

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

A Conversation About Racism Between Black and White Christians

(June 26, 2020)

Well, Dr. Frank Turek will not be with you today, but I am detective J. Warner Wallace, and you've heard us speak back and forth on our show here. And if you've been following Frank, you know, on his social media, you know, at crossexamined.org, even on the YouTube channel, and on this radio show, he's talked about the declining health of his father. And sadly, this morning...well, not sadly, his dad went to be with Jesus today, a couple of hours ago. That's the time of this recording. So, this week, Frank lost his dad. Your prayers are much appreciated. We have been praying for Frank for weeks. It's so great that he had the ability to spend as much time as he did in the last month with his dad. You know, a lot of times we were standing in for him, or he was putting things on hold, so he could spend time with his family. And sure enough, now Frank's dad is no longer in any pain. He is in the presence of Jesus and waiting for us to get there. So, be praying for Frank's family, as we are, and thanks so much for being patient with us as we kind of recalibrate what we're going to do today.

But we have a great show coming up for you. It's been said that something rarely becomes important until it affects you personally. As a matter of fact, Thomas Sowell once said that, something to the extent of like, you know, you would be more upset if an accident caused you to lose the tip of your little finger than if you heard a million people in China, or any part of the world, were murdered today. Because it doesn't seem to affect you personally, right. I mean, the things that Frank is experiencing now with the loss of his dad are all kind of philosophical and academic until they happen to you. And there's lots of things that this is like in our experience in life. We hear other people suffering from things, but it just doesn't affect us.

You'll hear about people, you know, sick with cancer, or they lose their jobs, or they have a bad school experience or educational process, or you even hear about racism. But a lot of people who are living in the middle-class white America just don't perceive the experience of racism the same way. Of course, they don't. Of course, we don't. I'm in that group. And so, it doesn't become an issue that we even press on our experience of everyday life to such an extent that we think about it the way that others will have to think about it.

And I can tell you as a guy who worked as a white police officer in Los Angeles County for 25 years, you know, I was probably maybe eight or nine years on the job before I became a Christian. And I've been thinking deeply about the nature of humanity, who we are. I had to

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think about that even when I was thinking about the offer of salvation, right, as a person who was examining Christianity. And as much as I think about it, as much as I've worked in this industry, I feel like there's still a lot that I don't know, that I need to learn. And a lot of that comes through having, you know, your questions addressed.

And that's why I want to have a conversation today with someone who's a friend. Now what's great about this is, this morning when Frank told me his father passed and asked me to step into this conversation, I had hesitation because I hadn't been preparing all week for this. But I knew the person I was going to talk to was somebody who was more than just an associate, somebody I had heard of. It was actually somebody who I consider to be family. And I thought, wow, it is God opening a door for this conversation that I need to step through. Because what are the odds of having a conversation where you have two sides of a polarized issue; one, an old Boomer white guy who happens to be a police officer, and two, a young black millennial who can speak to this issue directly. Both of whom know each other. We know our families. I've attended Vada's church. I'll introduce you in a second. Vada has attended our presentations with his family. Our families know each other. Okay? And we can have this conversation. How can I say no to that opportunity?

So, I want to introduce you to my friend, and fellow Christian apologist, Vada Hedgeman. Now Vada grew up in South Central Los Angeles, very close to the community that I worked in. And this area of Los Angeles, for the most part, people would say that they're known for the kind of a gang region. This is an area that you would say okay, well, his experience growing up was probably different than yours is; the person who's listening to this radio show. Growing up, where Vada grew up, there was a gang lifestyle. And he would say that too. And he survived all of that. He even grew up as an atheist but found Christ pretty early in his 20s. And since then this dude has just rocketed into making the case for Christianity as an apologist. He really is a singer, songwriter, producer.

This is the thing that's so great about, as a songwriter and a producer, because he has a different approach, a creative approach. Aside from all the other things that are true about Vada, he is creative. And I want to introduce him right now. He runs a radio show called, Is He a Real One Radio. You can go on YouTube; you should go on YouTube. He's got two beautiful girls, a beautiful wife. He lives in Los Angeles County. And please look up his YouTube channel for sure. So, Vada, we are going to have some time here in the next segment, but just tell us...first of all, I want to introduce you. Vada Hedgeman, thank you so much for joining the show today.

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Vada:

Thank you so much for having me. And condolences to Frank and the family. And I'm excited to have this conversation.

Jim:

Yeah, so I don't want to waste a lot more, just in terms of the beginnings of the conversation. Let's just tell people how you grew up and how you became a Christian and then an apologist.

