

CHRISTIANITY TODAY
& WHEATON COLLEGE
PRESENT

BLACK + EVANGELICAL

A DOCUMENTARY
AT THE CROSSROADS
OF FAITH & BELONGING

STUDY GUIDE

Welcome



Black + Evangelical is a feature-length documentary that profiles the history, struggles, and contributions of African American Evangelicals.

Taking us to the crossroads of faith and racial identity, *Black + Evangelical* is filled with candid interviews and eye-opening portraits of the resilient men and women who find themselves straddling the often clashing worlds of Black and white Evangelicalism in America.

Black + Evangelical challenges us to hear anew the voices of these men and women whose unique theological and social journeys have much to say about challenges faced by today's church.

Copyright and Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Welcome	2
Chapter 1 - Settle + Migrate	7
Chapter 2 - Home + Orphan	11
Chapter 3 - Negro + Black	14
Chapter 4 - Black + White	19
Chapter 5 - Now + Not Yet	25
Chapter 6 - Embrace + Release	31
Chapter 7 - Celebration + Anticipation	38
Additional Resources	43

What have you learned about Blackness in theology? In culture?

Write your answer here...

How would you define Evangelicalism? Black Evangelicalism?

Write your answer here...

Are Black and Evangelical conflicting identities?

Write your answer here...

Is Evangelical a political or theological marker? (within the context it is you)

Write your answer here...

What makes you more or less likely to use the label Evangelical?

Write your answer here...

What's your story? How have you experienced the crossroads of race and faith?

Write your answer here...

CHAPTER ONE

SETTLE + MIGRATE

Notes

Give a brief history of Westlawn Gospel Church and what was happening as Westlawn Gospel Church was founded.

Write your answer here...

How does where you live (or where you come from) inform your faith experience?

Write your answer here...

How well do you know the background of your neighborhood (and the neighborhood of your church?)

Write your answer here...

Who are the Nottage brothers? Why are they important?

Write your answer here...

What was BM Nottage's message?

Write your answer here...

How did the unique experiences and expressions of the historic Black Church shape Black Evangelicalism?

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER TWO

HOME + ORPHAN

Notes

How did you enter the world of Evangelicalism? What drew you there?

Write your answer here...

What institutions and organizations were entry points into Evangelicalism for those in the film?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What makes you feel “at home” in a church or Christian institution?

Write your answer here...

**What does Dr. Soong-Chan Rah say about the emergence of US Evangelicalism?
What was tied to this emergence?**

Write your answer here...

**What is a common experience of Black Evangelicals in primarily white
Evangelical spaces?**

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER THREE

NEGRO + BLACK

Notes

How does our faith relate to matters of systemic prejudice and social inequality?

Write your answer here...

**What was the purpose of the National Negro Evangelical Association (NNEA)?
When was it formed?**

What were some factors that led to its creation?

Write your answer here...

The NNEA was comprised of Black Evangelicals with different approaches to questions of faith and justice; what can we learn from their unity amid their clear differences in ministry strategy?

What was the white Evangelical's response to the creation of the NNEA? What assumption was connected to this response?

Write your answer here...

Who was Howard Jones?

Write your answer here...

After Howard Jones joined Billy Graham's evangelistic association, he experienced tension from both the white and Black communities. Describe the various reactions to Jones' ministry.

Write your answer here...

White America had slept through a revolution, especially white Evangelical Christians.
Dr. Bill Pannell

What did the shift from the term “Negro” to the term “Black” represent?

Write your answer here...

Dr. Jemar Tisby notes the transition from advocating for racial desegregation in the 1950s-1960s to promoting autonomy and assertiveness during the Black power movement in the 1970s. This shift also affected Black Evangelicals. How did this evolving focus, from seeking integration to emphasizing Black empowerment, likely influence the priorities and challenges of Black Evangelicals during that period?

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER FOUR

BLACK + WHITE

Notes

Who was Tom Skinner?

Write your answer here...

What were some reasons people related to Tom Skinner's story?

Write your answer here...

What was the dissonance Dr. Jemar Tisby mentions about Urbana's mission focus?

