

JUSTICE – A STUDY

What Is Justice?

Start by asking yourself what you think 'Justice' means.....

Chambers Dictionary: quality of being just; integrity; impartiality; rightness; the awarding of what is due

Quotes

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience usually recognize also the voice of justice.

Eleanor Roosevelt: When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?

Martin Luther King, Jr.: True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice. Justice denied anywhere diminishes justice everywhere.

Harrison Ford: Peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice.

Benjamin Disraeli: Sir, I say that justice is truth in action.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: A man is a little thing while he works by and for himself; but when he gives voice to the rules of love and justice, he is godlike.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Man is unjust, but God is just; and finally justice triumphs.

God Quotes

Proverbs 8:20 I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,

Psalms 37:28 For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Amos 5:24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Zechariah 7:9 “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.

Exodus 23:6 “Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits.

Psalms 72:2 He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.

Psalms 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

Psalms 97:2 Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Proverbs 28:5 Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Psalms 37:30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

Psalms 103:6 The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

Deuteronomy 24:17 Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

Psalms 33:5 The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

Deuteronomy 27:19 “Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

Exodus 23:2 Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd,

Matthew 12:18 "Here is my servant (Jesus) whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

Imagine Injustice In Your Family

Imagine a family where one child was constantly being bullied and set up for punishment for things the others had done. How would the loving father of that family feel if his kids told him how great a dad he was and how great their family was, yet they continued the bullying? That's how God feels about injustice in mankind. Jesus said in Matthew 24v45 "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." We are the family of God and God wants us to help each other where there is injustice. That can be helping those suffering injustice and stopping those committing it.

Defining Justice

Justice and only justice, you shall pursue...--Deuteronomy 16:20 NRSV

One word for justice in Hebrew is *zedakah*. The concept of justice in Judaism is different from Greek-Western views of this concept. The emphasis is not on "retribution" (punishment) or "distribution" (fair shares for all). It is more what human living should be like. That is why the word *zedakah* is not only translated into English as justice but also as righteousness, which means living a just life personally.

Also "justice" (*zedakah*) is consistently paired with "mercy" or "grace" (*hesed*) in the Hebrew scriptures. Jesus put them together in the Beatitudes:

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.--Matthew 5:6-7 NRSV*

Adapted from Community Of Christ 'Peace and Justice'

Tzedek: Justice and Compassion

What does it mean? *Tzedek / Tzedakah* is almost impossible to translate, because of its many shadings of meaning: justice, charity, righteousness, integrity, equity, fairness and innocence. It certainly means more than strictly legal justice, for which the Bible uses words like *mishpat* and *din*. One example illustrates the point:

If a man is poor, you may not go to sleep holding his security. Return it to him at sun-down, so that he will be able to sleep in his garment and bless you. To you it will be reckoned as *Tzedakah* before the Lord your God. (Deut. 24: 12-13)
Tzedakah cannot mean legal justice in this verse. It speaks of a situation in which a poor person has only a single cloak or covering, which he has handed over to the lender as security against a loan. The lender has a legal right to keep the cloak until the loan has been repaid. However, acting on the basis of this right is simply *not the right thing to do*. It ignores the human situation of the poor person, who has nothing else with which to keep warm on a cold night. The point

becomes even clearer when we examine the parallel passage in Exodus 22, which states:

If you take your neighbour's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am *compassionate*. (Ex. 22: 25-26) The same situation which in Deuteronomy is described as *tzedakah*, in Exodus is termed compassion or grace (*chanun*). The late Aryeh Kaplan translated *tzedakah* in Deut. 24 as "charitable merit". It is best rendered as "the right and decent thing to do" or "justice tempered by compassion". In Judaism, *justice* – *tzedek as opposed to mishpat* – *must be tempered by compassion*.

'Justice' and 'Mercy' are not opposites in Hebrew but are bonded together in a single word, *tzedek* or *tzedakah*.

'May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb. The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.' (Deut. 32: 2-4)

Why then is justice so central to following God? Because it is impartial. Law as envisaged by the Bible makes no distinction between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, home born or stranger. Equality before the law is the translation into human terms of equality before God. Time and again the Bible insists that justice is not a human artefact: "Fear no one, for judgment belongs to God." Because it belongs to God, it must never be compromised – by fear, bribery, or favouritism. It is an inescapable duty, an inalienable right. Christianity is a religion of love: You shall love the Lord your God; you shall love your neighbour as yourself; you shall love the stranger.

But it is also a religion of justice, for without justice, love corrupts (who would not bend the rules, if he could, to favour those he loves?). It is also a religion of compassion, for without compassion law itself can generate inequity. **Justice plus compassion equals *tzedek*, the first precondition of a decent society.** Adapted from Covenant and Conversation, <http://www.chiefrabbi.org/listserv.asp>

Justice & Mercy

Abraham Lincoln: I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice.

Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

Justice and Righteousness

The classic Old Testament text quoted on the subject of justice is Amos 5:24: 'But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.' (NASB) Spoken by the prophet to a people who perceived themselves as religious and godly, this call to overflowing justice reveals the lie of their existence. The people (then and now) who claim to be within a covenant relationship with God must respond to his requirement "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with ... God" (Micah 6:8; cf. James 1:27).

What is "Biblical Justice"? Throughout the Old Testament justice is overwhelmingly related to the idea of relationship and the life of the community; thus, justice in biblical thought concerns "fidelity to the demands of relationship" - to God and neighbour.

The Justice of God in the Old Testament The nature and content of the justice of God informs the practice of Christian justice. The Hebrew terms *sedāqā* (righteousness) and *mispat* (justice) are consistently tied together in relationship to God's role as judge; their meanings at times are practically synonymous.

Righteousness might almost be called "the underlying soul of justice." Although justice involves legal issues, it does not compare to righteousness's "burning compassion for the oppressed." In reality, God's justice cannot be separated from God's love. While it is arguable that justice is central to the Old Testament, other intertwining concepts, such as God's love, mercy, compassion, grace, and truth, must interpret the Old Testament view of justice.

Old Testament ideas of justice and righteousness include God's wrath, judgment, and punishment (Isa. 10:18, 28:17-18). God's punishment is just in that it provides salvation and restoration and "can overcome even the power of death"

God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt in the Exodus served as the foundation of Israel's understanding of Yahweh's concern and purpose to deliver the suffering. The Scriptures reveal God to be the champion of the outsider, the sojourner, the orphan and the widow. Defending the poor and the marginalized was the focus of Israel's social justice (Jer. 22:15-16).

The Partiality of Biblical justice Is God's justice partial or impartial? The popular Western concept of impartial justice derives from the memorable statue of the blindfolded goddess of justice who reminds all that justice plays no favorites. Biblical justice alternatively is not impartial, since it consistently shows preference to the marginalized and oppressed. This partiality is grounded in the concept of covenant community, that finds persons to be part of one another as members of the community.

Western society's view of justice, based on the assumption that "individuals naturally live in separation from one another," results in the need for a justice that

protects people from harming each other. The biblical model conversely upholds the idea of mutual and active care for community members (and strangers) in a context in which social, family and covenant relations are the focus of life — affirming justice as “that which is regarded as of basic importance in social relationships.”

Who Deserves Justice? The tendency to question whether or not someone “deserves” to receive justice or even mercy (an attitude pervading much of our modern life inside and outside of church) cannot be defended from Scripture. Jesus nor the disciples asked potential recipients of attention about their work history, their dependence on addictive substances, their mental state or any other discriminating type of question. Jesus simply felt compassion for people’s needs.

We on the other hand seem to forget that our blessings and salvation and wholeness are the result of God’s grace and not our inherent goodness. Therefore, we are able to justify the small line item for benevolences in our church budgets because “so many of *those* people” do not deserve any of our bounty.

Jubilean Justice Jubilean justice, for example, as set forth in Deut. 15:1-11, purposed to maintain the distressed within the confines of community (cf. Lev. 25:35; Ps. 107:36). The jubilean code envisioned a radical change in social practice with the “scheduled cancellation of the debts of the poor.”[15] In antiquity when the poor, as their only recourse, sold themselves into slavery, they became entangled in a trap from which there was no escape. The remission of debts provided by this legislation revealed the purpose of God as compassionate and just protector of the helpless.

The Just Individual Psalms, Proverbs, and Job describe the just individual as one who preserves the wholeness of the community (job 4:3-4) and who helps the weak, the orphan, the widow (Prov. 29:7; Job 31:16-19). This just one defends the helpless and exercises appropriate care over his land and employees (Job 31:13). The wisdom literature reveals that “justice is a harmony which comes from a right relationship to the covenant Lord and to the neighbor to whom a person is related by covenant bond.”

Justice in Jesus’ “Upside-Down Kingdom” To ignore issues of justice and integrity exposes the church to accusations of aiding injustice. Genesis 2 clearly reveals that God created humankind to live together in community; being called the people of God requires even greater attention to injustice, especially that perpetuated by God’s people. Modern culture is particularly at odds with Christ’s “upside-down” kingdom and is often outright anti-God in its promotion of materialism, hierarchical structures, acceptance of violence, misuse of the environment, and blind disregard for those who do not possess the national dream.

Historically, when interpreting Jesus’ teachings and work, churches have emphasized the spiritual over the social/physical needs of persons. The numbers of converts that we proudly proclaim (but cannot always locate) reveal a proclivity for addressing spiritual needs to the neglect of the social. Jesus’ ministry focused

on the spiritual needs of people, but, as a close inspection of the New Testament reveals, He also dealt clearly with the needs of the whole person.

