

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL JUSTICE

Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. This kind of life reflects the character of God. It consists of a broad range of activities, from simple, fair and honest dealings with people in daily life, to regular, radically generous giving of your time and resources, to activism that seeks to end particular forms of injustice, violence, and oppression. (TIMOTHY KELLER, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. 1st ed. New York: Dutton, 2010)

A MINIMALIST APPROACH: Being fair and honest in my dealings with others.

AN EXPANSIVE APPROACH: Giving myself regularly, radically, and generously to seeking the welfare of others—especially the poor, vulnerable, and disadvantaged.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. If Job is a model of Biblical Justice, how would you describe Biblical Justice?
2. How does Biblical Justice differ from some of the more popular notions of social justice?
3. What does Biblical Justice have in common with social justice?
4. How would you describe the difference between a minimalist approach and the expansive approach to Biblical Justice?
5. Does God have a minimal or an expansive approach to justice?
6. How was God expansive in bringing you to justice?
7. Tim Keller describes Biblical Justice as “Generous Justice.” Why is this an apt description of what God is looking for in his people?
8. What in this study (if anything) convicted you most?
9. How are you going to act on those convictions?
10. What are some ways your group can actively pursue Biblical Justice?



NOTE TO THE READER:

This particular 360 Discussion Guide is not a question and answer Bible study, it is an expanded version of the notes from Sunday's message. The study will not make a whole lot of sense if you have not heard the message, but will serve as a helpful summary if you have. We have included some "Questions to Consider" on the final page of the guide.

A DISCOURAGING EMAIL (FROM A GOOD FRIEND)

Hi All! My family has decided to leave Christ Church...

You have fallen prey to one of the most brilliant schemes ever executed by the enemy -- terribly divisive virtue signaling driven by the culture. CC leadership have been taking cultural virtue signals, wrapping them in bible verses, adding them to the gospel, and then using them to wag fingers at other believers. So, so, so disappointing to see CC becoming so distracted from the purpose of the church -- proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ...

These things are all divisive distractions from the gospel. Plagiarizing the world's stand on these items (regardless of whether you wrap them in bible verses) do NOT make the gospel complete.

The gospel stands alone... Period.

DOES THE GOSPEL STAND ALONE?

- The Bible is God's Word from beginning to end. God so superintended the writing of Scripture that it says everything He wanted to say in precisely the way He wanted to say it in and through the personality, language and style of the human authors.

- While not everything in Scripture is Gospel, the Gospel is the Heart and Center of everything in Scripture.
- Everything in Scripture that is not Gospel either prepares us for or flows naturally from the Gospel.
- Christ Church is committed to making disciples by teaching everything Christ commanded (Matthew 28:20) and declaring the “whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) in light of the Gospel.
- We believe Biblical Justice is not only foundational to the Gospel but is a clear implication of the Gospel.

DEFINING JUSTICE: THREE IMPORTANT WORDS

Justice (mis-phat): *Mis-phat* is to do what is right and fair. The word appears in the Hebrew text well over 200 times. *Mis-phat* can be translated judge, judges, judging, sentence, decision, cause, right, rightfully, rights, just, justice, justly.

Righteousness (seda-qah): *Seda-qah* is to be rightly related to someone based on an agreed standard. It is covenantal and relational in nature. We are rightly related to God when we fulfill our covenant responsibilities to God. We are rightly related to our fellow man when we fulfill our covenant obligations to humanity. *Seda-qah* can be translated righteous, righteously, righteousness, honest, right, rights, justice, just, fair, innocent, vindicate, accurate, and true.

Mercy (he-sed). *He-sed* is roughly the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament concept of grace. It describes God’s compassion for his people and faithfulness to his promises (i.e., his covenant love). *He-sed* can be translated love, loving, loving-kindness, kindness, kindnesses, loyalty, unfailing love, mercy, merciful, faithful, faithfully, devotion, covenant faithfulness, covenant love, unfailing love or great love.

HOW THESE WORDS WORK TOGETHER

MICAH 6:8 And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice (mis-phat), to love mercy (he-sed), and to walk humbly with your God?

PSALM 33:5 The Lord loves righteousness (seda-qah) and justice (mis-phat); the earth is full of his unfailing love (he-sed).

PSALM 146:7-9 [The Lord] upholds the cause (mis-phat) of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord

loves the righteous (seda-qah).⁹ The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow...

DEUTERONOMY 10:17-18 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.¹⁸ He defends the cause (mis-phat) of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.¹⁹ And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10 “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice (mis-phat); show mercy (he-sed) and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor.

ISAIAH 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice (mis-phat).

A COMPELLING PORTRAIT OF BIBLICAL JUSTICE

JOB 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

JOB 29:12-17 (Job Speaking) I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them. The one who was dying blessed me; I made the widow’s heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

JOB 31:13-22 If I have denied justice (mis-phat) to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers? If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.