



Affected by Injustice

Sometime before my wife and I started dating, we had our first argument. We'd attended an open mic event together at our Christian university, where students of color had shared their stories of pain and oppression. I left feeling annoyed.

"What good are events like this?" I complained. "All they do is stir up anger and alienate people like me who actually want to address racism." I proceeded to lay out my analysis of racism, along with foolproof solutions.

She surprised me by insisting there was value in hearing people's stories. That as a Christian community, we are to mourn with those who mourn, not to pontificate about things (or people) we don't understand. She showed me two things that night: my male privilege and my white privilege.

I wasn't accustomed to women standing up to me and never wearing down. Male privilege had taught me that women would eventually come around to my view, or at least give in to stop arguing. When she didn't, I hardly knew what to do, but I learned from her. And I admired her for it.

And I wasn't accustomed to being confronted about my resistance to hearing the pain of my non-white brothers and sisters. I was used to being affirmed by like-minded friends. She forced me to see that I'd bought the lie that white people like myself saw the big picture. She exposed my belief that I had the solutions for everyone, while those students of color were only concerned with themselves.

I learned that as a white male, I had the privilege of being unaffected by others' pain, experiences, or perspectives. Meanwhile, my cultural norms, expectations, and beliefs affected them daily. My privilege allowed me to see my views as objective, while others' were subjective. My understanding of faith had taught me that it was better to be unaffected, to protect my "objectivity" from experience or emotion that might color my understanding of the Bible. I believed I saw the big picture. I didn't have subjective opinions, I had objective knowledge.

The truth is I knew nothing, and time and time again, I'm reminded that I still know next to nothing. The more I learn, the more I find I have yet to learn.

This truth haunts me. What do I know of biblical gender equality? I am fortunate that my work educates me and allows me to soak in the pain, joy, and wisdom of Christian women and men. They've taught me that far from being unaffected, Christians should work to be *affectable*—to be influenced and changed and challenged by people unlike ourselves. To recognize our biases and be transformed by those around us. We are to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice.

I have a lot to learn. We all do. And in a way, this is a terribly selfish issue of *Mutuality*. It's the issue I wish I'd had years ago when I was just wading into conversations of faith, gender, race, and justice. And it's the issue I need now as I dig deeper.

Most of us are not trained in theology, sociology, psychology, or the many other fields that intersect in our movement for biblical gender equality, but that doesn't excuse us from taking part in the work. It can, however, make it more challenging.

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I've found that many of my own conversations are crippled by differing experiences, definitions, and understandings of key concepts. I find myself wishing I had a better handle on not just the theology, but the sociology of oppression and justice. I wish I could better explain concepts or define terms, or had something I could hand to my friends to aid my conversations. This issue is meant to help, if even a little.

This issue gives glimpses into several facets of biblical gender justice, with an emphasis on sociology and social justice. I am indebted to my colleague, Rachel Asproth, who has a background in justice studies and did much of the heavy lifting for this issue. Among her contributions is our lead article, an introduction to some often-misunderstood key terms and concepts. Other articles explore how race and gender intersect in the experiences of African American and Native American women, the psychology behind our expectations of male and female behavior, and the need for models of marriage based on mutuality rather than gender-based hierarchy or "roles."

As I read and learned from these articles, I gained a greater appreciation for Jesus, the one who never dismissed another person's experience, but affirmed their humanity and who loves us all deeply. May we all be so affectable.

In Christ,
Tim Krueger