



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: How Christians Can Assert A Biblical Worldview of Race, Gender, and Sexuality – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Neil Shenvi

Air Date: June 22, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Woke ideology. When you hear that term, you probably think, well, there's academic ideas that are coming from somewhere, and maybe I'm not quite aware of what's happening and I need to be more awakened to what's going on in the culture. But is it really something that those of us in the body of Christ really need to be focused on that clearly from the secular point of view? On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're going to get into a fascinating conversation about a new resource that I think will help many people in the body of Christ understand what wokeness is all about and how to live Christianly in a culture that seems to take that as the default position.

Dr. Neil Shenvi is the co-author of a brand-new book called *Post Woke: Asserting a Biblical Vision of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*. We have a link for the book up at drjamesdobson.org. Dr. Neil Shenvi has an A.B. in chemistry from Princeton University, and then went on to earn a Ph.D. in theoretical chemistry from UC Berkeley. He's the author of a number of books, including *Why Believe? A Reasoned Approach to Christianity*, and is widely recognized for his writing on critical theory, which can be found in journals like *Icon* and the *Journal of Christian Legal Thought*. He and his wife just recently celebrated their anniversary, and they have four children. Dr. Neil Shenvi, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: Roger, thank you so much. My pleasure to be here.

Roger Marsh: It's great to have you on for this conversation. I know Dr. Dobson always appreciated this type of discussion because of the fact that you approach this, obviously, biblically, but also from a scientific research standpoint. You're not just throwing out accusations and saying things like, "well, I don't like woke people, and therefore, I've got a whole book, a whole screed on this." Talk about, first and foremost, why you felt, you and your co-author, Pat Sawyer, why you felt the need to put this book out right now because it seems like a lot of people have kind of settled into their camps and, you know, either there's the woke crowd or there's the Christian anti-woke crowd, but you're trying to bridge the gap and say, well, let's understand what's really going on here before we start jumping to those conclusions. Is that a fair assessment?

Dr. Neil Shenvi: Mostly. I mean, I would put myself squarely in the anti-woke crowd, but that said, I want to understand the ideas very precisely and accurately because that's the best medicine against wokeness. In the book, we talk about how many Christians are unprepared, especially parents, to deal with the ideas that their kids are going to be bombarded with when they enter college, either at a secular university or even at Christian schools. They're going to be exposed to these ideas, and simply screaming Marxism at them is not going to be sufficient. You have to, at some fairly deep level, understand what they're being exposed to. And if you don't, you'll lose your credibility with them. We give the example of, you know, imagine this young atheist firebrand who marches into a church on Sunday and says, you know, all of you are living in a delusion because Christianity believes in a man living up in the clouds with a big beard. And, you know, Christianity started in 1517. It was founded by Martin Luther, and he didn't believe in the Trinity. He's like, what are you talking about? He's like, I read it on the internet somewhere.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: You know, you're not going to take him seriously. Well, in the same way, if your kid comes back from school, having spent literally an entire semester studying Foucault and Judith Butler and Kimberly Crenshaw in a sociology 101 class, and then your response to him is to go watch this YouTube video I saw. Here's a TikTok. "I destroy Marxism in two minutes." It's like, that's not going to really engage his questions. And he'll write you off. So one of our goals was to give people, especially Christian parents, the tools they needed to understand their kids, understand their kids' professors, and then to challenge these unbiblical views using reason, Scripture, and evidence.

