

Biblical Justice

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Justice is an attribute of God - its source is God Himself.

- Deut. 32:4 “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

God is perfectly just. He has judged entire nations because of their injustice. In the last day, He will personally ensure absolute and total justice on this earth.

Because our God is a just God, every Christian should care about justice. We should desire to see Biblical standards of justice implemented in society.

If you or a loved one has experienced significant mistreatment you have felt the fierce yearning for justice, for things to be set right. I love to see Christians working toward justice for oppressed victims:

- Unborn children (nearly 1 million murdered per year in this nation)
- Abused spouses (physical abuse is a reality in nearly 20% of marriages)
- Victims of trafficking (over 40 million worldwide)
- Targets of ethnic profiling or caste discrimination
- Small business owners defrauded by bureaucrats or looted by rioters
- A poor suspect who has been wrongly accused but can't afford a good lawyer
- Those who are wrongly incarcerated (like the Canadian pastor recently thrown in jail for welcoming people into his church)

In a world filled with injustice, working for justice is a worthy endeavor.

But as people of God we should loathe to see a false, postmodern version of justice advanced in our society. And that is exactly what we are seeing today in what some have termed *critical social justice*. The word “justice” is used, but with vastly different presuppositions, definitions, and goals than God’s version of justice.

Unlike the civil rights movement, which often appealed to Christian ethics, Critical Social Justice has little to do with Biblical standards of justice. If we care about biblical justice, if we care about justice being implemented in society, we should oppose what is falsely called “social justice” in our day.

What’s the difference between biblical justice and critical social justice?

- Kevin DeYoung examined major justice passages in the Bible: Leviticus 19 & 25, Isaiah 1 & 58, Jeremiah 22, Amos 5, Micah 6:8, Matthew 25:31-46, and Luke 4. He concluded: “Justice, as a biblical category, is not synonymous with anything and everything we feel would be good for the world. Doing justice means following the rule of law, showing impartiality, paying what you promised, not stealing, not swindling, not taking bribes,

and not taking advantage of the weak because they are too uninformed or unconnected to stop you.”

- Oxford dictionary definition of social justice: “Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.” Critical social justice, according to its advocates, is about identity, politics, power, and outcome equity.

One of these things is not like the other. The good, biblical concept of justice has been hijacked. And many Christians, because of a good instinct for fairness and compassion, have been hoodwinked into supporting what is falsely called justice.

1. Biblical justice does not call evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20).

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil” Isa 5:20

Intersectionality is a primary framework of CSJ. It began as an examination of how black women may experience a matrix of oppressions - sometimes due to racism, sometimes due to sexism, sometimes due to both. Good – but quickly turned into an ideology with an agenda.

The intersection of oppressions soon added lanes for LGBT+ individuals, the poor, immigrants, the disabled, religious minorities (!), and even categories such as “not conventionally attractive.” If you’re not in the oppressed category, you’re in the privileged/oppressor category and you are expected to renounce your group identity in order to become an “ally” of the oppressed.

We must ask, **by what standard** should individuals or groups be categorized as oppressed?

- LGBT+ identity and behavior is sinful. We should be kind, but acknowledging soul-endangering sin is not oppression, according to the biblical standard.
- God’s Word outlines different roles for men and women. Women contribute to churches and families in unique and invaluable ways, but God-ordained male leadership in these contexts is not oppression, according to the biblical standard.
- Every religion apart from biblical Christianity is a false religion. Warning and evangelizing our unsaved neighbors is not oppression, according to the biblical standard.
- One of the most Orwellian and egregious misuses of the word justice is in the phrase “reproductive justice” – referring to the act of an innocent baby being violently murdered in its own mother’s womb as somehow a matter of “justice.”

CSJ calls evil, good. You cannot separate out these anti-God aspects of social justice - in CSJ, all of these issues are inextricably linked. It’s not about helping the hurting, it is a political power play.

You must be aware that within this oppressed/oppressor framework, Christians are targeted!

- In Intersectionality (Vivian May), black women may not be advocated for if they are Bible-believing Christians, due to their support of “heteronormative patriarchy.”

- In CRT (Ibram Kendi), Christian missionaries are guilty of Colonization and exporting their White Supremacy, even if all they are doing is sharing the gospel!

Within this framework, good is called evil, and evil is called good.

2. Biblical justice is impartial (Deut. 16:18-20; Jn 7:24; Lev. 19:15; 2 Cor. 5:16; Ezek. 18:20).

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. You 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. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

Jn 7:24 “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment”

*This is why lady justice is blindfolded!

