

Should We Repent for the Sins of Our Ancestors? With Monique Duson and Krista Bontrager

(December 3, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, should we repent for the sins of our ancestors? That is a chapter in the 'Walking in Unity' book. You know, we had Krista and Monique on a week or two ago to talk about their brand-new book 'Walking in Unity: Biblical Answers to Questions on Race and Racism'.

And we were going through so many of the topics and we ran out of time. And I wanted to get to this issue of reparations because I hear people saying that reparations ought to be paid to people who are the ancestors of slaves because that obviously set them back according to the argument and there's a biblical precedent for paying reparations. So, what should we do?

Well, Krista and Monique are back to talk about their brand-new book 'Walking in Unity' and the answer to that question, because there's a chapter called 'Should We Repent for the Sins of Our Ancestors?' Krista let's start with you. You were the primary author behind that chapter. What do you cover in that chapter? Let's start right there.

KRISTA:

Yeah, I cover the question of repenting, corporate repenting from generations past sins as well as the whole reparations, monetary compensation question. And this was really a personal journey for me, and I write about it in the chapter where I went from, I'm a hard no. I'm angry about it and I'm going to tell you why. I'm totally against it to all right. Let me calm myself down here a little bit.

Try to learn the arguments on the other side in the case for reparations and then begin to try to respond to them. And Monique on the other hand was a hard yes, in the beginning of our friendship, very much for reparations. And so, this has been definitely a journey for both of us.



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FRANK:

Okay, so what is the biblical case? Biblical case now, for reparations? Do you want to start, Krista? Who makes the case and what are some of the arguments they make?

KRISTA:

Yeah, I think that Duke Kwon has a full book-length treatment on the subject. So, if people want to know the pro reparation side from a Christian point of view, that would be the book that I would refer them to. His co-author, I'm sorry, I'm not meaning to be disrespectful.

It's just his name is escaping me right now. But Duke Kwon, I know is the primary author on that book and you know, making a thoughtful case from a Christian point of view for reparations. And I think what is important for people to understand is the idea of restitution or paying back for a wrong is actually a deeply biblical idea. And so, there is in some way a preliminary case to be made from a biblical perspective for the idea of payment back for wrong.

Now, where I think that the current reparations movement as a political idea goes wrong is that the biblical case always and everywhere is between the two parties involved, where the wrongdoer is repaying the person who was wronged.

So, in the case of theft, or the example of Zacchaeus in the book of Luke, that he had engaged in theft toward his neighbors and so he wanted to pay them back plus interest. That is a biblical concept. And when Zacchaeus had an encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ and he came into a posture of repentance, his heart was moved, and he wanted to respond righteously. These are deeply biblical ideas.

And so, if one of us has frauded someone else to pay them back plus interest, is in my opinion, to obey Scripture. But the problem is that in the modern reparations movement, we are now generations removed between the wrongdoer and the wronged party. We are three to five generations removed. And there is no biblical precedent for that kind of repayment.

And so, none of us who are alive were slaves, and none of us who are alive right now were slave owners. Those people have all long died. And so, the time for biblically based restitution was after the Civil War. That's when it should have happened. And the ideal biblical case should

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have been for slave owners to repent of their sins and let their slaves go and give them some provisions to help them start a new life.

I think the second best scenario would have been for our government, who helped facilitate the slave trade, to help former slaves restart a life. And that was a field order at the end of the Civil War by General Sherman. Lincoln had given kind of a preliminary approval of it, but it never went to Congress.

Lincoln was assassinated, and it was never implemented. But this is where we get the saying 40 acres and a mule. Now, we're very far removed. And I do not think that there is a biblical case generations removed from the wrongdoing. And so, I am not an advocate for these political solutions to reparations now. But we can talk about what might have been, what could have been, what should have been. I think that is a historical conversation.

FRANK:

Monique, what is your perspective on this?

MONIQUE:

I feel much the same. You know, as much as I could use, you know, a new pair of stilettos or something, you know, I don't see biblical warrant for it. Many pastors who are in favor of reparations go to things like the Exodus and how, you know, the Lord moved on the hearts of Pharaoh and his people, and, you know, they gave them these things.