Vada:

Well, I grew up in South Central Los Angeles, as you just said. You know, I did grow up in a gang culture. You know, as you said, I would say that I was a gang member, as well. And I was a non-believer; didn't even think about God too much. It just wasn't a part of my life, you know. I didn't have anybody in my life who would talk to me about God, you know. But I've always been an authentic truth seeker, so I was never a hostile non-believer. I just thought that Christianity was foolishness. Never read the Bible, but I heard about a dude walking on water, and I was like, people don't walk on water, so that's stupid, you know. The Bible is fake, you know? And, you know, just as I got older, and seeking truth, you know, I believe if anybody sees the truth with an open heart, what they're going to find is Jesus on the cross and dying and rising on the third day, you know. So, I was seeking truth with an open heart. I found it and I'm so glad to be saved because, Lord knows I don't deserve it, but I'm grateful that I serve a God that has grace and mercy.

Jim:

But you've been powerful. Your voice is powerful. And tell me, then, that's a big difference, though, between embracing Christ as Lord, which lots of folks do, and then deciding, no, I'm gonna actually go into study, talk to people, train myself to take advantage of opportunities to be an apologist. How did that start?

Vada:

Well, I've always been, you know, a passionate teacher, you know, of all things. And I actually had somebody, you know, say something to me that I think was really interesting. They actually made an analogy to my lifestyle as a gang member before. You know, I saw your presentation where you were talking about racial reconciliation, and you used the example of, if someone sees someone and they don't know you, they'll ask you where you from. That's a confrontational situation. Where are you from? And at the end, if you don't answer that question correctly, you know, you don't know how that situation is going to turn out. Now, the Lord is so sovereign that he can use someone who's used to that type of, you know,

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environment and use it for His glory. You know, Paul didn't change. He just transformed. So, he was radically different, yet exactly the same at the same time. He was just doing [unintelligible]. And similarly, for me, you know, having evangelistic opportunities, you know, it might feel hostile. It might feel confrontational. But, you know, I grew up in, you know, in hostile environments, and the Lord is using that for His glory.

Jim:

Well, that's a good point you're bringing up. So, we're gonna be talking about the issue of systemic racism. And I know that, if you just say that expression, you divide the room pretty quickly. But I want to talk, first of all, about how did you experience racism when you were young?

Vada: Well, you know, as I say, you know, I grew up in a gang culture. And I'm sure you know, this as a police officer, that it's a hostile relationship, you know, in impoverished neighborhoods in America. Particularly places like Los Angeles, Baltimore, Chicago, etc., you know, and the police. So, you know, I saw a meme recently that asked the question, how old were you the first time a police officer pulled out a gun on you. And I was 12, you know, the first time I had a police officer pull out his gun on me, and I was just walking home from the store. You know, wasn't doing anything. I was just walking home from the store. And I really could go on and on about scenarios where I wasn't doing anything wrong and you know, I would get cussed out or something. So...

Jim:

Yeah, and I want to talk about that, because personal experiences play into this such a big way. So, we'll take a break right now. When we come back, we'll continue with Vada Hedgeman and talking about issues of systemic race right here on CrossExamined.

Ad:

Friends, can you help me with something? Can you go up to iTunes, or wherever you listen to this podcast, and give us a five-star review *Why?* It will help more people see this podcast and therefore then hear it. So, if you could help us out there, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Jim:

J. Warner Wallace here with you on Dr. Frank Turek's radio show. Thanks for joining us. Frank's dad passed this week, so you be praying for Frank as he is with his mom. And he gratefully had some time with his dad before his dad passed.

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Now we're talking with Vada Hedgeman about racism. And Vada, before the break you talked about how when you were 12 an officer pointed a gun at you and really shaped your view of the divide the racial divide. And so, I know a lot of people are probably listening to that. I have a question that follows up on it. Had that been a black police officer would you still have felt like it was an issue of you been treated this way on the basis of race, or would it have been more just a cop, non-cop thing? How would you have responded?

Vada:

Well, first, I won't even say that it shaped my view. It, more so in my mind, confirmed my view, you know, because, you know, I've always heard similar experiences. So, that experience, although was my first time to me, it wasn't surprising, you know. I anticipated that something like that will happen at some point, whether I'm innocent or guilty. Now, as far as whether it's a black cop, honestly, it's more of a culture thing. I can't speak for all of black America and anyone who grew up in an impoverished environment, but I know for me, I wouldn't have viewed it as any less racist if it was a black cop, an Asian cop, a Hispanic cop, because there is a culture that I think about when I think of the police. So, regardless of the ethnic group that the officer is, you know, this officer is doing what the racist culture has trained them to do. That is where my mind was at that time, and that's where, you know, that's how I would identify it.