In contrast to CSJ, we must not prejudge based on societal **identity**. (Lev 19:15) “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

We must not prejudge according to **appearances**. Do not assume someone is guilty or innocent, right or wrong, based on skin color, gender, or socioeconomic status. 2 Cor 5:16: “from now on we regard no one according to the flesh.”

We just not prejudge according to the sins of **past generations**. “The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.” (Ezekiel 18:20). You don’t bear the guilt for the sins of other people that you happen to look like!

It is unjust that entire groups would be oppressed, simply based on their appearance. History is filled with this kind of wicked injustice. As Christians, we must vehemently reject partial treatment against anyone based solely on their ethnicity.

It is also unjust that entire groups would be villainized, simply based on their appearance! (Chanequa Walker-Barnes, a professing Christian, recently wrote: “Dear God, please help me to hate white people. Or at least to want to hate them. At least, I want to stop caring about them.”)

That sort of thing never ends well. Don’t degrade individuals by seeing them as nothing more than avatars for their identity groups. Know them as individuals made in the image of God. We Christians ought to lead the way in cultivating sympathy and kindness toward those who have different backgrounds and experiences. And we ought to do this based on Biblical ideals, not cultural trends.

(What about people who had the Bible but still treated others in inhumane ways? Well, how many times have you chosen to disobey your Bible? The problem is not Scripture, the problem is failure to apply it.)

3. Biblical justice operates truthfully (Prov. 20:10; Deut. 17:6; Exod. 21:24).

“Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.” Prov. 20:10

*This is why lady justice is holding scales!

Justice without truth isn't justice.

- Multiple eyewitness testimony (Deut 17:6) – **verification**
“On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”
- “Eye for eye” (Ex 21:24) - **proportion**

An example of CSJ untruth: disparity is always a result of discrimination (Kendi)

Disparity can be, but is not necessarily, the result of discrimination.

When it comes to disparities, other possible variables must be considered (household stability, location, age, cultural expectations and priorities, personal choices)

- Thaddeus Williams: “If we don't bother to distinguish between inequalities that come from sin and those that don't, then we are well on our way...to repeating the bloodiest mistakes of modern history. ‘Equality’ was a waving banner of France's Reign of Terror, Russia's Gulags, and Mao's Great Leap Forward.”

When you hear of alleged injustice or discrimination, you as a Christian should have a desire for the truth to be known so that real justice can be done.

“If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” (Prov. 18:13) – If you give a quick opinion on breaking news - you'll often end up eating your words!

Injustice certainly exists, in our society and around the globe (slaves, Uyghurs in China, Christians in Nigeria, unborn in America).

There has been racial injustice in our nation. We must not forget this!

- If there are any remaining policies or practices that objectively discriminate against particular ethnicities, they should be changed.
- If a person in power is discriminating unjustly, accountability is needed.
- If an institutional culture needs to be addressed, address it!

But be **precise** about the problem and needed solution. Vague insinuations about systems and societies do not produce real justice.

Oppression happens, but when everything is portrayed as oppression, actual oppression gets overlooked. This is a real shame.

- If you have been a victim.. We care! We desire to help. Jesus is a strong warrior who stands for you.
Sometimes justice in this world isn't possible...entrust yourself to the one who judges justly. (1 Pet. 2:23)
- If you are an oppressor (abusing spouse, kids, swindling employer, mistreating employees).. Repent! And make things right. Accept the consequences of your actions, and call out to the Lord for mercy. If you don't repent, Jesus is a strong warrior who stands against you.
- If you see oppression.. Act! Jesus is a strong warrior who will strengthen you.
- If you are in a position to enforce biblical justice in a godly manner.. Thank you! Jesus is a strong warrior who stands as an example for you.

4. Biblical justice should not be confused with other biblical concepts such as mercy and wisdom (Micah 6:8; Prov. 6:6-11).

The role of governmental justice is to protect individual rights, not to ensure outcomes. We see this in the Ten Commandments: don't murder (right to life), don't steal (right to private property), don't bear false witness (right to personal reputation).

What about poverty and need? Is this a matter of justice? Technically no, but this is where other biblical exhortations come in..

Micah 6:8 "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?"

We do have an obligation toward the poor and disadvantaged but it is an obligation not of justice but of **mercy**. Have mercy upon the orphan and widow. Give generously to those in need. I love to see our congregation showing mercy and compassion!

Justice preserves rights. Mercy gives a hand up. Wisdom gives a path forward.

Embrace **wisdom**, which includes personal responsibility, diligence (Proverbs 6:6-11).

"Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.

Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.

How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."

We may experience difficulties because of injustice, but we are more likely to experience difficulties because of a failure to be diligent and walk in wisdom. The ethic of the book of Proverbs is: Work hard! Be smart with your money and relationships. As you fear the Lord.

- I have to be careful in what I say here – this is where one can be accused of victim-blaming. “Are you saying all poor people are lazy?” No! Certainly there are those who are disabled or those who find themselves in need through no fault of their own. I’m simply directing our attention to the ethic of wisdom and diligence within the pages of Scripture. If you are able, you have a personal responsibility to take advantage of the opportunities God lays before you.

Compassion... and personal responsibility. Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:5: “Each will have to bear his own load.” The Christian ethic takes all these principles into account.

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5. Biblical justice does not replace church and family with the state (1 Tim. 5:8; Acts 2:44-45; Matt. 22:21).

Family: “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 5:8)

Church: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” (Acts 2:44-45)

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt 22:21)
The state’s role is to be limited.

Make no mistake, a primary goal of critical social justice is socialism. Big government.

- Thomas Sowell: “The story of how human beings treat other human beings when they have unbridled power over them is seldom a pretty story.”

State-enforced collectivist redistribution undermines and in some cases even replaces the God-ordained institutions of church and family. (One of the tragedies of chattel slavery was the way it tore families apart. But in more subtle ways, socialism often does the same.)

Government-enforced redistribution of wealth doesn’t even help the poor, in the long run!

Romans 13 - government is to bear the sword, not the checkbook.

YOU have a responsibility to care for your family and your local community – don’t abdicate it to big government. The biblical ideal is a voluntary collectivism in the institutions of family, church, and local community. People in need, children, and other vulnerable members of society are best helped through these institutions, not an almighty government.

6. Biblical justice does not reverse the Great Commandment or distract from the Great Commission (Matt. 22:37-39; Matt. 28:19-20).

Critical social justice diverges from Biblical theology in nearly every way. It contradicts the doctrines of God, mankind, sin, salvation, church, and end times.

Many have noted that CSJ has all the characteristics of a new religion:

- Identity-group power is the original sin
- “Wokeness” is conversion
- Continual confession (“checking your privilege”) is required for sanctification
- Progressive intersectional politics is the good “work” to which all are called
- Sadly, this new religion lacks grace and forgiveness. It lacks a Savior. In His place is a tedious, exhausting legalism.

Harvest mission statement: “To honor God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission, in the spirit of the Great Commandment.”

(Matt. 28:19–20) “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

(Matt. 22:37-39) “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The great commandment is love: love of God first, then love of neighbor. Never reverse those. If you do not love God first, you will fail to love your neighbor well. Don’t forget the end of Micah 6:8 – don’t just “do justice” and “love mercy,” but most importantly “walk humbly with your God.” Love of God is of first importance.

The gospel is “of first importance” as well, according to 1 Cor. 15:3-5 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared...[to many].”

- Christ died and rose from our sins - this is the gospel. We were guilty before God! Pure justice for us would have been eternal punishment apart from God! But God justly provided mercy through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- We are to preach this good news to all identity groups, without distinction: “to Greeks and to barbarians, to the wise and to the foolish.” (Rom. 1:14). Never get distracted from this ultimate priority! This is what people need most! What does it profit a man to gain perfectly just systems, and lose his soul?

- When people are saved, they do justice better! More than that, they become a forgiving people who operate in grace, knowing that Jesus has fully reconciled us to God and to others. Most importantly, salvation gives us a new identity - the most important thing about us, the thing that unites us, is Jesus.

Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* – "Jesus shocked the established authorities by being a friend to all – not only to the destitute and hungry, but also to those rich extortioners, the tax-collectors, whom all decent people ostracized; the shocking thing was not that he sided with the poor against the rich but that he met everyone equally with the same unlimited mercy... Before the cross of Jesus there are no innocent parties. His cross is not for some and against others. It is the place where all are guilty and all are forgiven."

- The enemy would love nothing more than to see Christians divided and churches torn apart over these matters. Some of you have experienced this!
The answer is not to import the world's redefinition of justice, or to simply "agree to disagree." We must dig into God's revealed Word and agree on biblical principles pertaining to this matter. And we must see each other not mainly as representatives of various societal identity groups, but as brothers and sisters redeemed by the cross of Christ.

Recommendations:

Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth (Thaddeus Williams)

By What Standard? (Longshore, ed.)

Fault Lines (Voddie Baucham)

The Center for Biblical Unity (Monique Duson)