

Citizen Christian: Justice in Society

Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17

MPS Christ-followers are commanded and compelled by love to pursue justice in the world that demonstrates the righteousness of Creator God.

OBJ Every person can understand seeking Biblical Justice as Outlined by Four Characteristics.

INTRO Two verses launch our message for today.

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” **Micah 6:8**

“learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” **Isaiah 1:17**

Justice is a challenging topic because it is the point where theory intersects practice, where policy gets applied to real life over a wide array of topics and issues. I am not referring to our judicial system, but the church’s laboring for justice in society. Andrew T. Walker, Professor of Ethics and Public Theology at Southern Baptist Theology Seminary, comments on our particular moment in history, “There is a critical error in evangelical thought at present: An uncritical embrace of social justice and a heavy-handed disavowal of social justice.” The task for Christians is to approximate the biblical view of social justice without going to extremes. The reality is that biblical justice exists and is the application of God’s moral righteousness to address contemporary social evils and social dilemmas.¹ *Christ-follower, our call to pursue justice in the world is no easy task, but neither is it beyond the compelling power of Jesus’ love.*

Christ-followers are commanded and compelled by love to pursue justice in the world that demonstrates the righteousness of Creator God.

True, Biblical Justice always flows out of a right worship of God. When worship goes awry, justice falters, or more accurately, gets perverted so that good is called evil and evil good. This is what is taking place in Isaiah and Micah, two passages that remind us of our high mandate to pursue justice. Micah 6:8 “stands as the motto of the alcove of religion in the reading room of the Congressional Library in Washington.”² Micah’s first imperative is action. This command stands in stark contrast against today’s practice of conscience-salving by social awareness practices. For the Christian, justice demands personal involvement by action. Second, he says to love kindness, and uses the Hebrew word, *hesed*, for God’s covenant love. Of highest priority because of greatest loyalty, Christians strive to show mercy because we have been shown mercy by God. And third, we are commanded to walk humbly because this reminds us that we walk with God as ambassadors of His work in this world. *The work Christians do in Jesus’ name is the true expression of our religion.* **James 1:27**

True religion pursues justice to guard God’s good for people. Deuteronomy 10:12-13 makes clear that God requires this for His people: *“And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.”* The prophets command God’s people to do justice because it is the work of His will, the Law, in creation for redemption. There is no true justice without God because true, Biblical justice is what transpires when God shows up. **Isaiah 30:18** *God shows up when Christians walk with Him in the world and in obedience to His commands for good to pursue justice.*

Justice is the “right treatment of people that is their due under the law, and which is not to be neglected by the judges for their personal benefit.”³ The whole teaching of the Law consists in this, the right treatment of God and the right treatment of others. But there is more to justice than just ‘fair’ or ‘equal’ treatment of people. God is moral in every way and is honored

¹ <https://andrewtwalker.com/2018/08/carl-henry-social-justice-christian-responsibility-social-order/>

² Kenneth L. Barker, [Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah](#), vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 113.

³ D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 216.



through morality, but this is not the highest glory. Christians labor to demonstrate a higher glory in seeking justice. [For the Christian, seeking justice means laboring for the “Just-ness”, or righteousness, in which we have all fallen short.](#)

OBJ Seeking Biblical Justice can be Outlined by Four Distinctives

1: Seeking Justice demonstrates the glory and character of God in the world. Deut 16:18-20

You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. ²⁰Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you. Deut 16:18-20

Justice enables people to see God’s glory and experience his love. Deuteronomy 16:18-20 provides justice at work that displays God’s glory and love. **First, justice begins with the appointment of judges and officers who judge what is just at the local level.** This structure further develops Moses’ earlier practice of judging. Local judges judged people, and appointed officers ensured the judgments were carried out. [Justice demanded shared responsibility among the people.](#)

Second, the local level provided the best context for justice because it depends on relationships between people. When situations arise that cannot be settled locally, they can appeal to higher judges, but the higher judges serve to strengthen local justice, not subvert it. [Justice, from judgment to sentencing, was to be carried out locally among the people.](#)

Third, righteousness provides the rule of judgment. It is wrong to pervert justice by partiality, the internal influence that causes one to judge based on personal preference, or bribery, the external influence that causes one to judge based on outside pressure. God’s Law provided the standard of judgment by which judges ruled and people held judges accountable. [Justice provided the means by which righteousness would be displayed in the world.](#)

Seeking justice doesn’t mean injustice never happens, but it does mean that it is never ignored. Justice holds people accountable for actions when justice is denied. Seeking justice means to fight injustice in every form. It is more a process than an event that demands participation and accountability for the common good. [1: Seeking Justice demonstrates the glory and character of God in the world.](#)

2: Seeking Justice serves to uphold good and restrain evil in the world.