Jim:

Yeah, I think that that's a helpful for people to hear, because I think most of us, I think, probably get that, but not everyone understands that distinction. In fact, this is why we talk about the idea of systemic racism, right. That this is part of what you would say, is there's something about the system of law enforcement. I want this show today to be as diagnostic as it is helpful and hopeful going forward. But I think we need to talk a little bit about this idea that people I hear now, I've not posted anything on this, but I've seen people say, you know, I support the notion that black lives matter, but I do not support the organization called Black Lives Matter. So, I don't think a lot of people maybe...maybe people do understand the difference. But what is your sense of that difference between the sentiment or the idea of that philosophy and the organization itself?

Vada:

Well, I'm really glad you asked that because I think the sentiment is simply a statement that is necessary to be set in America, and it needs to be heard, because all lives certainly matter. I think most people would agree with that. But we also got to think that the Declaration of Independence said, that all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights, which means undeniable rights. And we know that that didn't exist for black people at that time. So, when

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we say the sentiment, or the sentence, or the words Black Lives Matter, I think most people are just saying black lives matter also. There's still systemic racism that impacts us. We're saying we matter too.

Now the organization is an organization that seems to have a political agenda. Certainly, appears to be anti-Christian. And I think that is important for people who wants to say black lives matter to know that distinction. I'm not going to stop saying black lives matter just because of the organization, but I do think we should know the distinction. But I also think that we shouldn't spend more time talking about how we disagree with the organization than we do talking about actual racism. Unfortunately, is many brothers and sisters who I know and respect, that spend a lot of time talking about the organization and how we shouldn't support the organization. And I'm like, okay, well what about the racial injustice part? Because that's where the focus should be. And quite frankly, I think it's similar to, you know, how many evangelicals will say, I don't support everything Donald Trump does, but I do agree with one, two, or three policies of his, you know, and we don't go out of our way to say, hey, I don't support all of that other stuff that he's doing. We don't go out of our way to do that, but we go way out of our way to talk a whole lot about the organization. So, I think it's important to know the distinction, but I do think it's more important to talk about the racial injustices that are impacting certain image-bearers of God.

Jim:

Yeah, it's almost like you're saying and tell me if I'm wrong. There's a sense in which, because the organization supports a lot of people principles that we as Christians would say are troublesome, It almost gives people an excuse to vilify...in other words, I would hate to see whatever your attitude about the organization is, detract from your position philosophically that black lives matter, right. Because this is called semantic overload. This idea that now when I say, black lives matter, am I saying it from a philosophical position, or am I saying that I support the organization? Right?

But I think a lot of people, I hear this all the time, they'll say things that I think that you would find offensive. To say, for example, no, all lives matter, is like we're talking past each other. Why does that expression, all lives matter, really sound like it is detrimental toward the message that black lives matter? I think some people will say all lives matter, they're trying to say, well no, all of us matter. But there's still a need to say black lives matter in the context. Why is there still a need to say that?

Vada:

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Well, you know, using the example again, you know, with the Declaration of Independence, you know, that said all men are created equal, you know. So, if black people at that time said, hey, you know, blacks we're created equal, and you say, all men are created equal, you know, but we're still slaves at that time, you know, that will be offensive. Obviously, I know that we aren't in slavery right now, that there aren't Jim Crow laws, but there are still certain injustices and disadvantages that black Americans and other minorities do have to fight through. And I think that is a healthier conversation to talk about those specifics, than to talk about the organization, or to talk about the looters, instead of the reason why people are protesting in the first place. I think that is all distracting, actually, you know, opposed to talking about actual racism that we can actually work to fix to help image-bearers of God.

Jim:

Ok. That's a good point you brought up because I always see that you cannot ignore the impact that history has in forming something. And if you've got a historic past that involves some evil act, you will pay a price for that. There will be a consequence for bad history. There just is. You cannot deny it. We've got that in our own history, right? All the way back to slavery, to Jim Crow laws, to segregation, to redlining. These are things that are part of our history. We cannot deny those things. I hear one side saying, you cannot ignore these things. This stuff happened. And I hear the other side saying, well, yeah, but that was then this is now. So, I still see a divide even when it comes to assessing history, right.

Like, how do we deal with that divide? I think you cannot deny that we are now in a position where a whole generation of minority groups of every color are at a disadvantage. The question though is, where do you think that we are today in terms of the difference between the history of racism we've had in our country and what you still see experiencing. We can look at statistics, but I'll be honest with you Vada, statistics can be manipulated in both directions. And every time I talk about statistics, I seem like I still have both sides mad at me. Okay. So, talk about what...