Roger Marsh: Well, and I appreciate, Dr. Shenvi, you mentioning it in that way, because I'm sure there are a lot of parents, you and I were talking before we started our recording here today, about the fact that you're about to enter into a debate with another professor or two from Christian universities against some so-called progressive Christians. And I think that when it comes to the term woke and that whole big, you know, 800-pound gorilla, a lot of people will find ways to sidestep. They'll find ways to avoid. They'll say, oh, yeah, I would put my kid in Christian schools. I'm going to homeschool. I'm not ever going to have to deal with this. And you're challenging us in a loving way. It's a good biblical exhortation to say, first of all, you have to understand what it is. And secondly, this isn't something you can avoid, Ephesians 6. I mean, it's spiritual warfare. It's really happening. And so toward that end, can you give us an example of how the woke mentality has moved from, I think its original concept was people of certain communities are saying, hey, I haven't been awakened to this. I'm woke. I mean, I'm already, I'm seeing this, I'm living this. But now it's kind of taken on a life of its own. And it shows up in all sorts of progressive movements.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: Exactly. So we define woke-ness, not pejoratively, just descriptively, as the cultural expression of the ideology of critical theory. It's like in one sentence. So

woke-ness, you recognize it. You see drag queen story hour. You see pride parades. You see Black Lives Matter. You see all of these queers for Palestine, these weird progressive movements, and you might just dismiss them as just, well, just cultural insanity. It's the zeitgeist. But actually, we say you can trace these movements back to bad ideas that have been percolating through academia for decades, if not centuries. So what is critical theory?

Well, critical theory is a set of ideas that goes back all the way to, you know who, Karl Marx in the 1800s. But his ideas were then expanded upon by the scholars at the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1920s and 30s. And then even that was almost 100 years ago. So since that time, critical theory has become this umbrella category that encompasses disciplines like critical race theory, queer theory, critical pedagogy, postcolonial studies, and a host of other studies departments. and that really has spilled over into our culture through organizations like Black Lives Matter. And lest you think that Christian schools are a safe space for your kids, let me quote one figure. It exemplifies wokeness in the evangelical church. So this is Dr. Christina Cleveland. She was writing for Christianity Today as late as 2016. She was talking at major conferences held by InterVarsity, CRU, Lifeway. And she was pretty much a normal evangelical in the 2010s. But in 2022, she published a book entitled *God is a Black Woman*. And here are just a few quotes from that book. She says, "More than anything, we must eradicate the transphobia within ourselves and our communities. For if God is a black woman, then she's a black trans woman, obviously." Where she talks about "toxic masculinity's idols are not a logic, reason, tradition, certainty, and consensus."

Roger Marsh: Oh no, oh no, heaven help us.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: Logic and reason are white, masculine idols. This is strange stuff, but where is this coming from? We see these ideas everywhere, frankly. And one more thing, there's this narrative in some conservative circles that, yeah, that was then. The Great Awokening happened in the late 2010s and early 2020s. That happened. But then Donald Trump was reelected in 2024, and he just killed wokedists dead. And I want to say to you, I wish that were true, but it's not true. Data show that Wokedist is alive and well. It's kind of gone underground, but here's some examples.

In 2023, several surveys showed that around one in four Gen Zers identified as LGBTQ+. One in four. Tremendously large number. In 2023, there's a survey of people and they asked these people, do you believe that whites are an oppressor group and people of color are oppressed? There's an ideology out there that says that. Is that true? Well, if you asked older people, boomers, what they thought, 80% said, no, I don't believe that. And 20% said, yeah, I believe that. Well, for Gen Z, the numbers were flipped. 80% of Gen Z thought that whites were oppressors and people of color were oppressed. And they were asked, well, what about Jews? Are Jews oppressors? Again, boomers, 80% said no. Gen Z, 80% said yes.

The point is this younger generation, Gen Z, is not wildly conservative. They're not all based. They are actually extremely woke, and they're going to be our next crop of lawyers, doctors, senators, presidents, pastors. So you need to equip your kids right now to understand these ideas and to show why they're not biblical.

Roger Marsh:

I love what Dr. Neil Shenvi just said today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk about, I think about the great awakening that happened with George Whitefield and company back in colonial times, and then the great awakening that happened in the 2010s, because there was a big paradigm shift. And I remember the Obergefell decision, and we were told by the White House, well, this isn't going to affect anybody. It's not really going to change anything. If you are in a straight marriage, then gay marriage isn't going to change anything. And yet it seems like that was the shot heard around the world that kind of unleashed all of this woke ideology becoming the norm.