And so, you know, I've heard Eric Mason talk about, you know, that the Israelites, when they were coming out, you know, they got their stacks, and they got their drip, and you know, all of this stuff. But that is God, one, moving on their hearts, freely moving on their hearts. But it still does not equate to our situation today because those people wronged and those people were, you know, were the victims of the wrong. And so, it still does not lead us beyond those who were actually involved in the event.

FRANK:

We were having dinner with Natasha Crain the last couple weeks ago, she was saying a difficulty of reparations is trying to trace the ancestry, like who actually was a slave and who

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wasn't? And there was a census that burned up in 1890, and there's so many disconnects. It'd be very hard to actually do this and do it equitably and fairly, even if you could. But let's say for the sake of argument, it somehow it could be done. Isn't there a case to be made that, yes, we're three to five generations removed, as you said, Krista.

However, isn't there a case to be made to say that if we could trace back to that period, that the people who have come from that ancestry line have had a much lower level of wealth given to them by their previous generations because they were held as slaves? And so, is there a way of equalizing that or at least providing some sort of restitution, as you put it, Krista? Is there a case to be made for that, even though the parties that originally were sinning are long gone?

KRISTA:

Yeah, I think I'll answer and then you can jump in. I mean, in that scenario, you're having the government kind of stand in as a proxy for the former slave owners and providing some level of repayment. And I think that that is probably the strongest argument for restitution.

Now, I want to tell you, there are a lot of different models for restitution. There is no agreement among reparations advocates for what reparations ought to be given. There is, you know, a lot of different suggestions.

MONIQUE:

So, with that whole, you know, argument of the people who are the African descendants of slaves, they haven't had as much wealth. One of the things that would do us well is to go back and look at history. There were...

And again, this isn't, you know, to say every African slave, you know, worked and then worked their way out of their slavery. But there were Africans or African American slaves who actually worked outside of the plantation, and bought their freedom, and then would buy the freedom of their family. Right after the Civil War, you had upwards of, I want to say, 300, 250-300 black people in office who were participating in helping to rebuild the nation after the Civil War.

When we think about up until Johnson and the whole war on poverty and all of that, when we look back at the black family, we had, if not equal to, higher than rates of marriage with white

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people. We were doctors, lawyers. We built schools. And so, when we think about the poverty that we see today in the black community, I can't say that it is directly connected to the African slave trade or Jim Crow, because blacks stuck together, and they were doing better than than they are doing now.

We weren't killing our children. We weren't having children out of wedlock. We weren't not going to work or not building wealth for ourselves. This is not, I would say, the way that we see black America today is not a direct result of slavery and Jim Crow. It's more of a direct result of Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty and our choices that we have made since then.

KRISTA:

Yeah.

FRANK:

Yeah. In fact, Thomas Sowell does make that case pretty strongly. He said when whites were at their worst, blacks were at their best. And prior to 1965, the Black family was very strong, and people stayed together. And the war on poverty had some sort of negative effect. And unfortunately, it tended to incentivize the breakup of the family. So, the mom would get more money if the father was not in the home.

MONIQUE:

Yes, they actually went into the home to check. And you were not to have male clothing in your home. You were not to have a man in your home. These are all things that could get you kicked off of what was then known, I believe, as AFDC or your Section 8 housing and things like that.

FRANK:

Yeah. It's certainly a difficult issue, a difficult problem. But if you want to go further, ladies and gentlemen, you really need to get the book 'Walking in Unity: Biblical Answers to Questions on Race and Racism'. I do want to ask you ladies something else that we talked about over dinner, and we agreed you guys would talk about this. Nobody else knows this, but I think there's an encouragement in your story about how God still intervenes today.

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So, let's tell the world what nobody else knows about your relationship. Because in the book 'Walking in Unity', you say, hey, yeah, we ran into one another in 2017 through mutual friends. But it's a lot deeper than that. Who's going to start the story?

KRISTA:

I guess I will. In November, early November, early to mid-November of 2017, Monique was living in South Africa as a missionary. And I lived in Southern California with my family. And I had a very vivid dream one night. And there was...