Write your answer here...

What was the experience of Black Evangelicals at the Urbana '67 Conference?

Write your answer here...

What did the Black students at the Urbana '67 Conference decide to do?

Write your answer here...

What happened at the Urbana '70 Conference?

Write your answer here...

In what ways did the larger Evangelical movement positively and negatively engage Black Evangelicals?

Write your answer here...

What were some main points in Tom Skinner's message?

1.

2.

3.

What were some examples of white Evangelicals' compromise and complicity in US racism? Are there examples of complicity today?

Write your answer here...

Tom Skinner asserts that any message of the gospel must address the issues that bind people. What were some of the issues mentioned?

Write your answer here...

What was InterVarsity's response to Tom Skinner's message?

Write your answer here...

Consider the Urbana 1970 gathering and Tom Skinner's sermon. Dr. Tisby states that Skinner contextualized the gospel for Black people by starting with the history of 1619, highlighting the complicity of white Evangelicals in racism. What does this historical approach reveal about the relationship between faith and history, and why was it so critical for Skinner to address this in his message?

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER FIVE

NOW + NOT YET

Notes

Both white and Black Evangelicals hold a high view of Scripture. Why might there be a disconnect between different communities reading the same Scripture?

Write your answer here...

Who was Dr. Melvin Banks? What did he do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is problematic with having white-centered Bible material?

Write your answer here...

What was the dynamic between Dr. Banks, UMI, and Scripture Press?

Write your answer here...

Dr. Banks desired a whole gospel message. What was that message? What did Dr. Melvin Banks feel was missing in the missionary message often preached?

Write your answer here...

Loving our neighbor as ourselves includes working for justice. No justice, we rob the gospel of its power. Evangelicals are robbing the gospel of power because they're leaving out justice.
Dr. Melvin Banks

Who defines where justice begins and ends? How did differing definitions of justice impact Tom Skinner's relationship with white Evangelical institutions?

Write your answer here...

What does Dr. Soong-Chan Rah allude to being the motivation/priority to the white institutions' break with Tom Skinner?

Write your answer here...

How does context affect ones attitude towards racism? What examples are given in the film?

Write your answer here...

Does neighborly love require us to know our neighbor? Why or why not?

Write your answer here...

How did Dr. Bill Pannell influence Tom Skinner?

Write your answer here...

What is the dual commitment Dr. Ron Potter mentions from Dr. Bill Pannell's book?

Write your answer here...

What does Bill Pannell's book, *My Friend, The Enemy*, say about the experience of Black people in primarily white spaces? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

Write your answer here...

Bill Pannell's book, *My Friend, The Enemy*, suggests that Black Evangelicals in white institutions often find their white colleagues to be both "friends and enemies." According to Dr. Tisby, white Evangelicals create this dynamic because they adhere to hyper individualism. Using the various examples from the film (such as the Urbana conference, Skinner's sermon, and the Promise Keepers movement), what specific behaviors or beliefs might cause this paradoxical dynamic, and how might it affect a Black person navigating these spaces today?

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER SIX

EMBRACE + RELEASE

Notes

In 1979 the Moral Majority was founded. Conservative political commitment became part of the Evangelical identity. Why would this be good or bad?

Write your answer here...

Why was Dr. Pannell unenthused about the NAE and NBEA's Racial Reconciliation Convocation in 1995?

Write your answer here...

We affirm that racism is a severe and fervent sin. It is an idolatry which makes God in the image of the controlling group and uses God to justify willful or unintended evil against minority interests.

Prayer at NBEA & NEA Convocation on Racial Reconciliation, 1995

What is your response to the prayer above? Why?

Write your answer here...

**Racial Reconciliation was a priority at the 1996 Promise Keepers conference.
What were some things that were learned? What else was needed?**

Write your answer here...

Dr. Tisby suggests that many white Evangelicals in the 1990s, particularly within movements like Promise Keepers, lacked the imagination to address systemic racism, opting instead for interpersonal gestures like hugging and crying together. Based on these insights, what is the key difference between this Evangelical approach to racial reconciliation and the approach taken by many Black Christians during the struggle for civil rights?