And it's interesting, Dr. Neil Shevi, I'm sure as you've seen some of the statistics that are suggesting anyway, I don't know if they are actually verifiable at this point the number of Gen Z, especially young men, that are starting to return to traditional, biblical, or at least they're going to Catholic and more organized religious expressions, and they're looking for a basis. Is that a response, do you think, to this great awakening, or are they just kind of trying on Catholicism and Christianity because they're looking for a little more structure in their lives?

Dr. Neil Shenvi:

It could be either. I've seen conflicting data sets on the number of Gen Zers and Gen Alpha who are re-entering the churches. I would say it's a real phenomenon, but it's still extremely small. And you have to set that against, you know, talking about 80, 90% of young people who are totally rejecting Christianity and all biblical norms and values. So even if we're seeing a small spark of interest in "traditional values and norms," it's not enough to offset this desperate need for the church to respond directly to the claims of critical theory. So I think we can be hopeful, but what we need to do is be prepared.

I liken our position to that of a missionary. You know, we're missionaries to our culture, and to be an effective missionary, A, you have to understand the gospel. You have to preach the gospel, teach the gospel, but also you have to speak the language, or help speak the language of your culture. So, for example, if I were a missionary to a Muslim country, I would start by reading the Quran. Because I want to know what they think about reality. I want to know what they think about Christianity and religion. And then that will help me to understand where they might get some things right, even, and also where they'll get things wrong. How can I explain to them what Christianity teaches in a way that they'll be able to hear effectively? Same way, we're missionaries to our culture, which is consumed right now by wokeness. How do we articulate the gospel in a way that they can hear?

Roger Marsh:

Think for just a moment, Dr. Shenvi, help us think through this. I'm a parent or a grandparent. I've got maybe a middle school or high school or even college

student in my home, and they're being woked. They're being influenced by this, whether they're in a Christian school or in public school, or maybe they're in homeschool. And some of the homeschool curriculum, this stuff has kind of found its way in. What's a good first step to take other than the shock and horror that you would have when your grandson comes home and says, "Hey, I'm 16 years old and I think I might be bi-curious or transgender or something like that." And my initial reaction would be, "What?" But we can't bring that to them. because then all of a sudden, we're kind of proving their point. I mean, their point thinking that we're hate-filled and, you know, logic.

Dr. Neil Shenvi:

They don't understand. They don't get it. Yeah, they don't get it. So number one, our books always start with understanding. The first step in reaching anyone is understanding them. Like, what are they saying? What do they believe? So let me give you a quick overview of what critical theory is. We boil it down into four big ideas. Number one is the social binary. This is very familiar to most people. The idea that society is divided into oppressor groups and oppress groups along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, physical ability, religion, and a host of other identity markers. So critical theorists see all society is divided into oppressors who have power and oppress people who don't. You might say, well, that sounds weird. You know, I'm a person of color or I'm a woman. Not me personally, but someone might say that. I don't feel oppressed. Well, so how do you explain that I'm oppressed? And idea number two is this. Oppression happens through what they call hegemonic power. What does that mean? Their idea, critical theory's idea, is that the ruling class, whether it's men or whites or heterosexuals or Christians, they impose their values and their norms on culture in a way that seems natural and normal and common sense and even God-ordained, but those norms, those rules, those values, those symbols, they actually serve to protect the power and the privilege of the ruling class. And so all of us are brainwashed into white supremacy, into the patriarchy, into cisgenderism, into heterosexism, into ableism.

So all of our ideas are actually just reflections of the ruling class's ideas. This goes all the way back to Marx, by the way. So that's their idea. Well, how do you escape that brainwashing? Idea number three, through lived experience. Critical theorists believe that the lived experience of oppressed groups allows them to see through these false ideas, these oppressive ideologies imposed on us by the ruling class. And then we can gain what's called a liberatory or a critical consciousness. Colloquially, we can get woke. So the blinders come off our eyes. Our lived experience teaches us that we're being oppressed. And now we have the authority and the ability to tell the truth to everyone around us who is still blinded by their privilege. So repressed people have this unique insight into the way the world works. Then number four, the last idea is social justice, which critical theorists have redefined to mean the destruction of all the systems and structures which perpetuate the social binary. They want to tear down these narratives, these hegemonic norms and values that split society into normal people, the good people, the powerful people, and those without power. They want to tear those down to establish the promised land of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this sort of classless, genderless utopia.

