



cg leader training

JUSTICE

fearing the Lord in all we do

september 5, 2020

Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.

—Proverbs 28:5

*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

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

When addressing any topic, definition is important. This is especially true as a topic is increasingly important. And when it comes to justice, definitions are in short supply currently. Below are some representative definitions of justice:

Dictionary.com [juhs-tis]¹

noun

¹ the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: *to uphold the justice of a cause.*

² rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason: *to complain with justice.*

³ the moral principle determining just conduct.

⁴ conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment.

⁵ the administering of deserved punishment or reward.

⁶ the maintenance or administration of what is just by law, as by judicial or other proceedings: *a court of justice.*

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*²

In Hebrew and Greek, there is only one word group behind the words that we translate in English as *righteousness* and *justice*. “God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.”

Carl Ellis, *Window of Righteousness*³

Righteousness has four dimensions:

1. **Piety.** Doing what is right according to God in a narrow sense that involves devotion and ceremony: “Live...in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God” (1 Pet. 4:2).

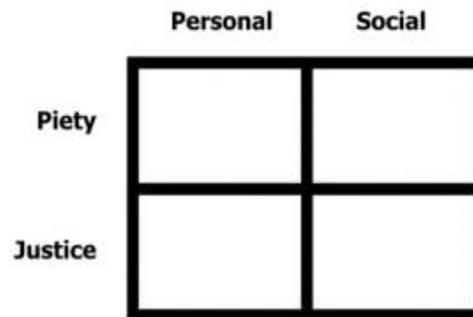
¹ As found at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/justice?s=t>. Accessed 1 September 2020. Note that this website has just announced that it is updating over 15,000 entries to remove ‘prejudicial language’, e.g.: capitalizing Black, changing “homosexual” to “gay”, and removing “commit suicide” in favor of “die by suicide.” See: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/sep/01/dictionarycom-revises-definitions-eliminate-prejudiced-language>, for more details.

² Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, p. 203.

³ As found at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/biblical-righteousness-four-paned-window/>. Accessed 3 September 2020.

2. **Justice.** Doing what is right toward your fellow image bearers. I'm aware that ultimately to do right to people is to do right before God. For example, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). However, for the sake of our discussion, I'm thinking of justice in a narrow sense here.
3. **Personal.** Living rightly before God as an individual: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated to God and pleasing to him" (Rom. 12:1).
4. **Social.** Living rightly before God as a corporate community, namely, as the body of Christ: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

If we pair these dimensions in all possible combinations, we get four *manifestations* of righteousness: personal piety, social piety, personal justice, and social justice. This can be illustrated by the Window of Righteousness. Think of this four-paned window as a picture of how the gospel plays out in individual lives and society.



... Each pane of the window depends on the support of the other three panes. If one pane is removed, the integrity of the whole window is compromised. The removal of each additional pane further degrades the window's integrity, and the last pane left will be so stressed that it will reach a breaking point.

I suggest that this is the current state of the American evangelical witness. We focus primarily on the upper-left-hand pane of each window, but much of the rest of the window is broken. Yet we cling to a sense of satisfaction that we got a 100 percent in less than 25 percent of the project. We're not helping or participating in the bigger picture. Rather than trying to reduce our witness to a single pane, we must work together as the body of Christ to pursue this bigger picture of righteousness and address this bigger picture of unrighteousness.

JUSTICE:

A MOST MISUNDERSTOOD AND NECESSARY TOPIC

WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES

We are living in tumultuous times. Protests and riots fill the streets of many of our major cities. Allegations of injustice abound. Hatred and division seem to characterize much of our political discourse. A new reckoning has arrived that is judging and condemning many of the historical figures in American history.⁴ Statues are being torn down. We are told that America is irredeemably racist, and that our country was built on slavery and the oppression of various peoples.⁵

These are very complex issues that defy simple explanations. However, one of the most concerning issues for us as Christians ought to be the understanding of justice that characterizes so much of public discourse and behavior. When we are told that looting is okay because it serves as a form of reparations⁶, or that rioting is okay, because “it is the language of the unheard”⁷ (quoting and misapplying Martin Luther King, Jr), what we are hearing is wickedness being justified. What is especially troubling is that many Christians affirm (and re-tweet) such things.

Though there are no doubt many causes for these troubles (including an epidemic of fatherlessness⁸), it seems fair to identify several core values of the 1960s counterculture as major contributors to our current problems. Four in particular deserve mention here: 1) hostility to authority; 2) feminism; 3) sexual idolatry; and, 4) the therapeutic worldview. All four of these values are antithetical to

⁴ For example, a mayor’s working group in the District of Columbia has recently recommended removing or re-contextualizing famous monuments and statues, including those honoring Washington, Jefferson, and Columbus, for not being reflective of “contemporary DC values”; cf.: https://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/page_content/attachments/DC%20FACES%20Executive%20Summary_r10sm.pdf.