Jesus' self-proclaimed mission in Luke 4:18-21, where he quotes Isa. 61:1, indicates attention to the whole person. Unfortunately, many churches have interpreted the passage as relating only to the spiritual. The jubilean nature of the Isaiah passage must have been recognized by Jesus as having to do with justice—in every realm of life. Luke 4:18-21 “The spirit of the Lord is on me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him and he began by saying to them “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Recalling the themes of Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55, Jesus revealed his upside-down kingdom as a radical reversal of normal human values. The focus then of his coming was on the poor, the enslaved, the blind, and the downtrodden, a focus that embodied God's nature as defender of the weak. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament teaching concerning justice for the needy and helpless in his teaching (Luke 4:16) and in his attention to the physical as well as the spiritual needs of people.

If any doubt exists about how Jesus understood his mission, his reply to John the Baptist's poignant question from prison, “Are You the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?”, clarifies for us his thinking. Jesus sent John the answer that “the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:5).

Society today is based on the exercise of social power and social leverage that makes some strong and some weak, some worthy and some undeserving. We hold each other in hock by money and influence, by attitude and action, by property and by speech.... We practice such destructive leverage between suburb and inner-city, between developed economies and the Third World. The cycles of poverty, not only economic but also psychological, generate massive despair. The despair lasts until the vicious cycles are broken. Moses [and Amos and Isaiah and Jesus] propose that the breaking can happen by generous, intentional acts that forgo advantage for the sake of communal equity.... This is the [odd] community that, before the hour of worship is out, will pray for forgiveness, ‘as we forgive our debtors’

In both testaments, being in relationship with God means taking up the cause of the lowly and poor. With Jesus as our example we cannot separate faith from doing justice. “Justice is concrete. It combines non-exploitation of the poor and taking their cause.

Challenge We as individuals and as local churches have often ignored the “shadow people” outside our walls. They are the people we see right through, the ones whom we discount as unworthy of our focus. We pass them throughout our busy days—noticing only a blurry shadow in our peripheral vision—not worthy of

a concerned glance let alone an inspection. If however we are to embody Christ's actions and teachings as they reveal God to the world, then we must be more holistic in our approach to persons.

To seek to live out the demands of God's justice is risky and goes against the grain of normal behavior and cultural norms

Are we courageous disciples? Are we brave enough to be God's light and justice to those in the shadows? If we are to know God fully through his Son Jesus Christ, we must live justly. If the world is to know Jesus Christ through us, we must risk entering into the dangerous waters of God's justice and righteousness.

Adapted from Christian Ethics Today 'Dangerous Waters of Justice and Righteousness'

The Right To Survival

Quotes from the book 'If I Were Rain – Celebrating The Spirit Of India's Disadvantaged Urban Child':

Sumitra, 12 year old Indian street child: 'If I were rain, I would go to those who have no water. I would say to them "I am coming." Everyone on earth would come out and I would pour water into their utensils and fill them...'

'Every child has the right to life and to the needs that are most basic to existence. For children to survive they have the right to shelter and spaces of refuge, food and nutrition, water and sanitation, health and medical services, roads and infrastructure for access to facilities. Above all, to survive, children must have the love, protection and commitment of adults.'

Challenge Do you agree every child has the right to survive? Does this challenge you? If your answers are "yes" and "yes," it is unacceptable that people are denying them this right & you must take action.

It Is Our Responsibility

'It is estimated that there are 27 million slaves worldwide, with 1.2 million children being trafficked each year. Girls are trafficked to major UK cities from Eastern Europe and sold into prostitution. Payment for full sex in India can cost as little as 10p while in London it can now be bought for £15. It is estimated that up to a huge \$40 billion is spent globally each year in the people trafficking industry. And while many would think this modern day Goliath is too big to fall down, we need to believe that God is bigger than any giant. There are girls who have been raped up to 40 times a day and, surely, in God's name that should stop. Psalm 72 says that 'He will deliver the needy, the oppressed and those trapped in violence.' **The word 'he' becomes 'we,' because Christ is in us.** It's the church's job to fulfill the mandate of God. When Jesus first came he said the spirit of God was upon him, so that he could proclaim freedom to the prisoners. The church is missing that. We should be pioneers of justice and making sure that value is placed on humanity.' Adapted from Ben Cooley article 'Making A Stand To End Trafficking'

We Cannot Be A Bystander

Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC:

Thou shalt not be a victim.

Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.

Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.

Martion Luther King Junior: The Negro's great stumbling block in the drive toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice.