Vada: (laughing)

Jim:

Yeah, right. I mean, so let's talk about what you think in terms of systemic racism that's going on today. Like, where would you say, okay, I still see it here, here, and here, and no one's addressing it, or no one's got a plan going forward. Is there still systemic racism today, in your view, and where do you see it?

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Vada:

Well, absolutely. But before we even get there, I will just talk about, you know, the fact that we should care, you know, from a human perspective, and we're talking about image bearers of God, you know, there shouldn't be apathy and whatnot. So, for instance, say, you know, I know that there's statistics about, you know, white people being gunned down by police, as well as black people and other ethnic groups. But when it's caught on video, and there's a black man being killed by the police, and then the first response, or at least what's portrayed on the media and on social media is, I'm going to wait to see if this guy was a criminal, or if he did porn before, or if he was ever arrested, or something like that, before I'm outraged at watching him getting murdered. That apathy is a form of some of the racism that exists.

Now, you know, I'm not saying it's only the majority community in America that that feels that way, but when there's many of the majority community, in this case, the white community, who at least appears to take that approach, and that's how the conversation even starts, you know, I think that that's part of systemic racism right there. The perception that we have to prove, or demonstrate, that you should be sad to see us get killed, you know. You have to wait for details...I have to wait, you know. So, I think that that's one case. There are, you know, certain things, as far as housing, and schooling, and things like that. That's a big residual effect, as well. But I think before we even get there, I think caring, you know. There appears to be; and I'm speaking from my perspective, and I do believe that there are several black Americans who will share the same sentiment; that there's a level of apathy and a lack of care when the conversation even starts, you know. And I think that that plays a part, particularly, when it appears to be the majority community that has that lack of care.

Jim:

Yeah, that's a good point. I think sometimes our Christian worldview should shape that, right. I mean, part of it is that that you might say, well look, part of what divides us is that we see as the other. Whoever you are, you're in the other group. I'm in my group and you're in another group. But Christianity calls us to stop thinking that way. From a Christian perspective, I don't have to wait to find out if you're a good or bad person, by some definition, before I can decide that what just happened to you is not right. You don't get any credit, Jesus said, for loving those who love you, okay. That doesn't get you any credit, okay? It's loving the people that you think are unlovable that changes the world. And that's something we don't see happening for sure.

When I come back from the break, though I want to talk to you. You used the expression, systemic racism, a couple times, when talking about just the view that we might hold, right, when we, for example, require that I need to know everything about this guy before I can

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decide if he was mistreated, right. We see a mistreatment of somebody and then we're like stop and reserve judgment until we get some sense of who he is. But what I want to ask you, when he come back from the break is, you know, what do you think systemic racism, the expression, what do we really mean? Does it mean that the laws or the government practices are purposely set up to disadvantage blacks? Or does it mean that the laws and practices disadvantage blacks, either unintentionally, or as a consequence of how they're...in other words, is it systemic in the sense that there is an active effort, an active desire, to disadvantage blacks? Or is it something that's less intentional? And that's what I want to talk about when we come back from the break? Does that sound good to you?

Now, listen, Vada, as we do this, I think that there's a lot of statistics that you and I could draw up that, I think, can be manipulated to either show one side or the other. And what I want to do is talk a little bit about that manipulation, as well. Okay, so we'll do that as soon as we come back from the break. You're listening to CrossExamined radio, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Dr. Frank Turek. J. Warner Wallace sitting in for Frank and with Veda Hedgeman.

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Friends, Frank Turek here. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, is a listener supported radio program and podcast, so if you like what you hear here, would you consider donating to crossexamined.org? 100% of your donations go to ministry, zero percent to buildings. We're completely virtual. So, if you can help us out, we greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Jim:

J. Warner Wallace with Veda Hedgeman, talking about racism here on CrossExamined radio. Frank Turek is away with his family at the passing of his dad. Be praying for him. Vada, we talked before the break a little bit about the nature of this term, systemic racism. Do you think it's really a combination of these two things, that government practices are purposely set up to disadvantage blacks, or that some just do disadvantage blacks, maybe not as an intention, but as either unintentionally or as a side effect.? Which do you think that is?

Vada:

Well, I think that in the early 1900s, particularly in the 1930s, when a lot of laws were being passed, it was certainly intentional to disadvantage black people, whether it be from housing loans that went, I think it was 90%, you know, to, you know, to white Americans, and even things that will happen for veterans, you know, I think 3,200 went out and only two went out to the black families, and things like that. And these are things that establish wealth and equity

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and things of that nature. But nowadays in 2020, I don't think there are laws, necessarily, or I can't prove that it's necessarily laws put in place specifically to disadvantage black people.

