

INTRODUCTION

“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 our God,” Micah 6:8.

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public,” Cornel West

Jesus sums up what he calls the law and the prophets with this command: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,” Matthew 7:12. The “golden rule” encompasses more than the practice of justice, but God’s call that we “do justice” (Micah 6:8) is certainly an expression of this central command.

Because Jesus’ golden rule—that we treat others as we would like to be treated—is a rule of *compassion*, it compels us to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes and consider, “How might it feel to be this person? What would I want someone to do for me?” When we see injustice—someone suffering because something is unfair, cruel, oppressive, or inequitable—the golden rule urges us to action, to do for others what we would want done if we were them. If someone has food and I have none, what do I want? If someone has opportunities I don’t have, what do I long for? If people treat me as ‘less than,’ how do I want things to change? If I am enslaved or oppressed, what do I need? These are the questions that lead us by the rule of compassion into doing justice.

Jesus lives his rule of compassion, and we see him going beyond doing justice to “doing grace.” He has unbroken intimacy with his Father, but he doesn’t hoard this for himself; he comes to earth to share his joy with us who would otherwise be excluded, freeing us from the oppression of our sin and our enemy and sharing his blessings with those who cannot repay him. He gives himself—his time, energy, love, and life—to care for the vulnerable and sick, feed the hungry, and lead lost people to his Father. He opposes the systems and prejudices that oppress people. He defeats the devil who holds the whole world captive; he overthrows the tables of the money changers and denounces the Pharisees for laying heavy burdens on people’s shoulders, declaring his outrage over religious exploitation and oppression. He constantly shows special concern for the vulnerable—widows, children, the poor, and the ostracized for reasons of race, sex, or disability. Jesus came “doing justice” *and* lavishing grace on the underserving; he urges his followers to do the same.

Tim Keller describes Jesus this way:

Jesus, in his incarnation, “moved in” with the poor. He lived with, ate with, and associated with the socially ostracized (Matthew 9:13). He raised the son of the poor widow (Luke 7:11-16) and showed the greatest respect to the immoral woman who was a social outcast (Luke 7:36). Indeed, Jesus spoke with women in public, something that a man with any standing in society would not have done,

but Jesus resisted the sexism of his day (John 4:27). Jesus also refused to go along with the racism of his culture, making a hated Samaritan the hero of one of his most famous parables (Luke 10:26) and touching off a riot when he claimed that God loved Gentiles like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian as much as Jews (Luke 4:25-27). Jesus showed special concern for children, despite his apostles' belief that they were not worth Jesus' time (Luke 18:15).

And Jesus teaches us who follow him to do as he does. He says, "Sell your possessions and give to the needy," (Luke 12:33), and "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the **just**," (Luke 14:12-14). In other words, a just person will do as Jesus did—show special concern for the vulnerable and graciously give to those who cannot repay. Realizing we are among the recipients of his grace moves us to seek justice. As Tim Keller says, "there is a direct relationship between a person's grasp and experience of God's grace, and his or her heart for justice," (*Generous Justice*).

To follow Jesus, then, we must be a people who do justice and love mercy, who treat others as we would like to be treated, sacrificially giving ourselves to meet the needs of others and to oppose oppressive structures. Keller says we will be a people moved by three principles: equal treatment for all, special concern for those without power, and radical generosity.

And John Perkins writes, "God has always wanted the vulnerable in society to be cared for. He never intended for them to languish in poverty, abuse, slavery, homelessness, or other types of devastation. When we care for individuals who are trapped in these ways, when we show them love and help them move toward freedom and wholeness, we participate in bringing a little part of God's Kingdom back into alignment with His greater plan. We do justice and God smiles," (*Let Justice Roll Down*).

