

BIBLICAL JUSTICE vs SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

When you hear the term “social justice” what do you think? For many of us it sounds like an honorable and important desire in our society. Do you not desire justice in this world? The technical term “social justice” that drives our politics, controls our education systems, and informs society does not mean what you think it means.

If Jesus was ministering on earth today, He would be guilty of “social injustice”. He chose 12 Jewish men as His apostles. He did not consider racial or gender representation. He would certainly be in error to give to one servant 5 talents, to another 3 and yet another 1. His unequivocal stance that marriage is between one man and one woman for life would be subject to tremendous criticism. His view of the family would be another certainly make Him unpopular. In almost every major point He would be guilty of violating contemporary “social justice” values.

What is “social justice”?

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

William H. Young¹ defines “state redistribution of advantages and resources to disadvantaged groups to satisfy their rights to social and economic equality.” **The problem is the little word “equality”.** Within the social justice topic equality does not mean equal worth or dignity. Now that might mean that to you as you use it, but that is not what it means in contemporary social science. **It means equality in outcome.** For instance, in economic Marxism, equality means everyone has the same amount of wealth. In this worldview, also called cultural Marxism, everyone has equality of outcome.

Christians would certainly believe in “equality of opportunity”, but “equality of outcome” is a different species. Equality of opportunity never promises equality in the outcome. A simple illustration of equality of outcome might be this:

- If you have 10 dogs and 10 cats applying for a job; and you only need 10.
- Equality of opportunity is that all cats and dogs that want the job can apply.
- Equality of outcome is that no matter the qualification, 5 cats and 5 dogs will be selected to get equal outcome.

Further to that definition within some of the subsets of the social justice movement, if cats come from a circumstance where they have been mistreated and marginalized, the outcome will be manipulated so that there are 7 cats and 3 dogs.

In the 2020 US election, Kamala Harris² (the current Vice-President of the US) is quoted in a video saying,

¹ https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/academic_social_science_and_social_justice

² <https://www.steveglaveski.com/blog/why-equality-of-outcome-is-a-bad-idea>

“It’s about giving people the resources and support they need so that everyone can be on equal footing, and then compete on equal footing”, (so far most of us would agree, but then she adds) “equitable treatment means we all end up at the same place”.

That is cultural Marxism that our society calls “social justice”. The reason this is important issue is because it is the default worldview in our governments, schools and slowly creeping into the Church. Christians need to be informed and warned.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL JUSTICE?

As Christians we disagree with this social justice theory, but God forbid if we fail to recognize the need for justice in this world. The Bible is not silent on the need for justice:

- *“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.” (Psalm 82:3, ESV)*
- *“learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” (Isaiah 1:17, ESV)*
- *“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, ESV)*
- *“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” (James 2:1, ESV)*

To suggest that a Christian ought to not be concerned about justice is like saying we shouldn’t be concerned about holiness or righteousness. Biblical Justice in its simplest form, ***means to set things right***. Jesus is our example. Jesus pursued justice. He physically and spiritually ministered to the needs around Him. Healing the leper in Matthew 8 and caring for the woman caught in adultery in John 8 are just a few examples. Luke’s Gospel emphasizes that the ministry of Jesus was to the marginalized, the poor, the despised in society.

The standard of justice is God Himself. The only reason there is any concept of justice in our world is because our holy, righteous Creator God imparted the notion to His creation. Hear God’s Word:

- *““The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4, ESV)*
- *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.” (Psalm 89:14, ESV)*

God defines justice. All His ways are just.

In discussion with someone recently I appealed to them to “think Christianly” about social issues. What do I mean by that? Here are 7 principles to help you think “Christianly” about social issues.

7 BIBLICAL GUIDELINES TO THINK “CHRISTIANLY” ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES

1. To think “Christianly” places ultimate blame for all injustice in wickedness of human heart. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV).* The

heart of the problem is the heart. The very first sin committed after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden was murder induced by jealousy and envy. The sobering condemnation of Scripture is, *"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."* (Romans 3:10–12, ESV). Ultimately its not social groupings or institutions that cause injustice. It is sin. If the ultimate problem is sin, the ultimate solution is a Saviour.

2. To think "Christianly" rightly defines the identity of all people in God. The identity of the Christian is found in Christ. A familiar question of our day is, "How do you identify yourself?" If I find my identity in the color of my skin, the gender of my being, the identifier of my culture and so on, I will always be discontent.

Our primary thought, no matter who we meet is "this person is made in the image of God." *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'"* (Genesis 1:26a, ESV) It is for that reason that God directed the value and the protection of human life. *"And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.'"* (Genesis 9:5–6, ESV). All human nature is still under the terms and conditions of the Noahic covenant. All human beings are by creation, precious, valuable, equal and of eternal worth.

This does not mean that race, gender, culture is unimportant. It does mean that it is less important.

Likewise, those who are in Christ have a unique identity. Every Christian regardless of race, color or gender is uniquely blessed by God, chosen in Christ, and predestined to be God's son (don't change the gender of that, ladies.). Every Christian, regardless, is redeemed, forgiven, guaranteed and eternal inheritance, sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:3-14).

If you ultimately identify by your race, color, gender, etc., you will never be happy – you will never find satisfaction in Christ.