“If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. ⁹And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. ¹⁰Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. ¹¹According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. ¹²The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. ¹³And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again. Deut 17:8-13

Deuteronomy 17:8-13 overviews the process of justice and its effect on people. It establishes that seeking justice holds a two-fold effect that produces hope for people. When practiced in society, justice champions good among people, and also restrains evil. This reflects the influence that the pursuit of justice holds on people. The writer of Proverbs states, *“When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.”*^{Prov21:15} You will not be able to see the full effect of your labor in the process, but every labor in seeking justice holds this two-fold benefit. [2: Seeking justice brings hope to people when they see good upheld and evil punished.](#)

3: Seeking justice always prioritizes protection and help for people. Deut 24 & 25



*You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. ¹⁵You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the LORD, and you be guilty of sin. **Deuteronomy 24:14-15***

*You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, ¹⁸but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. **Deuteronomy 24:17-18***

Deuteronomy 24:14-15,17-18 tells us that justice is concerned with the well-being of people. It favors protection and help for the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed, and the marginalized in their need. Sin against God arises when helping a person in need is hindered, or when help is skewed to only masquerade as help. Remembering people's plight is essential for true justice, so that we grant them favor and help them in their need. Deuteronomy 25:1-3 goes on to say that justice administered in sentencing must also be fair. Sentencing, for law breaking, must be done in a way that is in proportion to the offense, whether in some form of punishment or repayment. All justice should reflect some measure of mercy, and not strip people of hope in the way sentencing is administered any more than it should in the way it is decided. **3: Seeking justice always prioritizes protection and help.**

4: Seeking justice means Christians labor for true liberty by sharing Jesus with people.

Justice that reflects God's character and nature points people to the One who is our righteousness, Jesus. Justice reveals God's heart. Doing good and acting justly pleases God as an act of worship. There is no religious activity or sacrifice that is pleasing to God when it does not include justice. The Prophets declare God's love for justice for a reason, because Jesus brings justice to the nations. Matthew uses Isaiah to show God's purpose for justice in this world to point people to Jesus, the Just One. ^{Matt12:15-21} Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they neglected justice. ^{Luke11:42} **Justice that produces good and hope also guards freedom, and all these are perfectly received in Jesus.**

In his missional manifesto of 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says we have been given the ministry and message of reconciliation. Our witness must align with our work, or we cannot accomplish what we've been sent to do. This means that what gets called "good" in seeking justice must be in accordance with God's Law, because when what stands contrary to God's Law gets called good, it deceives and damages people. When Christians labor for justice, we testify to the One who is Just and our Justifier ^{Rom3:26}, Jesus, who is true liberty for those who believe in Him. Carl F. H. Henry states, "The common core and hub of such a witness will be the God of justice and justification, the God who demands right and who offers new life and joy for doing it." **4: Seeking justice means Christians labor to share Jesus to bring true liberty to people.**

Christ-followers are commanded and compelled by love to pursue justice in the world that demonstrates the righteousness of Creator God.

TRANS We live with a mountain of social ills today that cry for Biblical Justice. Every societal issue cries out for Biblical justice, from issues of race, racism and systemic racism, sexual identity and gender issues, education, poverty, drugs, trafficking, economic recovery, political ideology, et al. I don't have time to address them all, but I will address one.

ILLUS Critical Race Theory / Intersectionality has risen to great prominence and influence recently, though it's been around for a while, and provides the under-pinning rationale for a great number of societal divisions today. It has made great in-road in the Christian church.

CRT is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that examines society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power. Intersectionality explores the interconnected nature of social categorization and orders the world by power structure. The reason CRT / I is dangerous for Christians is because it is incompatible with the tenets of Christianity. It holds a measure of truth, but ultimately does not uphold it. By assertion and pressure, it is redefining terms and re-writing history to deconstruct reality into a new norm, following the path of secular humanism and postmodern philosophy.



CRT / I perverts Biblical justice by imposing its presuppositions by demand through pressure and dismisses and disavows any who disagree; by stripping individual responsibility through group identity, of which everyone is placed into a category by their determination and recognized by its label; by fueling division among people along the lines of race, gender, economics, and other philosophical lines; by subverting a Biblical worldview with an alternate, comprehensive story about reality, and much more. Where its tentacles take hold, confusion, division, and destruction will occur. Every major field / discipline of society in the world today is impacted by this theory. CRT / I is to Biblical anthropology, the doctrine of man, what evolution is the doctrine of creation, a godless perversion that damages, deceives and destroys, and all under the guise of claiming 'good from science'. CRT / I is the prevailing theory that is providing rationale for fueling divisions in our world today, from condoning violence and riots to defunding police departments, from condemning capitalism to celebrating communism, and from deconstructing structures of power and authority to rebuild around the narrative of oppression. And all this is done in the name of fighting oppression. **CRT / I is neither necessary nor allowable for a Christian to "act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God", but subverts God's true justice in the world.**

LifePoint, I don't want to be a sideline spectator in this social issue. We will continue *to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God* according to God's Word. We will not be silent on things the Bible is not silent about. We will not give in to false narratives to pursue justice among people and claim a "good" that is neither just nor righteous.

Christ-followers are commanded and compelled by love to pursue justice in the world that demonstrates the righteousness of Creator God.

CLOSE Christian brothers and sisters, we cannot check out on our communities, our city or our country. It's not good for any of them, and it's not good in God's eyes. We must engage! As my main point notes today, we are commanded and compelled. Commanded means we cannot avoid or willingly disengage. Compelled means we must pursue the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ in both our witness (message) and our works (ministry).