Write your answer here...

According to Dr. Ruth Bentley, white Evangelicals were eager to get to the solutions without fully understanding the questions. What is your response to this statement?

Write your answer here...

What does a commitment to the justice of God look like? Do you know anyone who lives out this commitment well? What makes them a good example?

Write your answer here...

What is colorblindness? What is the lived experience of this approach for the people in the film?

Write your answer here...

What is color consciousness?

Write your answer here...

Dr. Tisby states, "For Black people, racism is existential. We can't not talk about it." In light of this, how might the idea of "color-blindness" — which Tisby defines as a refusal to see Black and Brown people in the fullness of their humanity — create a fundamental conflict for Black Evangelicals and other Christians of color in predominantly white church institutions. What does he propose as an alternative?

Write your answer here...



CHAPTER SEVEN

CELEBRATION + ANTICIPATION

Notes

What other stories about Black Evangelicals need to be told?

Write your answer here...

What stories need to be told about our global church family?

Write your answer here...

Quotes from *Black + Evangelical*

Jesus prayed that we be one just as He and the Father are one, and that hasn't happened and so that would be my desire.

Dr. Ruth Bentley

There's an obligation for those of us that sit in these seats, that run these centers, that are in these historically predominantly white institutions , that we have an obligation to make sure that the space is not toxic, that it's not just tolerating, but that there is room for Black thriving.

Dr. Dwight Radcliff

Thriving is going to be taking on the ministry of reconciliation. I have a colleague who says they believe that the hope of the church is the Black church and that if we have to be divided then I want to be in the ministry of being that hope.

Dr. Joy Moore

Evangelical theology is good, we're just not embodying it well. And hopefully we can redeem the movement from the inside.

Rev. Brandon Washington, Th.D.

The word "Evangelical " is not a certain partisan politics. The heart of the word "Evangelical" is evangel - the good news.

Dr. Soong-Chan Rah

So we ask the question, "What is this 'whole gospel'? What does that mean?" It has to point to our responsibility to one another communally.

Dr. Vanessa Quainoo

It's fear that causes us to gravitate back to what we used to have or what used to be and we can't go back. We've gotta keep dealing with the times in which God has allowed us to be alive in the world. And to me that's where we draw on Jesus and the values of the kingdom. We're here now. We're God's light now. We're God's representative in the world now. And we have the responsibility of showing God's love now.

Dr. Stan Long

Respond to one or two of the quotes above.

1.

2.

Where do you see the spirit of hope and activism?

Write your answer here...

What is your story? What would you like people to know?

Write your answer here...

What might the Lord be calling you to?

Write your answer here...

Resources

Books From Those Featured In The Documentary

Black and Free by Tom Skinner

A Burning House: Redeeming American Evangelicalism by Examining Its History, Mission and Message by Brandon Washington

The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism by Jemar Tisby

The Coming Race Wars: A Cry for Justice, from Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter by William Pannell

Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African American Experience by Carl Ellis and Amisho Baraka

The Gospel in Black and White: Theological Resources for Racial Reconciliation by Dennis Okholm (ed.)

How Black Is The Gospel?: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today's Revolution by Tom Skinner

My Friend, The Enemy by William Pannell

Reckoning with Race and Performing the Good News: In Search of a Better Evangelical Theology by Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

Reconciliation Blues: A Black Evangelical's Inside View of White Christianity by Edward Gilbreath

Resources

Additional Reading

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation by Latasha Morrison

The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best by Irwyn Ince

Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey by Sarah Shin

Color-Courageous Discipleship: Follow Jesus, Dismantle Racism, and Build Beloved Community by Michelle Sanchez

Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith

Know Own Change: Journeying Toward God's Heart for Reconciliation by Josh Clemons and Hazen Stevens

Living Undivided: Loving Courageously for Racial Healing and Justice by Chuck Mingo and Troy Jackson

More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice

Resources

Additional Reading continued

One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love by John M. Perkins

Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice by Brenda Salter McNeil

What Color Is Your God?: Black Consciousness & the Christian Faith by Columbus Salley and Ronald Behm