So that's, in a nutshell, that's what critical theory is made of today. And once you understand those ideas, things make a lot of sense. You're like, oh, that's why race scholars want to tear down the gender binary. That's why feminists don't think that female is a real category. Why would feminists have a problem defining what is a woman? You're a feminist, right? The answer is because, ironically, queer theorists came along in the 1990s and said, you know, queer people, they're actually oppressed just like women are, but that requires us to sit in solidarity with them by tearing down the gender binary. This is how you get self-identified feminists working to support things like biological men in women's bathrooms because they see queer people as part of this oppressed class they should stand in solidarity with. Anyway, a lot of things that are otherwise incomprehensible begin to make sense once you understand the core concepts of critical theory.

Roger Marsh:

Dr. Neil Shenvi is the co-author of a new book called *Post Woke: Asserting a Biblical Vision of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*. We have it linked up at drjamesdobson.org. And Dr. Shenvi, that little three to four minute piece there where you explain critical theory and the four pillars through which you identify it really does explain a lot. It helps us to understand... why I'll use one example that's been in the news a lot in the last year or so. Riley Gaines, the swimmer from University of Kentucky, who was one of the first women to take a public stand and say, wait a minute, I don't want this guy who says he's a woman in the locker room with us. And because here's a biological male who's undressing in front of us, making us feel uncomfortable, and we're being told we're the problem. And yet the argument you see, and I say argument in air quotes, from the left is, well, you're just upset because you tied with this transgender athlete. You came in fifth place. Instead, they're completely missing the point. But from the understanding standpoint, Dr. Neil Shenvi, it pains me to say, with your definition, what you just described, I now have a better understanding of why they think the way they do. I don't agree with it, but at least I understand where they're coming from. And I think that it's crucial for us as parents and grandparents who have young adults who are being influenced by the world and that type of thinking to be able to say, that's wrong, but... How am I going to, I mean, we're not trying to win the argument or win the battle necessarily. We're just trying to keep our own sanity at this point and stay true to our calling as Christ followers.

Dr. Neil Shenvi:

Well, you're trying to win the person. So I always, this is a great slogan from apologetics is that you want to, you don't want to win the argument and lose the person. You want to win the person, hopefully through winning the argument. So how do you do that? It's a good question. Once you understand the ideas. How do you move from that to then engaging the people? And so our second half of our book is all about explaining these ideas, helping people to understand why these ideas are false. Let me give you a few, I think, ways to do that. One is recognizing that a lot of critical theory's appeal is to empathy and compassion. So critical theory positions itself as a compassionate, empathetic response to human suffering. And we would say that's a good thing. It's actually a God-ordained, God-inspired part of our consciences that we should protect

the vulnerable. We know it's right to stand up for the rights of the vulnerable. So when critical theory latches onto that and says, yeah, if you really want to serve justice, you really want to be on the right side of history, you need to sign up to all of these progressive causes. Well, we don't despise that impulse. to seek justice and to love mercy. We want to make sure it's channeled biblically. So how do you do that?

Well, one place we go is the stories of detransitioners. So we talked about how lived experience is a major theme in critical theory, listening to people on the margins. And so we can take that idea and say, how about we listen to those who are detransitioning back to their birth genders? There's stories of often young women. who got caught up in queer theory, who transitioned to men. They identified as men. They would take hormones, sometimes even have surgeries, then later regretted their decision and detransitioned back to their birth gender. And there we actually quote in our book several essays that they wrote talking about how they got sucked into, in their own words, this cult of gender ideology.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: And they're all different reasons, but one of them was that they felt a lot of them are, you know, young, middle-class white females, and because of that, they were at sort of the bottom of the woke totem pole. Everyone's calling them oppressors. You have to be quiet, sit down, shut up, because, you know, you're an oppressor. But what do they do? They felt terrible about themselves. Well, one way to skip the front of the line was to suddenly declare that you are transgender. Suddenly you're at the top of the totem pole and people are telling you you're brave and sunny. So they got pulled into these ideologies in various ways, but they came out of those, the ideology. But now they're living with tremendous sorrow and regret for what they've done to themselves.