But I do think that there is an intentional ignoring of the of the fact that history does play a part in generations that have followed, including my generation. Because we got to think, I was born in 1988, and from 1981 to 1991, you know, it was this war on drugs where so many black people were incarcerated. I grew up without a dad. I think, hopefully, before we start talking about certain solutions, we can talk about fatherlessness, as well, you know. But mass incarceration plays a part in fatherlessness.

So, although there are people that will say well, you know, I don't think it's anything systemic about our laws, it's about, you know, fatherlessness. And if the black community had that fixed, which stats do show that that is not nearly as big a problem nowadays. But nevertheless, you know, I think that if we even take that approach of, okay, you take fatherlessness, that's a direct result. Even if you want to say that fatherlessness is the biggest issue, that's still a direct result of mass incarceration, which was a direct result of certain laws being implemented in the 80s and early 90s. So, I think that nowadays, although it may not be laws being implemented in 2020 to disenfranchise black people, I think that there is an act of ignoring of the facts that it does impact us still. That would be my view.

Jim:

Okay, so let's talk about that. I do want to turn a little bit of a corner here at some point, before we run out of time on today's show, to talk about what we think is the solution going forward. Because even when you talk about the statistics related to fatherlessness, I mean, I think we see this growing culturally, regardless of racial group. I mean, we see the destruction of the nuclear family. I mean, look, the way we embrace divorce and blended families and the idea of being, you know, statistics completely show, and continue to show across almost every metric in which we measure statistics for the well-being of kids, that the children who are raised in families with two biological parents in a low-conflict setting do better. And I think that that's something that's true, regardless of race.

Now we can argue about how any group gets to that point. But we do know that just these statistics are still pretty high. And they're getting higher for each group as we go forward. They're not, like, stemming. They're not leveling. They're not retreating. The number of fatherless family groups is rising for all racial groups. And so, that is something that you had to address.

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Let's go back to the issue, though, of how we got here. I heard someone on ESPN show say, I thought pretty well, he said, look, if you had two people who are getting ready to run a race, and one does not have any racing shoes, and has a disadvantage, he sets back 10 yards before he begins, he's not treated fairly to run the race. Well then, of course, as the race is being run, the person who has the equipment, the person who has the good shoes, and had a 10 yard head start, he's going to finish the race first, or he's going to be in a stronger position. Now you could equalize this. You could give the other runner the same shoes that the first runner has. But the problem is that runner still had a 10 yard head start. And there's no way to make up the ground, even if you had all things being equal in terms of equipment. And so, I have a sense that that's kind of what you're talking about. That there's a sense that yes, in 2020 we could try to level the field. But how do we still overcome that 10 yard head start?

Vada:

Yeah, and I would even like to point out, you know, if anyone's listening and they may feel like they disagree. I always like to point out that, oftentimes, you know, conservatives will actually selectively point this out. For instance, Donald Trump got some flak for saying a truthful statement when he was running for president. When he when he was appealing to black voters he said, 58% of your youth is unemployed, your schools are no good, you're living in poverty. Look at your communities. What more do you have to lose? He got a lot of flak for that, because it's like, yo, that's true. But many people say, hey, that's true. But the fact that you would say, hey, that's true means that you know that there is disadvantages that people were born into, that they had no control over, that does make it harder for them to, you know, to be as successful as some of their white brothers and sisters.

Candace Owens even defended Trump for saying those statements, which means that she knows that that's accurate. So, you know, we could talk stats all day, but I just think that how you worded it was beautifully, that it is a reality in America's history that has disadvantaged some. So, how do we go about making adjustments to correct certain things, you know?

Jim:

Let's jump into that right now a little bit. I know we could talk a lot more. I mean, we're going to run out of time, though, if we're not careful here. So, I have a view of how I might address issues related, specifically to law enforcement, going forward. To solve some of the problems. Now look, here's what's interesting is that all of us, for the most part, Vada, we come at it from a personal perspective. You had an experienced as a 12 year old that began...well, you had experiencing before that where you were hearing other people tell you about this. So, you have a personal experience that shapes the way you see people. So, do I, right? Like so, for example,

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when I hear that people talk about, like, I didn't see the things in my law enforcement career that caused me any pause on this issue at all. And I was raised by a single mom in Los Angeles, right? To be honest, my views related to race are probably different than some of the people I might have worked with. And I didn't see the things in my own limited experience.

Because remember, in Los Angeles County, there are over 30 municipal law enforcement agencies, all of which have a completely different ethos, different hiring practices, different training practices, different set of guys. You can have one experience at LAPD that you may never have at the suburb where I was working, or in South Central Los Angeles when I was working as an undercover officer. It's very different, right? So, there's no like overarching system. Even in Los Angeles County, which guides all these agencies, you have a very different experience working for Glendale PD than you will for LAPD. And very different guidelines, you know, so you're gonna experience something different in that community. Where you were raised was it sheriff's department? I think was a sheriff's department, right, or was it a PD at the time?