It was about an American black woman living in South Africa. Her name was Mo, and she had a really vibrant big smile. And she worked with traumatized children near the ocean. And there was a lot of big rocks and cliffs where the ocean would come pound the cliffs. And she worked at the end of this war zone.

And I had to go through, in the dream, go through the war zone, and there was all this fighting and a lot of guns and violence in order to get to where she was. And I woke up from this dream, and it was just so vivid that I typed it out on my phone at like 2 in the morning. And I was trying not to wake up my husband.

My phone, I'm doing it under the covers and wrote it down. And I was like, I don't know what this is, but it seems important. It was just so vivid. And a couple of days later, I saw a video on Facebook from a mutual friend of Monique and I who shared a video of Monique giving a message.

She was at home on furlough up in Northern California, giving a message about her mission work in Africa. And I recognized Monique from my dream, and I saw that her name was Mo. And so, I just impulsively wrote in the comments, I think I had a dream about you.

FRANK:

Sure you did.

KRISTA:

Well, I'll let Monique take it from there.

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MONIQUE:

And from there I was completely freaked out because I was like, well, has the Lord told somebody something horrible about me? Like, what in the world is this? Now, you know, in all fairness, I had drifted into NAR. And so, dreams were very, very big and--

KRISTA:

New Apostolic Reformation. Yeah.

MONIQUE:

And the idea of dreams and what dreams meant, and God primarily spoke dreams and all of that. Now, I had, you know, had dreams before, but the idea where my mind was in regards to dreams, I've since corrected. But at the time I was like, we need to talk now. What are you talking about?

And she wasn't available. She had to go on a trip and was gone for like two weeks. And so, we finally had a conversation about the dream. And she knew things about where I worked, the route that I took.

So, every day for four years, I drove an hour long along the coast of Cape Town. or down, like, by Sea Point. And so, every day I would drive along, and I would see the ocean on one side, and then there would be, you know, and it was ocean and cliff, and then on the other side, there was, like a hill that could be, you know, seen as a mountain, but it was a larger hill.

I worked in an area called the Cape Flats. And across the street from my school that I worked at, that I was stationed at, was a large field. And the gangs would come out, rival gangs would come out, and they would shoot across this field, and they called it the battlefield.

Many of my students had experienced horrible traumatic events. They had seen their parents killed. Their parents were on drugs. They had witnessed people be stabbed or shot. One of my children in particular, I remember, was a little boy in third or fourth grade, and he sold guns out of his classroom. This was just the normal life of my students every day.

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And so, when I came home from South Africa, one of the things that I immediately wanted to do was see this dream, because I mean, a lot hinged on that. Like, she either made this up and somebody told her or, like, she really knew. And I was able to actually read this dream and read it off her phone and see that, wow.

Like, here's the date. Here's when she actually typed this. While I was still living overseas, while I was still in the middle of a critical race theory worldview, or a progressive Christian worldview, still working with traumatized kids. I have been attacked on the mission fields because of the work that I've done and where my school was located and everything like that.

And so, yes, it was definitely a war zone that I worked in. And I definitely worked with traumatized kids. And I lived about 10 minutes from the beach, five to ten minutes from the beach. But my drive five days a week was along the coast.

KRISTA:

And I think that that really was... sometimes people ask us, you know, why did you guys stay friends even though you had so many political and theological differences, and you saw the world so differently?

MONIQUE:

Because what if the Lord gave her another dream? I can't have that. [Laughter]

KRISTA:

No, but that dream was the foundation of our friendship. We knew that somehow God had a plan. He had some kind of a supernatural plan for us and for our friendship. And that really helped us kind of hang on to the friendship during the hard times and the arguments about race and racism that we talk about in our book, 'Walking in Unity'.

FRANK:

Yeah, there's a chapter in there where you start talking about you went on a long walk and your differences became apparent right off the bat. I think you started talking politics right away. Can you sort of give us sort of an overview of how that conversation went?

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MONIQUE:

Well, I will start. So, I don't like small talk. Like, if we're going to talk, we need to just jump in and talk. We are not small talk friends. And so, I wanted to know, what are your thoughts about justice? What do you think about helping the poor? Who did you vote for? Did you vote for Trump?

