fearless. In what ways can we end up inadvertently making people more fearful and easily triggered in the name of "social justice"?
- 3. Why is the pursuit of truth so essential to the biblical pursuit of justice, and how does Tribes thinking derail us in that pursuit? How can serious thinking and research, even if our conclusions go against the political orthodoxies of our day, make us more effective in loving the oppressed?

## **The Standpoint Question**

- 1. God commands us to grieve with those who grieve, and feeling someone else's grief is impossible if we don't listen well to their pain. What steps can we take as Christians to be better listeners, both to the pain of our brothers and sisters and to those who have yet to call God "Father"?
- 2. Scripture commands us to "truly execute justice," which implies that there are untrue ways to execute justice. Why is weighing ideas based on their merit rather than melanin, their credibility over chromosomes, and their scriptural fidelity over social status so important to doing true justice?
- 3. According to Scripture, God exhibits deep solidarity with the poor and commands us to care for them. What are three practical habits we can form to help us live these Scriptures well?

### Appendix E

# **Ending the Culture War**

#### The Trinity

#### The Anti-Trinity

The Father	"The Father of Lights"	"The Father of Lies"	The Devil
Jam. 1:17 Eph. 4:6 1 Pet. 1:3 Matt. 5:45 John 4:23 John 10:29-38	The Father is God, "The Father of Lights" on a redemptive mission in the world for his glory's sake. Narrow focus on this truth may lead theologically to Arianism and a practical failure to worship and enjoy the Son and Holy Spirit.	The Devil is evil, "The Father of Lies" on a destructive mission in the world for his glory's sake. Narrow focus on this truth may lead to blaming self-caused blunders on the devil and often unhealthy obsession with or fear of demons.	John 8:44 1 Pet. 5:8 John 17:15 Eph. 6:10-16 John 10:10 James 4:7
The Son	God Who "Became Flesh"	"The Flesh"	The Sin Nature
John 1:1, 14 Isa. 9:6-7 Heb. 1:3-13 Col. 1:15-17 Rom. 9:5 John 20:28	The Son is God who "became flesh," lived flawlessly, died as our substitute, and rose bodily to give us life. Narrow focus on this truth may lead to "Jesus only" theology and a practical failure to worship and enjoy the Father and Holy Spirit.	The sin nature is evil, "the flesh" as an internal driving force toward selfish action and away from God, leading to death. Narrow focus on this truth may lead to morbid introspection and ignoring the need for spiritual warfare.	Rom. 8:1-17 Gal. 5:16-25 Ps. 51:1-12 1 Pet. 2:11 Col. 3:5-10 Matt. 15:8-20
The Holy Spirit	"The Spirit of Truth"	"The Spirit of the Age"	The World
John 14:16-17 Ez. 36:26-27 Acts 5:3-9 2 Pet. 1:21 Gal. 5:22-23 John 16:8-14	The Holy Spirit is God, "The Spirit of Truth" who moves people deeper into the reality of God and his glory. Narrow focus on this truth may lead to "Charismania" and a practical failure to worship and enjoy the Father and Son.	The world is evil, "The Spirit of the Age" that moves people deeper into the illusion of our own godhood and glory. Narrow focus on this truth may lead to an us-them xenophobia and failure to acknowledge or fight against internal evils.	1 Cor. 2:12 Rom. 12:2 James 4:4 Titus 2:12 1 John 2:15-17 Eph. 2:1-5