Vada:

I think it was PD. I think it was PD. I really don't remember, though, to be honest.

Jim:

So, there's a culture in that PD. So, we have these experiences. Let's move this shift a little bit. Given your experience, where you're coming from, if you said, hey, if I was king of the world, or let's say President of the United States, here's what I would do. Here's what I would change. Here's three suggestions that I would change going forward that, even though our history got us here, this approach would change us going forward. What would they be?

Vada:

Well, one would be, I would have a more clear guideline on what is an indictable offense by a police officer, you know, because before we started having body cams and phones with cameras on it, you know, many people, you know, in poor communities felt like okay, if we start recording it, you know, things will start to change. That's why it was such an outrage with Rodney King back in the early 90s. It was like, hey, it's finally on tape, and then nothing happened, right. So, I think that if there's a clearer guideline, whether we like those guidelines or not, on what it takes for a police officer to be indicted, because more often than not, the officer isn't even indicted, let alone being charged. And then the case being dismissed. They usually aren't even indicted. So, I think that that would be something that's very helpful.

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I think that if police officers who did want to speak up, or speak out, about certain things to help civilians who feel like they're being treated unjustly, if they had a safe space, because my understanding is that police officers have a no snitching policy, just like gang bangers do. So, I think that a safe space should somehow be created there. And even as far as our schools are concerned. You know, if credit was being taught, and if there was a "Know Your Rights" class in high school, and things like that. Because I think that that would help combat some of the things that we didn't have, historically, in our families, because we weren't able to own homes, we weren't able to have good jobs weren't able to do these things, so these conversations weren't happening in our households the way it might have happened in some other households. So, if this was taught in all schools, including ours, I think that this will certainly help our outlook. You know, for me, I didn't know anything about credit until I missed the car payment at 22. And I realized I had bad credit all the sudden, you know, so, you know, so things like that, you know.

And I also think that if a teenager is arrested, or if a minor is arrested for a non-violent offense, I think that he or she should be able to get that off of his record at some point, you know. Whether that be, you know, because he enrolled into college, or things like that, because a lot of times people are arrested as a teenager, and now they still have a record, even though they're 24 or 25. And they still can't get a job. You know, so imagine me. Thankfully, I wasn't arrested for anything, but say if I was, because I did commit a crime or two, I'm not gonna lie. You know, imagine if I was arrested, I wouldn't be able to have the job that I have today. I wouldn't be able to do certain things that I have today. I didn't even start thinking about gang banging is actually wrong until I was 17, because I didn't have anybody to tell me. So, I think that if we had certain things like that in place, that that would help correct some of the things that are systemic that plagues not just the black community, even, you know, the Hispanic community and others, as well. Those are just a couple.

Jim:

Okay, so tell me, Vada, what's your view when it comes down to...my thinking on this is that there's a systemic problem, but it's not a problem in government systems, it's a problem in the human heart. That government systems almost need to be in place to protect us from ourselves because our human inclination is to divide from one another in a way that is very, very powerful. Also, our human inclination is to see each other as groups. And I'm always afraid of that, because the more we see each other's as tribes; you're a tribe, I'm a tribe, or all these different tribes who are referring to each other, the more I see tribalism. In other words, the sense that hey, I don't like your group. So, what's great about you and my relationship is, I'm sure you still have a view about police officers, but you have contact with one who you know

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personally. And the more we see each other as individuals, the less likely I am to say, well, you guys are all like that. Whether it's you looking at cops or us looking at a minority group.

By the way, God tells us in His Word that God has not looked at the outward appearance of a man but looks at the inward appearance of his heart. Where's the heart? What you don't see in that passage is God's saying, I just look at all of you as a group, and if one of you is bad, I'm done with all of you. So anyway, when we get back from the break, what I wanted us to do is continue our talk. David Wood, one of our friends, has actually given a short list of things he would do. Let's give some more opportunity for hope going forward and how we might address this issue of racism in America. You're listening to CrossExamined radio, I'm J. Warner Wallace sitting in for Frank Turek.

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Jim:

J. Warner Wallace, sitting in for Frank Turek, talking to Vada Hedgeman about the issues of racism in America. We have a common friend named David Wood who's got a great YouTube channel, as well. And David spent time in jail for a relatively serious crime. And he does a great job on his recent show talking about the five kinds of correctional officers that he encountered in jail. And he's got three suggestions that he would make right away to maybe help address this.