Like, tell me why you voted for Trump because he's a racist. This was, you know, 2017, 2018, Mo. I wanted to know, what are all of your thoughts? What I didn't realize that I was asking was, what do you think about the human person and how do you think we should treat one another? That's what my questions really boiled down to.

And for Krista, I think she knew that I wasn't coming from the same angle that she was coming from. And so, my very first, like, opportunity to ask her all of my questions on this walk that we went on, she immediately stopped. The conversation was like, I don't feel comfortable answering those questions. And I was like, really? Like, this is what we're going to do. We're going to have a quiet walk? Because I'm not doing small talk.

FRANK:

How did you respond, Krista? What did you do?

KRISTA:

Well, what she didn't know, what she wasn't aware of, is that...

And I don't think I really talk about this in the book, but I had had some rough experiences talking with people from other ethnicities where I had been shamed and called a racist. And those were, in one particular case, it was quite traumatic for me.

And so, when she starts coming on really strong with all of these questions, my immediate kind of getting me back on my heels a little bit was, wait a minute, I just met you, like a little while ago. I don't know if our relationship, like, do we know each other well enough to have this conversation?

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But that's where the kind of the anchoring of that supernatural incident of the dream, I was like, I just have to trust that the Lord has a plan.

And so, as I began to talk about my positions and I said, you know, I do care about the poor. I think you and I just probably have differences about what way is best to help the poor. And that made her intrigued. And so, then she asked, like, oh, well, what are your thoughts about that? So, it kind of opened some doors.

FRANK:

So, from that point on, I mean, when you had that dream, you didn't even know Monique Dusan existed.

KRISTA:

Oh, no. I had no idea that was a real woman in my dream until I was on Facebook that day, and I was like, oh, my word. There she is! [Laughter]

FRANK:

Now, how did it go from that point to the point that you started the Center for Biblical Unity and then wrote the new book 'Walking in Unity?'

KRISTA:

So, she was in South Africa, and for the first seven months of our friendship, we were just talking on Zoom, and Facebook messenger, and that sort of a thing, sending videos to each other. And then she came for a visit in June of 2018 and came to my house just for a visit for a couple of nights. But what ended up happening was she needed to make an emergency transition off the mission field due to some situations that were happening in Africa.

MONIQUE:

I had a death threat, and I also was diagnosed with PTSD. So, I know that like that, I just wanted to bring clarity to what she's saying.

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KRISTA:

Yeah. So, then she came to live with my family, and I. It was supposed to be just for a few months while she was transitioning and getting resettled, but because of the PTSD, she needed a stable place to live for a little bit longer than that and ended up living with my family for almost five years and really became part of our family. And my kids see her as a big sister, and she comes to our family Christmases and Thanksgivings still, and she's just part of the family now.

FRANK:

That's fabulous. And then you decided that you were going to start.... How did it go from you're a CRT progressive Christian to now you're not? What happened just in two minutes? What's the two minute testimony for you, Monique?

MONIQUE:

I was waiting for Krista to repent from her whiteness. And in reality, the Holy Spirit started to tug on my own heart. I had been reading the Bible, like, in context, which was something new for me, not just a Bible verse. And as I was reading, as I was praying, as I was having conversations with people like Pat Sawyer, who's Neil Shenvi's writing partner, I just like... It wasn't even me. The Lord really began to show me that what I was believing was simply wrong. It was wrong.

Now, I didn't know what was right because I didn't think Krista was right, but that I was wrong. And so, I needed to find out what was right. And in doing that, breaking down my paradigm, the Lord began to build a biblical worldview. We fast forward.

We're still having conversations about race. We are now talking about, you know, critical race theory a lot. And Women in Apologetics had asked us to come and speak about critical race theory in January of 2020. We talk about critical race theory, and so many people come to us and say, hey, this is what we're dealing with. It's what you're talking about.

I went home and just started the paperwork for a ministry, the Center for Biblical Unity. The goal wasn't to do this. It wasn't to write a book. It wasn't to travel and all of that. It was just to

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equip pastors to be able to understand that there's a framework out there that will divide your whole church.

