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## What Does “Woke” Mean? And Why Does It Matter?

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What Does “Woke” Mean? And Why Does It Matter? Dr. Paul Chappell Fri, 03/01/2024 - 16:49 Woke is an odd word—and not just because it is a past tense verb that is now commonly used as an adjective. It's odd because it has vague connotations without clear definitions. This ambiguity allows those who appreciate the word's implications to write off those who criticize its implications as “just not understanding its meaning.”? In conversations like this, clarity is always our friend. That's why I was thankful when someone from our Sheriff's Department recently asked me what I meant in using the word woke. This individual is not a believer, and I was happy to answer his question from a Christian perspective.? Below is a lightly-edited copy of the letter that I wrote him. I thought it may be helpful to readers of this blog who have similar conversations with law enforcement or others who are seeking clarity on our concerns over the radical changes in our society that are being furthered under the banner of wokism.? Thanks for asking about the definition of “woke.” I wasn't sure if the question was asked personally or on behalf of the Sheriff, but I am happy to share a few thoughts.? Many of us had never heard the term woke until a few years ago. Prior to that time, it was used simply to describe people who felt awakened to the injustices of racism. In recent years, however, it seems the word has been hijacked by political activists who are often far-left or socialistic in their views and have a larger agenda in mind than standing against racism.? Although I cannot in this short space define the whole woke philosophy as is commonly applied today, I can point out a few frequently used terms and highlight some of their implications.? Social Justice: This is a broad term that often defeats the principles of “equal justice under the law.” Social justice focuses on enforcing equal outcomes for everyone. In this way, it leans into socialism. And amazingly, “social justice” doesn't bring justice to the average citizen, as it focuses on groups rather than on individuals' misconduct or good accomplishments. The end result, as philosopher Friedrich Hayek observed, is that people must be treated unequally in order to create equal outcomes: “And that's what social justice amounts to. It's a demand that the state should treat people differently in order to place them in the same position. . . .To make people equal a goal of governmental policy would force government to treat people very unequally indeed.”? Critical Race Theory (CRT): Under the guise of exposing racism, CRT actually suggests a reverse racism by insisting that the color of one's skin determines whether or not he or she is racist. As one author explained, “Even if a white person has never had a genuinely racist thought...he is still a racist, white supremacist, because he is white and belongs to the majority” (Ronnie W. Rogers, “Understanding the Terms...” blog post). This kind of insistence on seeing everything through the lens of race brings division to communities.LGBTQ Promotion: For many years, the LGBTQ movement has sought to align with the woke activists to gain influence, and that strategy is working. Woke activists aggressively promote sexual behavior and lifestyles through celebrations and legislation with new laws and vocabulary introduced regularly (cisgender, transgender, cultural appropriation, intersectionality, conscious capitalism, etc.). They have enshrined these numerous terms which are now being forced upon the public. The woke agenda also belittles the nuclear, or biblical, family model. Yet strong families are a strength in any society. While claiming to be marginalized, the woke and LGBTQ lobbies in this state are well-represented in government positions and dominant in political circles. Most concerning, they are now targeting children and prohibiting parents and teachers from speaking up. For instance, CA Bill AB 957 which was put before the California legislature and passed both houses before being vetoed by the governor, said a non-consenting parent of an under-aged child would lose custody if that parent refused a mastectomy or castration (sex re-assignment surgery) for his or her child. Only the “gender affirming” parent is deemed fit to parent a child who may actually be suffering from dysphoria. Additionally, teachers have been fired from their jobs for refusing to go along with these new ideals. (One local example is Jessica Tapias, a teacher in Riverside County, who was fired just this year for refusing to hide gender transitions from parents of young children.)Economic Equity: This aims to reduce the income gap between the poor and middle class—not by increasing economic opportunity for minority groups, but by taking from the middle class by way of taxes and/or not prosecuting theft. Wealth redistribution is a common theme in woke literature.Again, this is a very high-end summary, and more could be said. But the larger point is that, while every American should stand against racism, wokism actually focuses on emphasizing differences between race and seems to have an end agenda of the disruption of society.? In particular, it leads to concerning philosophies as it relates to law enforcement. The interpretation of social justice by woke activists has led to practices such as zero-bail policies, refusing to prosecute crime, and large-scale defunding of and/or disrespect for law enforcement.? These policies, which are supported by left-leaning financiers such as George Soros and others, have been adopted by the Los Angeles District Attorney. The training of these policies has been disseminated throughout Southern Californian governmental agencies. What has been the result?? Increase in crimeIgniting class and race warfareDiscouragement and apathy among law enforcement, including many LA County deputiesFor instance, another bill recently passed the California legislature (AB 852) that requires judges to base their sentencing on race, rather than on crime. The essence of the bill is that someone who is a minority should not be prosecuted to the same extent as someone who is Caucasian because of past injustices. This is the actual opposite of Martin Luther King Jr.'s aspiration that people “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”The woke philosophy applied to law enforcement has essentially emboldened the criminal element of communities. No doubt, you have seen this with grab-and-go robberies of high-end stores and hit and run accidents. In places where the criminal element of a community is emboldened, the rank-and-file deputies as well as law enforcement in general have become discouraged. I know the citizens of the Antelope Valley as well as anyone, and I can tell you they are discouraged by the emboldened attitude of those who run red lights, commit robbery, and worse.? As a pastor of thirty-seven years here in Los Angeles County, I care about the safety of our citizens and the wellbeing of our law enforcement community. I am concerned to see crime on the rise and criminals emboldened. I'm saddened, too, to see these issues tied to race. I've preached here in our community for nearly four decades against racism, and I know that all people are made in the image of God.? Theologically and biblically, I believe that all humans fall short of God's perfection (Romans 3:23). None of us are better than others. We have all broken God's law, and we all need redemption through the finished work of Christ for us (Romans 6:23). Whoever calls to God, acknowledges his or her sin, and receives Christ as Savior may have forgiveness and peace with God. I realize this last point is another, although related, topic. But I am happy to discuss it with you at some point in time.? I realize there is political pressure because many woke activists are political donors. Yet, I believe the Sheriff's Department must not be guided by the woke agenda, but by the law. Without law and order, nothing else works in society. Certainly, our new Captain in Lancaster or anyone in the department should be advanced based on integrity, respect, leadership, and a history of good policing. They should not be affirmed because of adherence to a particular dogma such as “wokism.”Thank you for your service to our community. Please know that I am here to help you and our law enforcement community in any way that I can.? Your Friend,Paul Chappell? P. S. I'm happy to provide additional resources on wokism and woke interpretations of social justice if these would be a help to you. A few that may be a help are Fault Lines by Voddie Baucham Jr. and Woke, Inc. by Vivek Ramaswamy. I have written a minibook on this topic titled Which Justice? which I would be glad to send you. Category

