

# 7 cultural terms every Christian should understand

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Because of globalization and the internet, as well as the marching zeitgeist of postmodernism, words and their definitions have become more and more slippery. To help, we've compiled a list of crucial ideas that the Denison Forum frequently comments on, along with brief definitions (though their connotation may change in mere years), and biblical responses.

## What is postmodern relativism?

Postmodernism as a worldview rejects the hyper-rationalist perspective that came before it: modernism. Relativism, which tends to follow from postmodernism, holds that "a claim is true relative to the beliefs or valuations of an individual or group that accepts it."

The transgender claim, "I am a woman in a man's body," makes sense to our postmodern culture because the claim is "true" relative to the individual, regardless of its objective, factual standing. One example of this idea's relevance is in President Biden's push for requiring hospitals to provide sex-change procedures.

*In contrast, the Bible says that "the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8).*

## What does "woke" mean?

"Wokeness" currently refers to an overarching awareness of perceived social injustice and is often interchangeable with "political correctness." Many people, including those who lean left and center, now see "wokeness" as a superficial term.

This most often manifests in large companies being "woke." The new LGBTQ-affirming LEGO set presents one example. Companies changing their logos to rainbow colors during pride month is another.

*The Apostle Paul says to avoid being "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), calling us instead to "speak the truth in love" (v. 15).*

## What is critical race theory?

Critical race theory holds that the oppression of people of color continues to be prevalent in modern American society, especially at an implicit level, which leads to social and economic inequality. Consequently, this can only be combated by fundamentally changing society.

If held as a worldview, CRT aligns with postmodernism. As a note, Christians should thoughtfully and sparingly use this term, especially when referring to another Christian. We should be careful not to slander brothers and sisters in Christ who advocate for justice and social change with the phrase “critical race theory.”

Censorship provides one example of numerous conversations around the issue; another is how to redress racism in the discriminatory housing practice of redlining.

*The Bible says that the Father “judges impartially” (1 Peter 1:17), that we must “love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22), that all humans are made in God’s image (James 3:9), and that God, not man, defines justice (Isaiah 30:18).*

### **What is the Equality Act?**

The Equality Act amends the Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity, forbidding the appeal to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. This means that many faith-based organizations could not deny employment based on an applicant’s sexuality and that transgender surgeries would be required of faith-based hospitals, in addition to other potential restrictions of religious freedom.

*The Bible says we should pray for governing authorities so that they would allow us to live a godly and dignified life, where Christians freely live based on biblical convictions (1 Timothy 2:2).*

### **What is cultural appropriation?**

According to the website Verywell Mind, cultural appropriation occurs when “a dominant cultural group makes use of elements of a non-dominant group in a way that the non-dominant group views as exploitative.” Every definition of cultural appropriation includes a “relative” aspect to it. Because of this, it remains controversial and often self-contradictory. For instance, ethnic Hawaiians called surfing cultural appropriation since it was “stolen” from Native Hawaiian culture.

*The Bible says we should not be tossed to and fro by the world (Ephesians 4:14). We should do nothing from rivalry or conceit (Philippians 2:3), have sympathy (1 Peter 3:8), and act honorably (Hebrews 13:18). In contrast to every perceived appropriation, we should be concerned with combatting genuine exploitation and injustice (Isaiah 61:8).*

### **What is political correctness?**

This phrase is well known and commonly used. It refers to a “prescribed” way to speak and act, and any deviation from the generally progressive “correct” view can lead to being “canceled” if not followed. It can also apply in a positive sense what one is “supposed” to

say. What is or is not politically correct frequently changes, but generally it is “intended to give the least amount of offense.”

*We should not use “I’m not politically correct” to excuse sinful speech (Ephesians 4:29). Often, Jesus said the offensive thing in communicating his message of love, and the gospel itself is offensive (John 6:66–67). However, offensive language in man’s anger does not please God (James 1:20). The Bible says to love our neighbor (the people around us) as ourselves (Mark 12:31).*

## **What is cancel culture?**

Cancel culture refers to the culture created by people adhering to political correctness, a byproduct that involves swiftly removing people from places of influence or boycotting businesses in response to their breaking politically correct rules. Christians have been targeted by cancel culture before.

*While the Bible encourages holding evil accountable, ostracizing people because of political correctness often originates in hasty and slanderous accusations. The Bible says to “Let all bitterness . . . and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31).*

## **Who defines you?**

At the end of it all, Christians should stake our place with Jesus, facing persecution, knowing that we have an enduring hope (Romans 5:3–4).

Yet, as we stake this flag, does human anger against those we disagree with make any sense? Should we retaliate with hate and violence? No, certainly not.

Should we place our final hope in politics? Should we insulate ourselves entirely from the world, hiding under a bushel, or should we shine our light in the darkness (Matthew 5:15)?

At the end of the matter, we have the unshakable hope that Jesus will return with glory and set things right.

Let Jesus, not the world, define your life.