

Christians Don't Need The Black Lives Matter Movement To Defeat Evil

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As churches across America restart in-person services, Christians and their pastors are feeling the heat. The “heat,” however, is not from the lack of air conditioning in the sanctuary as things get hot and humid – it’s the pressure to “say something” in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Yet just as Christians shouldn’t feel obligated to issue “official church statements” every time sin is committed (there would be little time for anything else), they should oppose demands from Black Lives Matter activists to “take their Christianity further.” Why? The gospel is already sufficient.

Believers living out Christ’s commands to love God and love their neighbors as themselves led the West’s push to abolish slavery. Christians acting out a sincere application of the gospel were at the forefront of the civil rights movement, a movement steeped in the

biblical message of neighborly love. We're already in possession of the ultimate "user's manual" to bring peace to our nation and defeat evil wherever it lurks — it's called the Bible.

The Dangerous Retreat from The Word

One of the most emblematic summations of the insidious "say something, the gospel isn't enough" line of thinking was expressed by author and blogger Kristen Howerton. On Twitter, Howerton implored her fellow believers, "Do not treat the protests as a new mission field. Do not go to 'love on people' or to lead people in prayer. Do not go to 'be a Christian voice in the crowd' or to share God's love or to witness to people. Go to fight systemic racism and racial violence. The end."

This sort of belief is omnipresent right now among American Christians of all ages. I see it in my social media feeds. If you've been on social media lately, you've likely seen it too. What we need to do is live out the teachings of Jesus Christ to the best of our flawed human ability every day. Yet the idea that Christians need to "do *more*" than this has permeated the highest, most prominent echelons of Christian ministry.

Brian Houston, a founder of Hillsong Church, called for "radical" and "permanent" change to combat the "systemic issues" facing black Americans, then tweeted his disappointment when a pastor of a U.K. Hillsong Church did not express what Houston considered sufficient solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Houston's apology on behalf of his British colleague ended with "#BlackLivesMatter" and the three raised fists emoji that symbolizes BLM activism.

It would be disheartening enough if it were just simply that Christians felt pressured to support a dangerous, manifestly anti-Christian movement based on neo-Marxist ideology. It's worse, however, that by related words and deeds, many of these same Christians appear to insinuate that the BLM movement can provide something that the gospel cannot.

Christians Led the Modern Charge to Peacefully End Injustice

The idea that the gospel is not enough to defeat evil is a belief that could severely hamper the work of the Kingdom. Thankfully, the history of the last two centuries is enough to prove otherwise.

Many of the most influential and successful abolitionists were Christians who used the Bible to soften the hearts of men and win the fight to end the horrible practice of slavery in the West. Picking up where Christian Quaker abolitionists left off, evangelical Anglican William Wilberforce was the driving force behind the British Empire's ban on the slave

trade in 1807. Ultimately, the efforts of Wilberforce and the movement he spearheaded with fellow Anglican Thomas Clarkson led to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, ending slavery throughout the British Empire.

Deep Christian faith was also at the heart of the work done by John G. Fee, one of the leading Southern abolitionists. In 1855, Fee founded Berea College “in the midst of many privations and persecutions to preach and apply a gospel of impartial love.” Berea was the first non-segregated college in the South to admit black and Caucasian students, and its motto — “God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth” — was lifted directly from the Bible’s Acts 17:26.

In his autobiography, Fee writes the biblical command to “love thy neighbor as thyself” was “pressed upon his conscience.” Throughout his life, he strived to wholly embrace that principle and live it “in honest practice.”

Led by Martin Luther King, Jr. several Christian ministers including Ralph Abernathy, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Hosea Williams joined to found the influential Southern Christian Leadership Conference that served as the spiritual and ideological backbone of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and beyond. The gospel’s message of neighborly love was the forefront of their purpose and the centerpiece of their advocacy for non-violence as embodied by Matthew 5:38-40.

Methodist preacher James Lawson was called “the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world” by MLK, Jr. and “the architect” of the civil rights movement by Rep. John Lewis. Lawson helped organize the Freedom Rides and saw the civil rights struggle as much of a spiritual struggle as it was a political one. “The Christian favors the breaking down of racial barriers,” said Lawson, “because the redeemed community of which he is already a citizen recognizes no barriers dividing humanity.”

For both Christian abolitionists and civil rights leaders, the words of the Bible and abiding faith in the Almighty were all they needed to achieve victory and justice for members of God’s family being denied their natural rights as endowed by their Creator. If slavery and government-sponsored Jim Crow legislation could be defeated by the irresistible love the gospel promotes, Christians should take heart that the power of the Word can work the same wonders again and unite a fractious nation.

The Bible Provides All the Guidance We Need

Those who practice authentic Christianity do not need any pointers on how to defeat evil. They especially don’t need to borrow ideas from the Black Lives Matter movement, which, since the tragic death of George Floyd has led to at least 24 new deaths as a result of violent

rioting, looting, and chaos. While the true cost of the vandalism and destruction unleashed by the movement may not be fully known for years to come, the latest estimates place property damages at more than \$500 million in Minnesota alone.

Of course, much of this could likely have been avoided if instead of encouraging and standing with the BLM movement and other radical leftist neo-Marxists, the more than 210 million self-professed Christians living in America took the text of the New Testament to heart.

Christians don't need to adopt the positions of BLM movement to spread a message of equality. The instructions on how to live in harmony with our fellow brothers and sisters are right before us. Besides the well-known words of Galatians 3:28-29, in Ephesians 2:14 the Apostle Paul proclaims, "For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us."

Throughout the New Testament, Christians are reminded that "sin is lawlessness" as written in 1 John 3:4; similarly, in 1 Peter 4:15, "If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs." We also see in the New Testament that the misinformed nature of many found at riots and scenes of chaos has not changed for thousands of years.

Just as recent rioters destroyed black-owned businesses, while others vandalize statues of abolitionists and rock stars they mistakenly suspect of being Indian hunters or slave traders, Luke relays a similar scene in Acts 19. When angry Ephesians felt Christians slighted their pagan god Artemis, a riot broke out. Anger boiled, "the whole city was filled with confusion," and, lo and behold, "most of them didn't even know why they were there."

The local mayor ordered the rioters to calm down, and — in this case — they listened. Instead of stoking their rage, the mayor appealed to the rule of law. He tells the angry Ephesians to take up the matter with official courts "to be settled in a legal assembly."

Paul shows the choice is neither to dismiss the cries of the angry nor to condone mob violence or vigilante justice. The Christian solution is to empathize with those who are hurting and then to have faith in the fixtures of civilized society to discharge justice as best as possible, knowing God will deliver the final justice in the end.

The Way to Healing

As stated in James 1:16-20, "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Indeed, James warns against being carried away by earthly movements. The only cause we should be following whole-heartedly is the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. . . . You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

All Christians can, with confidence, emphatically say the words “black lives matter,” a statement that is resoundingly true. What they should not condone, however, is the BLM movement that removes the forgiveness, hope, and peace of the gospel and replaces those core values with continual protest, fear, and anger. As Paul reminds us in Romans 12:19, “Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the Lord.”

The God-inspired words of the New Testament are already sufficient. The words and deeds of Jesus Christ are already sufficient. When before His last breath Christ proclaimed, “it is finished,” His mission was complete.

We'll never know perfect human equality here on earth. But until our Lord returns, Christians can take comfort that the Bible app on their phone, the Holy Scripture resting on the shelf, and the Word in front of them in the church pew all contain the only guide needed to heal our broken world.