THE PRACTICE

Tim Keller's description of the kinds of activities that doing justice requires is helpful:

*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. (*Generous Justice*)*

With this framework in mind, this practice involves prayerfully considering how the Lord might be inviting us to increase our involvement in doing justice. The suggestions below are intended to guide your thoughts and prayers:

- Make a practice to regularly ask the Lord where he sees injustice and how he would like you to be involved in his work of promoting justice.
- Prayerfully consider how the Lord is inviting you to educate yourself about matters of justice. The resources listed below might be a good place to start.
- Ask the Lord to show you ways you can practice justice in realms where you have influence—your home, office, neighborhood, or schools. Consider things like generous tipping for service workers, fair or generous wages for people in your employ, equitable treatment for people of all races, genders, and social classes, hospitality to people who are different from you, and empowerment of those without power.
- Ask the Lord for the courage and wisdom to recognize and to challenge injustice—inequity, unfairness, corruption, oppression, or fraud—in your spheres of living.
- Consider making a commitment to purchase clothing, home goods, coffee, and/or chocolate made by fair trade companies, effectively boycotting enslaving and unjust work environments.
- Prayerfully consider how the Lord might be inviting you to practice generosity.
- Consider: How might the Lord be inviting you to give sacrificially of your time, money, and/or talents to benefit those whom Tim Keller describes as “the quartet of the vulnerable—widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor?” How might he be leading you to step out of your comfort zone and into places where people are suffering from violence, oppression, or injustice? Take a prayerful look at this webpage listing Greenwood’s mission partners. Is there a place God might be prompting you to engage? <https://greenwoodcc.com/serve/>
- As you step out into these areas and injustice becomes evident to you, follow your tears. What form of injustice grieves you the most? How might the Lord be asking you to engage in an activism that might bring justice in this situation?

HELPFUL VERSES:

“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 our God.” Micah 6:8

“Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” Luke 3:11

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” James 1:27

“He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?’ declares the Lord.” Jeremiah 22:16

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily.” Isaiah 58:6-8

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12

INTERESTING QUOTES

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” —Cornel West

“God has always wanted the vulnerable in society to be cared for. He never intended for them to languish in poverty, abuse, slavery, homelessness, or other types of devastation. When we care for individuals who are trapped in these ways, when we show them love and help them move toward freedom and wholeness, we participate in bringing a little part of God's Kingdom back into alignment with His greater plan. We do justice and God smiles.” —John M. Perkins.

“If we obeyed the greatest commandment, ‘love God and your neighbor as yourself,’ issues of justices could not be avoided . . . We would be people who fought unemployment with job training, illiteracy with education, pollution with technology, oppression with legal protection,

disease with medicine, danger with safety, poverty with help, chaos with order, fear with love, hunger with food, and so on.” —Adele Calhoun

“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.” —Tim Keller

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." —Martin Luther King

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” The U.S. Declaration of Independence.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before you engage this practice:

1. What has been your experience with “doing justice?”
2. Is there a person who works for justice whom you admire? What do you respect about them?
3. Have you been the recipient of someone’s commitment to doing justice? What did this mean to you?
4. Which scripture or quote from this practice speaks to you the most and why?
5. What form of injustice troubles your soul?
6. How might the Lord be asking you to give sacrificially of your time, money, or talents to advance justice?
7. What resistance do you find in your heart to engaging in this practice? Why do you think this might be?
8. What excites you about engaging in this practice?
9. Take a prayerful look at this webpage listing Greenwood’s mission partners. Is there a place God might be prompting you to engage? <https://greenwoodcc.com/serve/>

After you have engaged with this practice:

1. How have your thoughts or attitudes changed as you tried to consider doing justice in your sphere of influence?
2. What do you find exciting about this practice?
3. What do you find challenging?
4. Is there an area of doing justice your group might like to engage with together going forward?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

When Helping Hurts by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Generous Justice by Tim Keller

Let Justice Roll Down by John M. Perkins

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson (also a movie available on Amazon and Hulu).

[Resources for Christians Responding to Racial Injustice - Google Docs](#) by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship