

Welcome to Kev's on-line eGroup

Psalm 139: 1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Romans 12: 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

John 17: Jesus Prays for His Disciples - 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

Closing Prayer by John Gray on 5/31/2020

“Thank you for Elevation Church that is breaking the back of the devil that existed in this region of the country for hundreds of years. And for all of the black bodies that have been accumulating due to injustices – and a lack of human empathy – and I’m grateful this moment has begun – and I pray that the church will not avoid this conversation. May the church be a voice to the voiceless – and may you feel something – ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart of flesh – have the heart of Jesus become active in you – that we will live in community and fight for the unity of the Spirit and the bonds of peace – to pursue peace with all men – I pray that the pain is now so severe as to effectuate change – and change starts in our hearts – by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus - allow us to have this initial conversation – and reconcile this issue through the church – may we celebrate our differences while attacking at its root the systems of oppression and injustice. Lord, change our hearts so that we see everyone is equally valuable – God give us hope – give us peace – give us strength – Show us the pathway – This is my prayer – in Jesus’ name – Amen”

From Elevation eGroup Leadership Guide: "Exposure and understanding are keys to "building bridges. There are real things and emotions that stop us or make us hesitate to expose ourselves - Sometimes the best way to take a stand is to take a seat – and have the conversation."

Question: What things are you going to do to become a bridge?



George Floyd



David Patrick Underwood

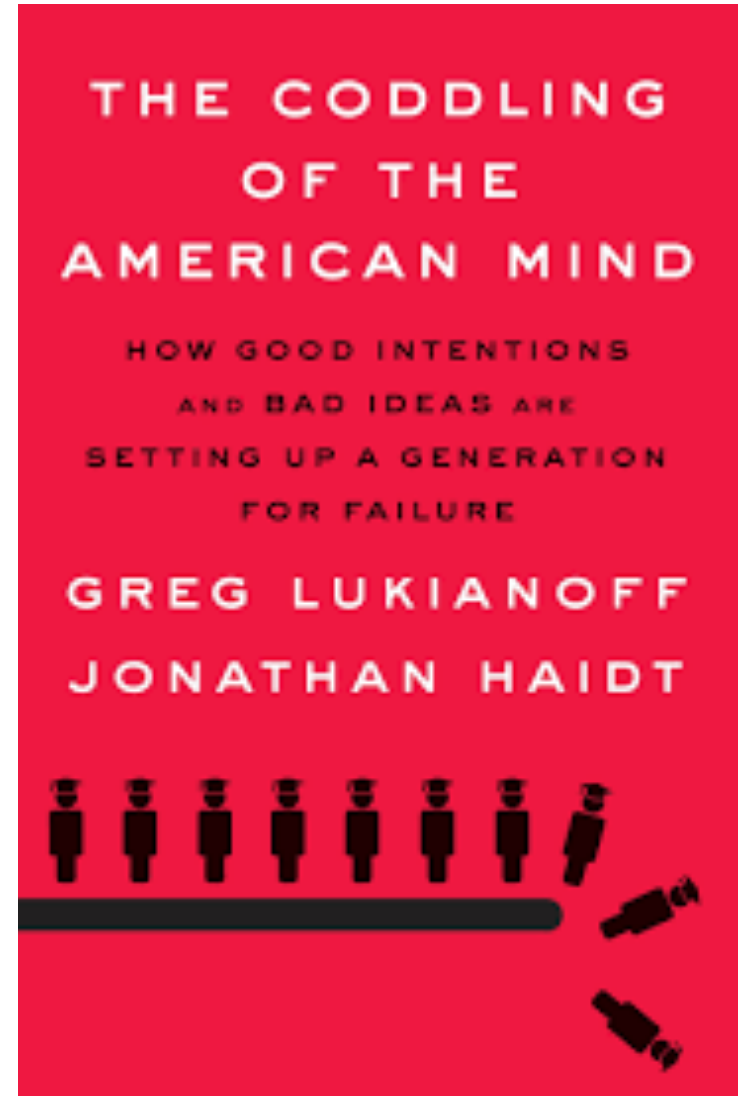
Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

What does the New Testament say about racism as quoted from two sources: A sermon by Billy Graham in 1993 called "Footprints of Conscience" and a press release from New Spring Church – see: <https://newspring.cc/articles/is-racism-a-sin>

- **Mathew 22:39:** "Love your neighbor as yourself"
- **Luke 10: 25-37:** Jesus' response to the question "Who is my neighbor?" He responded with a parable about a good Samaritan, a member of a despised race.
- **John 4: 1-26:** Once the Pharisees began their political posturing, Jesus had to go to Samaria – to convert a Samaritan woman.
- **Rev. 5:9:** God created a diverse world "From every tribe and language and people and nation" – additional comments by Billy Graham in 1993: Racism is a sin precisely because it keeps us from obeying God's command to love our neighbor, and because it has its roots in pride and arrogance. Christians who harbor racism in their attitudes or actions are not following their Lord at this point, for Christ came to bring reconciliation—reconciliation between us and God, and reconciliation between each other.
- **Romans 10:12:** "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him"
- **Eph. 2:14-15:** "has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility"
- **Acts 8:26-40:** Philip - leader of the church, helps an Ethiopian eunuch understand part of the Bible and begins following Jesus.
- **Deuteronomy 10:17-19:** God cares about people regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, and social status.
- **Acts 10:34-35:** "God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."
- **1 Corinthians 12:13:** "We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."
- James 2:9: "If you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."
- **Revelation 7:9-10:** About the age to come, we see a heavenly picture: "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."
- **Ephesians 2:14-18:** Jesus removes hostility and introduces harmony.
- Galatians 3:28: God isn't about separation, but inclusion and unity. Jesus made it possible for anyone to be included in the people and promises of God."
- **Ephesians 2:13:** The Gospel doesn't just mean that we're brought near to God. It also means we're brought near to the people we once considered so different from ourselves.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18-20:** If we belong to Jesus, we are part of His movement to bring more reconciliation between people and God."

Hum??? - Disconnected moral matrices?

“By the 2010s, most Americans were using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, which make it easy to encase oneself within an echo chamber. And then there’s the “filter bubble,” in which search engines and YouTube algorithms are designed to give you more of what you seem to be interested in, leading conservatives and progressives into disconnected moral matrices backed up by mutually contradictory informational worlds. Both the physical and the electronic isolation from people we disagree with allow the forces of confirmation bias . . . to push us still further apart.”



Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- “Opening comments and by Chandler Moore: Today is a great weekend to be reminded of the promises of the Lord over us – many of us are losing sight, hope, and language based on what is going on all around us - and what is happening in our country and our world – it is best that we put our kingdom in heavenly perspective – and be reminded of what we live by - and how the word of God guides us. He will be with us through everything - and he will neither abandon us nor forsake us – we’ve never seen the righteous forsaken – and we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living – our confidence is not in earthen vessels – our confidence is in the word of God – and we want to be reminded of these promises – father we thank you for this moment – I think that you are opening hearts - even now – that you are encouraging souls even now – to be reminded of things that you have spoken and things that you have said – and we are encouraged today because we have hope in you – you keep every word that you say – and you stand by everything that you have declared over us – that you have called us favorite and that you have called is chosen – that you called us forgiven - that you’ve called us a royal priesthood a holy nation – that you meant that and you stand by that – so we focus in this – and we hone in on what you say today – Lord posture ourselves.”

Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- “Opening prayer by Pastor Furtick: Welcome everybody from all over the world – we come today to praise Jesus – His promises never fail and He never changes – thank you for the blessings of God and thank you for allowing us to see another day – dear Lord we thank you for another opportunity to bow before you – to place all our fears and anxieties and sadness into your hands – Lord it’s been a heavy week and it’s been a heavy year – and it seems like things keep getting darker – and we keep losing the light that we guide by – and sometimes we even lose our hope – and we don’t want to admit that but we do – for today we ask that you shine the light as to who you are – and help us understand all those things that we do not understand. Bless all those that encounter you today – speak to us so that we hear you – oh great god – you meet every need – keeper of every secret – you see our tears – uphold your people Today – you are a keeper and a sustainer and a friend. In Jesus Name. Amen.”

Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- **“Pastor Furtick: when our consciousness is pierced, this gives us a window – my issue is that we have reduced Jesus and Christianity on the only the comfortable things - and shocking events like this put us in a state of despair – and despair is just as deadly as denial. And we have to be careful as to live in denial and accept and tolerate it because we lack the tools to fix it at a regional or global level – and give up on the possibility to change it – and we have replaced the art of conversation with clicks and short comments – and so we don't talk and therefore we don't empathize – and we don't take the time to understand people that come from different perspectives – and we just surround ourselves with people that merely confirm our biases – and we never challenge ourselves to seek something beyond our own perspective – keeping us in states of spiritual immaturity – or even regressive states – because we've never stressed ourselves to better understand other people's experiences.”**

Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- **“Pastor Furtick: Guilt is not a strategy – perhaps we don’t know the difference between guilt and repentance – making someone feel bad doesn’t change anything – repentance means to change direction in the Old Testament and repentance means to change your mind in the New Testament. We change direction and we do things differently – and we need to do things differently now – and the only way to break the cycle is to repent – sitting here singing “bridge over troubled waters” is not going to solve anything – this is nothing more than an anesthetic – however repentance is real change – where we ask ourselves how we can change our minds so that we see things the way God sees things – allowing my heart to see beyond the corners of my own darkness – where I no longer cosign intolerance by the nature of my silence – this is repentance. Repentance is moving differently, thinking differently, getting up and walking in a different direction – and refusing to assume a posture of indifference.”**

Insight from Pastor Tony G.

Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- “Pastor John Gray: I want this conversation to be a tipping point for the church – to foster true reconciliation – as it states in John 17, we need to have a presence of God in our conversation – and in our minds - and our hearts, otherwise empathy and activism will not matter. I want this to be the start of dialogue that we need to have with each other – and then we need to have real world application in real time – where we call out regional and national systemic injustice – and everybody mobilize and move in that same direction. Also see <https://johngrayministries.com/partner-1>. There are many people that don't know what is going on – It is one thing to be angry and prejudicial – another thing to be apathetic because you don't know – and let's have these conversations.

Sermon notes from “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain” by Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick.

- “Pastor Furtick: Thank you today for your wisdom and your perspective – I have never had a friend more brilliant than you – not so brilliant that you forget how to make us feel – I think that we become so numb that we do not feel anything anymore – please pray for those of us to feel overwhelmed – those of us that feel that we can’t do anything therefore we won’t do anything – and also please pray for the people that are blind to this and allow God to open our eyes.”

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

The Coronavirus Isn't God's Will

The Lord calls us to join with him to fight suffering and to choose life over death.

By Irving Greenberg

May 28, 2020 6:59 pm ET

"Facing death concentrates the mind religiously. Google searches for "prayer" spiked in March as Covid-19 spread, and again in April as the extent of the loss became clear. Feeling helpless, many people turn to a higher power. Others wrestle with how God could allow innocents to suffer. Some religious leaders speak of accepting that suffering is inexplicable and death inescapable. All we can do, they say, is respond with care and love for our fellows.

These responses build on the inherited trope that religion is the consolation of those who can't help themselves. But we all need a guide right now, and religion should show us how to act and use power for good.

By this standard, some widely broadcast religious responses are spiritually immature. One is that the pandemic is a divine punishment—for what, each group picks its own *bête noire*. The idea is echoed by New Age theologians who claim that Gaia, the embodiment of nature, is lashing back at humans for our abuse of the environment, foreshadowing greater catastrophes to be inflicted by climate change.

These claims draw from unreconstructed biblical themes of natural catastrophes punishing sin, such as the flood in the Book of Genesis. Those who invoke such concepts have failed to grasp one of rabbinic Judaism's most important modifications of the biblical message.

God has self-limited, says the Talmud, giving humans greater freedom and responsibility. The biblical age of visible miracles defeating evil has ended. The Lord asks the faithful to serve not to beget miracles, but out of love and shared fate. God shares our pain and asks us to take action to end the suffering.

The world runs on natural processes that don't treat evil differently from good. A stolen seed planted in soil flowers like any other seed. Adulterous intercourse can create a child. This doesn't mean we're not living in God's world; the Creator's presence and love are evidenced precisely in the miraculous functioning of this natural order, with its exquisite interacting mechanisms that sustain life. Still, creation is unfinished and full of flaws, natural and human-generated. God calls on humanity to join in covenant to repair the flaws.

Religious authorities should lead in proclaiming that coronavirus isn't willed or inflicted by God. The virus is a natural phenomenon that bats live with comfortably. It was unleashed on humanity by irresponsible human behavior, which likely included killing endangered wildlife and serving it to eat, under unsanitary conditions.

The focus on divine punishment distracts in this case from human responsibility to work in partnership with God. This includes taking action religiously to prevent transmission of the disease. Hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing are to be done strictly and repetitively, for they are the ritual actions that now link us to God and respond to divine instruction: "I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God's will isn't that we resign ourselves, but that we work with him to fight Covid-19 and develop cures and vaccines.

Another misapplication of biblical teachings is to act as if faith shields believers from disease. Early in Brazil's trial with the virus, President Jair Bolsonaro and some evangelical leaders mixed with crowds, insisting that God would protect them. "God is Brazilian," Mr. Bolsonaro told supporters. "The cure is right there."

Around the world, many fundamentalist Jews, Christians and Muslims have resisted giving up group religious experiences, defying medical instructions. Such behavior reflects magical thinking. The claim of magic is that certain actions and words compel God to override natural processes for the benefit of practitioners. The Bible considers magic abhorrent. It is at once a denial of God's freedom and of his creation—a dependable, nonmanipulatable natural order."

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“Theological misrepresentations have also led many devout people to distance themselves from science, because it challenges their conceptions. This estrangement makes them more vulnerable to natural evils, alienated from contemporary culture, and hesitant to enjoy even its positive features. Conversely, the absence of old-fashioned miracles leads many others to conclude there is no God and no covenant to join. Distancing themselves from religion, they're left with less-anchored values and a weaker bond with past generations.

It is time for everyone to understand that God operates within the laws of nature, which are themselves miraculous. Humans encounter God most deeply when they act as divine agents in sustaining life, protecting humans who are made in God's image. God chooses to depend on humans to repair the world and end the suffering. We are called to work in partnership with the Lord to overcome the coronavirus and move beyond it to a renewal of life.

Rabbi Greenberg is president of the J.J. Greenberg Institute for the Advancement of Jewish Life.”