3. To think "Christianly", true justice is motivated by love. It seems to me that modern social justice movements which on the surface seem to be promoting equality, respect, and fairness promote suspicion, hostility, labelling, motivated by envy, jealousy, anger, and resentment. This tells us the motivation is wrong.

The Biblical worldview calls for Good Samaritan ethics which is to do good to all as you have opportunity. The Biblical worldview calls to love even your enemies and those who despitely use you. The Biblical worldview calls for love instead of retaliation.

The Biblical response seems to me to *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Romans 12:21, ESV). Peter calls us who are Christians to a high standard; to be like Christ. *"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."* (1 Peter 2:22–23, ESV)

Paul reminds us of one of the marks of a true Christian. They, *"repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all."* (Romans 12:17, ESV).

4. To think “Christianly” responds to the plight of the oppressed. Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles give to us great advice. *“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* (Jeremiah 29:7, ESV). I repeat from Isaiah, *“learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”* (Isaiah 1:17, ESV). In God’s opinion, doing good includes seeking a just functioning of our society.

The Bible also implies that we focus on the known injustices in our communities. “As you have opportunity, do good.” Do you speak up at coffee time when racist comments are made? Do you honor the women in your life? Do you honor the men in your life? Will you have the courage to rebuke the multitude of jokes that demean genders and cultures?

Secondly the Bible (in Psalm 82 and Romans 13) places great responsibility on our civil leaders. This means praying for them, holding them to account and being involved in the political process is critical. Hear these last inspired words of King David recorded in 2 Samuel 23:3–4 (ESV),

“³ The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴ he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.”

That’s how we pray.

5. To think “Christianly” means we look at people differently. *“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.”* (2 Corinthians 5:16, ESV). Christians don’t classify people in human categories. Before your saved you look and say, “That person is rich and privileged. That person is not.” Or we say, “That person is an embarrassment to society. That person is not.” Christians view all persons, created in the image of God and in need of salvation.

Modern theories, called “critical theories” create categories and division. Christians view people according to the Spirit. Christians understand there are only two races: the race of Adam and the race of Christ. Christians labour to call all people to the hope of the Gospel and to find their hope in Christ.

6. To think “Christianly” is to think of personal responsibility and accountability. *“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:14, ESV). In the Bible there is no room to excuse sin because of the social circumstances you find yourself. The Bible emphasizes personal responsibility. Each person is a moral agent accountable before God. Any theory that seeks to ignore our personal responsibility is unbiblical.

7. To think “Christianly” in the ultimate sense is to remember that God who is perfect in justice is the final Judge. Peter reminds us of those who live unjustly: *“but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”* (1 Peter 4:5, ESV).

We hear the words of the Holy Spirit: *“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.””* (Romans 12:19, ESV).

CONCLUSION

Biblical Justice is then treating others, in all areas of life, in such a way as to uphold God's revealed standards of righteousness and holiness. It means to each of us, "as you have opportunity, do good." It means for our nation to uphold the same standard and punish wrongdoers and reward the injured accordingly.

APPLICATION

My appeal to you this morning is to become informed. Biblical Justice is opposed to and is opposed by most modern theories of social justice. When you hear code words like 'critical race theory', "intersectionality", "reproductive justice", "economic justice", "inclusiveness", "diversity", "privilege" and particularly the word "equality" be aware they may not mean what you think they mean. I encourage you to test what you hear and ensure that it is inline with thinking "Christianly"?

I encourage you to inform and equip yourself. How can you do that?

1. In June of 2018 several prominent evangelicals such as John MacArthur, Voddie Baucham, and so on met together draft a statement on Social Justice. Tens of thousands of Churches or individuals have added their signature in approval. It is called [Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel](#). I highly recommend it to you. Just reading it will help you understand the issues.
2. I also recommend the teaching of Voddie Baucham. There are 2 presentations on YouTube that would be helpful:
 - a. <https://youtu.be/yEL7KtQ673w>
 - b. <https://youtu.be/YFNOP2IqwoY>

These presentations are based on his book: [Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe](#)

3. Anything [Monique Duson](#), from the Center for Biblical Unity, produces is excellent. She has produced a small group Bible study entitled [Reconciled, A Biblical Approach to Ethnic Unity](#). Here's an example: <https://youtu.be/YxZOSv-tMDs>
4. I've read several online articles that are helpful. Here is a list:
 - a. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/faqs-christians-know-social-justice/>
 - b. <https://www.liberty.edu/champion/2020/11/opinion-social-justice-is-not-the-same-as-biblical-justice/>
 - c. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-all-christians-must-seek-public-justice/>
 - d. <https://www.jarrodjones.com/2020/10/social-justice-vs-biblical-justice-7-ways-to-discern-the-truth/>
 - e. <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/is-white-fragility-a-helpful-resource-for-christians/>
 - f. <https://alberta.lightmagazine.ca/2021/06/11/is-critical-race-theory-of-concern-in-canada-part-1/>
 - g. <https://alberta.lightmagazine.ca/2021/06/18/part-2-how-far-can-we-agree-with-critical-race-theory/>
 - h. <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/critical-race-theory-part-1>

- i. <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/critical-race-theory-part-2>