And one of the things, Helena Kirshner is a detransitioner. And in one of her essays, she writes, throughout my childhood, when I came out, came out as a trans man, I received nothing but affirmation and encouragement. Oh, you're brave. You're stunning. Everyone from her parents to her guidance counselors to her friends did nothing but tell her how awesome she was. And she says, looking back on it, she says, why did no one love me enough to tell me the truth about what I was doing for my body? And we give the example of an anorexic girl. The approach we take to transgender versus anorexia are totally incompatible. If a young girl came to you and said, "I am fat. I want you to call me fatty from now on. I want you to help me get liposuction and to take diet pills because I'm convinced I'm fat. And if you don't do those things, you don't love me." We would say to her, "Honey, I'm not going to do any of those things. I'm not going to call you fatty. I'm not going to help you get liposuction because you are literally 60 pounds. You're dying of starvation. It's not in spite of my love for you that I won't do this. It's because I love you that I will not help you destroy yourself." And I genuinely mean that. That's how we should approach people caught up in transgender ideology. It's not in spite of our love. It's because of

our love. It would be hatred. to tell you what you want to hear because I'm too cowardly to tell you what you need to hear. So we should approach this as people who love our neighbors by telling them what's actually true and good for them.

Roger Marsh: And the real courageous act is not to be, who is it, Ricky Gervais, the comedian, get up in front of the Golden Globe Awards and insults everybody because they all talk about how brave they are for standing up and espousing views and opinions that everybody in the room already believes in. There's no bravery there. The real bravery, as you described it, is the courage to say, "Look, I love you. And there's an issue here because you're 60 pounds, but you think you're overweight. And I'm going to love you through this. Even if you don't want to hear it, I'm going to work with you. because there's something not right with your thinking." And then here comes, well, they've vilified logic and reason.

Dr. Neil Shenvi: As white male Western constructs.

Roger Marsh: Exactly. Well, this is a fascinating conversation and we're just now scratching the surface to it, but we have to break for today's program. So Dr. Neil Shenvi is wondering if you could join us again next time to continue talking about your book, *Post Woke: Asserting a Biblical Vision of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*. Can you join us again next time?

Dr. Neil Shenvi: Absolutely.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk in a program featuring my thought-provoking conversation with Dr. Neil Shenvi about understanding the woke worldview and answering it with biblical truth. Now, it isn't enough just to simply slap away the bad ideas our kids are being fed on college campuses and in the media. We have to put something good and true and nourishing in their hands instead. That is the heartbeat of what Dr. Shenvi has been helping us think through today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Dr. Shenvi is the co-author, along with Pat Sawyer, of a brand new book called *Post Woke: Asserting a Biblical Vision of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*. You'll find a link to that book as well as a chance to hear today's program again when you visit jdfi.org.

The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute exists to preserve the family, to introduce people to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to defend biblical truth in a culture that's lost its bearings. Every program we put on the air equips parents and grandparents to stand firm and raise the next generation with faith. But none of this happens without friends like you. So we invite you to join the team that helps keep Dr. James Dobson's family talk on the air all across America by partnering with us today. Your gift of any amount makes a real difference and you can give online when you visit jdfi.org. You can also give a call to a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Now, if you'd prefer to write to us, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the

zip code 80949. Once again, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or you can just use those initials, JDFI for short, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for making us a part of your day. Be sure to join us again next time when I'll continue my conversation with Dr. Neil Shenvi discussing how Christians can assert a biblical vision of race, gender, and sexuality in a post-woke culture. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.