⁵ A prime example is the NY Times controversial *1619 Project*, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>. For a representative critique of the project see: <https://thefederalist.com/2020/05/06/watch-this-short-documentary-debunking-the-1619-project/>.

⁶ This perspective was advanced by Black Lives Matter organizer Ariel Atkins in Chicago, cf.: <https://nypost.com/2020/08/13/blm-organizer-who-called-looting-reparations-doubles-down/>.

⁷ <https://spectator.org/misquoting-mlk-to-legitimize-violence/>

⁸ The US Census Bureau estimates that more than 1 in 4 children under 18 in America lives without a father in the home; cf.: <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>.

Christianity and have led to the transformation of the understanding and application of justice in the broader American culture.

First, hostility to authority is as old as the Garden. We have discussed this extensively in our sermon series on Authority and at other points. *All* of the evil we see around us is a direct result of rebellion against the authority of God first, and then against the lesser authorities that God has instituted.

Second, feminism is tied to #1, but is also a revolt against God and his designs for men and women. It has told women for decades that feminine godliness is second-class and unsatisfying, and that in order to be liberated women need to act more like men. Our understanding of justice has also been feminized, which is tied to #4.

Third, sexual idolatry has fueled many, many injustices, from abortion to gay marriage to the hook-up culture to fatherlessness. It has changed sexuality from a verb (action) to a noun (identity), and it has ascended to become the single most important thing about someone. Linking sexual ‘freedom’ to the broader civil rights agenda has been one of the most successful strategies here.

Finally, the therapeutic culture has radically transformed our understandings of justice. Sin has all but vanished as a category. In its place are syndromes and diseases (e.g., alcoholism instead of drunkenness). Environmental factors have gained massive explanatory power in how we think about persons’ behavior, and how we can explain away wickedness.

All of these factors, and others, have led to a massive shift in how we think about ourselves and others, and what we think about justice. In one sense this is nothing new—mankind has been willfully reinterpreting God, man, sin, and redemption ever since Genesis 3. Even here in America, there have been ebbs and flows in the influence of Christianity on the popular imagination. However, the speed and breadth of this latest onslaught are very concerning.

It is imperative, therefore, that we as Christians know what the Bible teaches about justice and that we apply it faithfully and broadly and courageously to all that God calls us to do. In that way, we can fulfill Paul’s charge to the church in Philippians 2:15:

...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...

FOUNDATIONS OF JUSTICE

1 God is just(ice)

Psalm 25:8–10 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Isaiah 61:8 For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

2 Therefore:

a. Justice is an attribute of God (his character)

Psalm 119:137 Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules.

Habakkuk 1:13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong...

Exodus 15:11 Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

b. Justice is not a standard that exists outside of God. He literally defines justice. It is what he says it is.

Isaiah 55:7–9 ...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Genesis 18:25 “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

c. God opposes and punishes evil.

Psalm 129:4 The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.

Hebrews 10:26–31 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

d. God rewards and supports righteousness.

James 4:6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require 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 keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

3 All of God's ways are just

Deuteronomy 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.

a. God's justice does not necessarily align with human standards.

b. God's justice does is necessarily accomplished in human timeliness.

2 Peter 3:7–13 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any

should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

4 God establishes all authorities on the earth and justice is part of their purview.

Romans 13:1–5 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Ephesians 6:1–4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

5 Human justice requires due process

Acts 26:24–26 And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.”

a. Due process includes identifying and employing due authorities (the idea of jurisdiction).

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Matthew 18:15–17 If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

b. Due process includes the presumption of innocence.

Deuteronomy 19:15 A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

Acts 24:10–13 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.”

Proverbs 18:17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

c. Due process includes biblical standards of proof.

Deuteronomy 17:6 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.

1 Timothy 5:19–21 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

d. Due process includes proportional penalties for false accusations.

Deuteronomy 19:16–21 If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then

you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

6 The essence of justice is impartiality

Romans 2:11 For God shows no partiality.

Acts 10:34–35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

Leviticus 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.

Deuteronomy 1:17 You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s.

James 2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Exodus 23:2–3 You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

Deuteronomy 10:16–17 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

Two Illustrative Examples

FALL

1 The Fall introduced injustice into this world

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...

2 There are at least four important, continuing effects

a. A new interpretation of justice and injustice.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

Ephesians 2:1–3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

b. The (just) curse of God on this world and everyone in it.

Genesis 3:14–19 The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

c. Individual guilt before God that must be addressed.

Romans 1:28–32 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all

manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Ezekiel 18:1–4, 19-20 The word of the LORD came to me: “What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die... Yet you say, ‘Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?’ When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. 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.

d. The human conscience that reflects both our sense of justice and our need for repentance.

Romans 2:1–6 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works.

3 *Therefore, we must recognize and account for the injustice that is rampant in this world if we are to seek to ‘do justice.’*

a. We should care for others according to our God-given vocations and as he providentially arranges.