KRISTA:

We thought maybe we would speak two or three times a year. That was the vision. We really didn't have a plan. And then when the George Floyd situation happened, Monique started doing a ton of interviews about Black Lives Matter, and critical race theory, and more interviews and more interviews, and the ministry just kind of came out of all of that.

MONIQUE:

Alisa interviewed us or interviewed me. Natasha mentioned us in a blog post that went viral. And then Nancy Pearcey mentioned us. And from there, I feel like the ministry started because of them. Yeah, it was in a period of maybe eight days, those three things happened.

KRISTA:

And then Monique's name was everywhere, and people were calling us from all over to have her come speak. And then we thought, oh, this might be more than just a viral video. This might be a whole ministry. But we had already had the 501-c3 in place maybe for two or three months prior to all that. So, the Lord had a plan. We didn't know the plan. She was still working at the food pantry. I was still working at Reasons to Believe, and things just sort of took off.

MONIQUE:

This definitely wasn't my plan.

FRANK:

God. Yeah, God laughs at our plans, doesn't He? [Laughter] Well, it's encouraging to see that God can and still does work through special circumstances, like a dream or a vision, because, I mean, how do you explain that? I mean, that's too specific.

MONIQUE:

It was so specific.

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FRANK:

Yeah, especially you've never heard her name. And then that day you're on Facebook.

KRISTA:

I had no idea who she was. Yeah.

FRANK:

Yeah. And it all fit. So, here we are, Senator for Center for Biblical Unity. That's the website. 'Walking in Unity' is the book. 'Walking in Unity: Biblical Answers to Questions on Race and Racism.' Let me mention one other thing, and then we'll wrap this up. And much of this is in the book.

We were talking earlier about reparations and in the previous program. Friends, if you didn't listen to the first podcast, you've got to go back and listen to the first podcast because we covered a lot more from the book 'Walking in Unity'. I think Thomas Sowell makes this point too, that I know that there are critical race theorists who say that all disparities are due to racism.

That's what Kendi has said. But we know that's not the case. And I think one of the things that Sowell says, which I think is very profound. He says, just think about your own family. There are people in your own family who are brought up under the same roof as you, with the same parents, in the same situation.

Are they in the same place financially, spiritually, socially, vocationally that you are right now? I mean, if you have brothers and sisters, are you guys exactly the same? No, you're not. Why? Because there are so many other factors that go into whether or not you're a success or not in life or how far you go in life.

It can't be all due to racism. We know that. Now, maybe some of it is, but it can't all be due to racism. So, don't buy into the idea that racism is the reason that there are disparities between people 100% of the reason. There may be other factors and there are other factors.

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You know, what decisions do you make, what talents you have, what gifts you have, what determination you have, what friends you make, what choices you make. There are so many other reasons. And you guys unpack some of that in 'Walking in Unity'.

So, friends, get the book 'Walking in Unity: Biblical Answers to Questions on Race and Racism.' And also check out the website, CenterForBiblicalUnity.com. All right, I want each one of you to leave our listening audience with some encouragement or something you want them to know before we go. Let's start with Krista. Go ahead, Krista.

KRISTA:

I hope that if you read the book that you will be inspired to not give up on the progressive people in your life. They need Jesus. They need the real Jesus, not the social justice Jesus. But they will also likely need you to walk a road with them. You'll need to be patient. You might even need to be willing to be called names. But pray, ask the Lord for his help, and just don't give up, because that person might be the next Monique Dusan.

MONIQUE:

Three things. First thing is that we need to remember that racism is not simply a white to black issue. Anyone can experience racism. A lot of times, what we're seeing in our current culture, many white people are experiencing racism as well. Second thing is that we need to define our terms clearly.

We do not just go along with the culture's definitions. Third thing, we need to be courageous. As believers, we need to stand for truth, even in the midst of a culture that may be screaming in our face or calling us names. That is what I hope people get from our book. And just yeah, my last words that I would want to encourage people with.

FRANK:

Amen to that ladies and gentlemen. That's Krista and Monique. The book, 'Walking in Unity: Answers to Questions on Race and Racism.' Also, check out centerforbiblicalunity.com and Lord willing, I hope to see you here next week. God bless.

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