Number one, he says the lawmakers should listen to those who say that certain laws are unjust and then just correct them. For example, being charged with a gun possession because you're renting a room in a house of an owner who had his own guns in a safe in another part of the house. There are lots of laws that seem unfair. So, lawmakers need to listen to those people who are suggesting, this is the law that's unfair weigh it, and actually respond to them.

Two, he says, put more personality and character testing in place to avoid hiring bad cops and weeding out those that are. That's tougher, but I'll talk about that in a second.

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Three, the police chief's ought to meet with community members regularly to hear their concerns about policing. That powerful. That's the idea of moving from seeing people as anonymous groups, to seeing people as a collection of individuals that you know personally. If we can move in that direction, to seeing groups as collections of individuals, many of whom we know personally, I guarantee you things will change. Also, the second point he makes, Vada, I think is striking. I want to give the table to you.

I always say it this way, if you have a Facebook page, you're managing the Facebook page, you have a group of people who like, let's say, to build birdhouses. So, you start a birdhouse building Facebook page. Well, you're going to do three things. Number one, you're going to have a criteria for who gets to join your page. Two, you're going to have a set of rules for how to interact with other people. And three, you're going to have to moderate your page. And this is what law enforcement has to do. It has to have a strong sense of who gets in. Law enforcement involves force. That's why it's called law enforcement. And sometimes, you end up hiring guys who you think can athletically do the job, but you haven't really assessed them to see if they have the character to do the job.

As a matter of fact, it's a lot easier to see how many pushups somebody can do, than it is to see who they would push away, in the perspective of character. So, I think I would be focused on, how do people get into this job. Two, what are the rules and training, once they get here, to make sure they're not doing stupid. And three, who is moderating this in a way to know what is happening on a daily basis in each shift? I don't want to be micromanaged as a police officer. I get it. But as a Christian, I already know that there is a camera on everything I am doing called God. And God sees everything I'm doing. So, I'm not really afraid of body cams, because I know that I don't even answer to the body cam. I answer to God. I gotta go home at the end of the night and feel like I responded to my calling, and not just, you know, managed to get through a shift. So, those are kind of my views on how we make changes going forward there, but much broader. But I know you and I would agree that there's a role that Christianity plays in this. Talk about that a little bit.

Vada:

Well, I mean, you and Frank talked about it a couple of episodes ago, you know, just about sin being our primary issue. I don't disagree with that at all. I think that is our issue when it comes to any form of racism being done to any group, when it comes to lust, when it comes to anything. I think that sin is the issue and that should be corrected. The only thing that I would like to add to that is that sometimes we say that and then we refuse to go a little bit deeper.

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For instance, this conversation that you and I are having, I believe it should be more normal. Because I'm speaking about my experience, I'm speaking about other people's experience, and it actually matters.

For example, just really quick, you know, you and I agree 100% on same-sex marriage. We agree 100% on transgenderism. And I believe we also agree that, you know, people of that community shouldn't be bullied and beat up and murdered for their lifestyle, you know. And if a person who practices homosexuality says to me that they get beat up all the time, my first thought isn't going to be okay, well, how often do people in your community fight each other? And do you guys fight and get thrown out of gay nightclubs for misbehaving and all that stuff? Fix that before you complain about the six straight people who beat you up last month, when 100 of you did that to each other. That wouldn't be the initial response. And I don't believe that's the Christian response. I believe the Christian response is to actually care about that, you know, because we don't think that people should be harmed.

So, I think that sin is the root issue. But I want each of us, myself included, you know, to not use that as a crutch for us to not ever have to get more specific when we talk about abortion. We're specific when we talk about same-sex marriage. And even if there is a point where, if someone's listening to this interview, and they go, hey, that Vada guy sounds like a nice guy, but I disagree with everything he said. At least agree on the part where you should care that this is the experience of several image-bearers of God. Not just several, but when it comes to black Americans, it is the overwhelming majority, as far as people who have this view. Sure that you can find some who look like me who disagree, but it's the overwhelming majority of us who have a view that similar to mine. So, even if you disagree 100% at least care. And I think this is the Christian thing to do; to care. And I think that once we care, authentically care, I think that that helps inform how we move forward and how we be conscious of stuff. So, I think that sin is certainly the issue. But, you know, I think that we should also be specific.