James 2v14-17: 'What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him "go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

Practical Action

- Live a justice lifestyle - in integrity and justice, asking God for his heart of compassion for those treated unjustly. Look to yourself & your own lifestyle to ensure you live justly & do not condone injustice.
- Live a justice lifestyle in your shopping - buying Fair Trade food & avoiding products of exploitation
- Live a justice lifestyle in your community - standing up against wrong when you see it in the street, in shops, schools, offices; thefts, bullying, cheating.
- Support justice organizations fighting injustice; charities & pressure groups like SPEAK, Amnesty International, Micah Challenge, Justice & Care...
- Become a rights activist & work for organizations or volunteer or demonstrate.

Catherine & William Booth – Social Justice In Action

Catherine Booth was born in Derbyshire in 1829. When she was a young girl the family moved to the East End of London. She was a committed Christian and by the age of twelve she had read the Bible eight times. She was particularly concerned for the weak and the powerless and on one occasion she became incensed with a policeman who had arrested and abused a drunken member of the 'lower orders'.

In 1852 Catherine met William Booth, the future founder of the Salvation Army. William believed passionately that Christians should be busy "loosing the chains of injustice, freeing the captive and oppressed, sharing food and home, clothing the naked, and carrying out family responsibilities."

Catherine shared William's commitment to social justice. In 1864 the couple set up the Christian Mission which later became known as the Salvation Army.

Catherine Booth took a leading role in these revival services and could often be seen preaching in the dockland parishes of the East End.

The Church of England were at first extremely hostile to the Salvation Army. Lord Shaftesbury, a leading Christian politician and factory reformer, described William Booth as the "Anti-Christ". One of the main complaints against William Booth was his "elevation of women to man's status". In the Salvation Army a woman officer enjoyed equal rights with a man. Although William Booth had initially rejected the idea of women preachers, he had now completely changed his mind and wrote that "the best men in my Army are the women."

Catherine established what became known as 'Food-for-the-Million' shops, where the poor could buy hot soup and a three-course dinner for 2 pence. On special occasions such as Christmas Day, Catherine Booth would cook over 300 dinners to be distributed to some of the poorest people living in London.

By 1882 a survey of London discovered that on one weeknight, there were almost 17,000 people worshipping with the Salvation Army, compared to 11,000 in ordinary churches. Even, Dr. William Thornton, the Archbishop of York, had to accept that the Salvation Army was reaching people that the Church of England had failed to have any impact on.

It was while working with the poor and needy that Catherine found out about what was known as "sweated labour". In the tenements of London, Catherine discovered exhausted, red-eyed women sewing and stitching for eleven hours a day. These cockney 'birds' were only being paid 4 pence a day, whereas men doing the same work in a factory were receiving over 20 pence. Catherine and William attempted to shame employers into paying better wages. They also struggled to improve the working conditions of these female slaves.

Catherine Booth was particularly concerned about the women who were employed by match factories. A match was typically a wooden stick or stiff paper stick coated at one end with a material often containing the element phosphorus, that will ignite from the heat of friction if rubbed against a suitable surface.

The match girls were only earning 8 pence for a sixteen hour day. They were also risking their health when they dipped the match-heads in the yellow phosphorus supplied by manufacturers such as Bryant & May. A large number of these women suffered from 'Phossy Jaw' (necrosis of the bone) caused by the toxic fumes of the yellow phosphorus. The whole side of the face turned green and then black, discharging foul-smelling pus and then the match girls died.

Women like Catherine Booth and Annie Besant led a campaign against the use of yellow phosphorus. They pointed out that most other European countries produced matches tipped with harmless red phosphorus. Bryant & May responded that these matches were more expensive and that consumers would be unwilling to pay these higher prices. In other words profits were more important than 'disposable' working class women.

Catherine, along with other evangelicals like Josephine Butler and William Stead, was also appalled by the "white slave trade", a Victorian euphemism for child

prostitution. Wicked people would kidnap and force destitute girls into a life of prostitution that was nearly impossible to escape. Catherine and her husband exposed the white slave trade in England. Three hundred and ninety-six thousand signatures later, they saw the practice outlawed. The Booths believed that this kind of political activity was an essential part of their Christian witness.

Catherine died of cancer in October 1890. The campaigns that were started by Catherine were not abandoned. William Booth was determined to force companies to abandon the use of yellow phosphorus. In 1891 the Salvation Army opened its own match-factory in Old Ford, East London. Only using harmless red phosphorus, the workers were soon producing six million boxes a year. The Salvation Army paid their employees twice the amount paid by Bryant & May!

William Booth encouraged MPs and journalists to visit this 'model' factory. He also took them to the homes of those "sweated workers" who were working eleven and twelve hours a day producing matches for companies like Bryant & May. The bad publicity that Bryant & May received forced the company to reconsider its actions. In 1901, Gilbert Bartholomew, managing director of Bryant & May, announced that the firm had stopped using yellow phosphorus.

From 'Reformational UK' – 'Catherine Booth'

Peter Stanley 20.1.09

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