Jim:

Right. It does not remove our responsibility to change the bad policies, to change the bad behaviors, to provide guidelines, to do the things we're supposed to do. We can't just say, well, yeah, this about sin, and so, let's just preach the gospel. I get that. I do think the gospel is upstream of all the other problems, and I don't talk a lot about politics on any of my work, because I think the politics stand on the shoulders of the issue of, you know, who are we and what is the problem. It's Christian worldview stuff; is the Bible true and should we take it seriously? That does change hearts. It changes the way we approach. But I do get the understanding that there's a sense in which, if that's all we did, you would still see that as

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deficient. In other words, as yeah, but it's not enough. It's a both/and not an either/or. Is that what you're saying?

Vada:

Yeah, I mean, and even when we think about scriptures like Colossians 3:11, you know, where there's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, because Christ is all in all. That means that all of our identity should be in Christ and it shouldn't be me being black, you being white, me being Asian, Jim being Yugoslavian, you know. It is about our identity in Christ period. That's what that means. But it also means that if something has happened, something is happening uniquely to the Yugoslavian's, we should care because Christ is all in all, you know.

Jim:

Okay, let me say something that might be controversial, but I want to say it, because I see that part of the difference here too, is a generational difference. So, for example, I know your experience in the world, especially using social media and technology is different than mine, because I didn't have that growing up. I didn't really even adopt that until I was probably in my 40s, right. So, [unintelligible] was a lot different life. So, in other words, when people express their care and concern, here's what I'm seeing. I'm seeing for a lot of young people, in order to express that I care about this, it means this token gesture on social media. That I just do something that clicks a box on social media. So, now you know I care. Whereas, in my generation, I'm saying, really, that doesn't mean you care. It means that you clicked the box on social media. That means you give the appearance of caring.

So, for example, I resist these notions, I resist these gestures, because I find them to be superficial. And I don't want people to think that I am just superficial. You know, virtue signaling is something that I'd actually agree with, but I don't want to see it as just another...to me, those are empty gestures and I see them as empty gestures. And so, I resist them. And then I know, after talking to you, that I don't want the perception to be though that, yeah, but I didn't hear anything from you. If you're not going to do these empty gestures on social media, there's a sense in which I don't think you care. When, in fact, this may just be an age divide, whereas I'm a boomer. So, as a boomer I'm thinking, well, no, this is how you would express your concern.

I mean, I get a lot of people in my age group, who are maybe a little bit older, five or six years older, who have no social media platform at all, are not even hearing that noise, and wouldn't even have a way to interact. I've only jumped in because, right, I'm trying to contend for the gospel. And so, I'm trying to learn social media and maneuver in social media. But still, I have a sense that especially young people...I talked to a high schooler recently, Vada, who told me that

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if she didn't join in this social media click, or like this, or whatever, then she was an outcast from her peer group, who felt like the only way to express themselves on any concern is to say something on social media, rather than, hey, well how about what can you do effectively to actually serve a community, to actually jump in and do something to serve a community. That's not even on the on the radar for some folks. It's really about, well yeah, but I clicked that, and I joined that, and I put that banner on the top of my website, and I did all those things. So, you know, I'm good, right. And I don't think any of us really trust that. Yeah, right. Right? So, tell me, what is your sense of that? Do you see a generational divide here?

Vada:

Certainly, I think that that plays a part. I think that that plays a part in it, you know, But, you know, we talked a little bit about certain policies; I mentioned some, you mentioned some, and I think that all of that stuff is helpful, as well, you know. You mentioned, you know, police training and stuff like that. I did hear you guys' show that you did recently, you know, about, okay, well, if you don't say this, you know, then you know, then you aren't down for the cause. And it can't come off as that, you know, in some instances. It can't come off as that.

But I think that actions do speak louder than words, and it's more than just making a Facebook post on one day, because people are doing it just to be in. So, I completely agree with that, you know. I think that, at the end of the day, you know, if we authentically care for real, and we actually try to understand other people's experiences, and not just give them a label, and a new theological term, and now someone has to stud, critical race theory, you know, after they just got a master's in Calvinism. It's like, oh, now I sound like a critical race theorist just because I'm speaking about my experience? Like, I'm not a heretic, you know.

So, let me put it this way. Let me put it this way. I think that there are insensitive remarks and behaviors that don't have to be said. And I think that silence actually is better than that. Because oftentimes, what people will say is, they'll say, hold up, Vada, stop, you're starting to sound like a critical race theorist. I'm like, how you know more about that then actually fixing racism, you know? So...

Jim:

Right. Now, this has been really great conversation with you, Vada. I feel like we needed another hour easily to even flesh some of these things out and we have notes that I didn't even touch, right. So...

Vada:

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Yeah. I feel like people are going to be mad at me if I get specific. I'm grateful.

Jim:

Well, I'm grateful too, Vada. Thanks, so much for joining us here at CrossExamined radio. I'm J. Warner Wallace sitting in for Frank Turek. We'll see you here next time.

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