James 1:27 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 2:14–17 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Galatians 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

The Importance of Vocation and Proximity

b. We should also recognize and expect that sometimes people suffer consequences (injustices?) because of their own sin(s).

2 Timothy 3:1–7 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Proverbs 26:14–21 As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly. Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the

ears. Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!" For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

2 Thessalonians 3:10–12 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

4 We must also recognize that injustice will not be fully and finally removed from the earth until Christ returns.

Revelation 6:9–11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Matthew 26:11 For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.

REDEMPTION

1 The central question of justice in the gospel concerns the apparent injustice of God in forgiving sins.

Romans 3:23–26 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

2 In Jesus, Christians are justly declared righteous. Forgiveness, therefore, is a justice issue. It is also our only hope for justice in this world.

Romans 4:4–8 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Romans 5:8–11 ...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

3 Christians can also extend mercy and grace to others when we suffer injustices because we have received such extravagant grace.

Matthew 6:14–15 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 18:28–35 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

4 However, Christians can and should also act justly and oppose evil as appropriate in our varying vocations.

1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 ...and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

Philippians 2:14–16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Luke 3:14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

Psalm 15:4 ...in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD...

Psalm 31:6 I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD.

Deuteronomy 16:20 Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

CONSUMMATION

1 Jesus will return as King and will bring true and full justice on the earth

Jeremiah 23:5 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Revelation 19:11–16 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

CONTEMPORARY ERRORS ON JUSTICE & RACE

Cultural (Neo-)Marxism Neo-Marxism is a philosophy of human liberation, founded upon naturalistic materialism, and aimed at overcoming the alienation of the oppressed (especially the workers, or *proletariat*) by emancipating them from oppressive institutions.⁹ It offers a trajectory of history aimed at increasing justice. In particular, it has sought to achieve these goals by emphasizing group identity and encouraging minority groups to identify themselves as victims of society who must rise up and throw off their oppressors.

Identity Politics¹⁰ “A wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups.” In our context, those identities are most often found in neo-Marxist categories of thought that encourage us to think of ourselves according to skin color, sex (re-termed *gender*), sexual ‘orientation’, and the like.

Social Justice Social Justice is notoriously difficult to define and often goes without definition in public discussions. However, in general, it is a movement aimed at achieving the aims identified through applying neo-Marxist categories to contemporary society. William Young notes, “Its core concept, while often amorphous, is the redistribution of resources and advantages to the disadvantaged to achieve social and economic equality.”¹¹

Critical Race Theory CRT arose in legal circles in the 1980s as law schools began to reevaluate legal theories regarding race, racism and power.¹² In particular, CRT is concerned with the *systemic* nature of oppression, racism and injustice. In America, it identifies white supremacy and white privilege as lying behind the structures of our society, and therefore posits that minorities are always disadvantaged because the system is stacked against them. Intersectionality functions complementarily with CRT, showing the greater degree of disadvantage experienced according to the degree of one’s oppressedness. Further, one of the prevailing implications of this view is that those who belong to majority categories are by nature unable to understand the plight of the

⁹ Adapted from a modern advocate, Sydney Hook, as quoted in Tinker, *How the West Was Lost*, 45-6. These are obviously broad and significant generalizations which cannot be thoroughly supported or explained in this paper. Tinker’s work is an excellent starting place for further study.

¹⁰ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/>

¹¹ As found at: https://www.nas.org/articles/social_justice_and_human_nature. Accessed 17 April 2019.

¹² Materials in this paragraph are primarily drawn from the UCLA School of Public Affairs, as found at: <https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/>. Accessed 17 April 2019.

oppressed, that they are by nature oppressors themselves and that they cannot speak truthfully or helpfully to these important issues. Only those from oppressed groups can do so—they are granted experiential authority, regardless of what they may or may not have actually experienced.¹³

Intersectionality Intersectionality is “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.”¹⁴ The phrase was coined by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, though it has only recently passed into wide circulation. Briefly, according to intersectional theory, the more minority categories a person identifies with, the more oppressed they are: thus, a black lesbian woman is thrice-more oppressed than a white homosexual man.

White privilege “White privilege is the automatic, taken-for-granted advantage bestowed upon white people as a result of living in a society based on the premise of white as the human ideal, and that from its founding established white advantage as a matter of law and today as a matter of policy and practice. It doesn't matter if you agree with it, if you want it, if you even are aware of it — it's 24/7/365.”¹⁵ (Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility*).

Woke There are at least two common levels of meaning to woke. 1) *Woke*¹⁶ means being conscious of racial discrimination in society and other forms of oppression and injustice. In mainstream use, *woke* can also more generally describe someone or something as being “with it.” 2) *Woke* refers to a white person who is on board with the social justice viewpoint and agenda. One who is *woke* has begun to ‘own his privilege’ and ‘check his privilege.’

Antiracism¹⁷ “The active dismantling of systems, privileges, and everyday practices that reinforce and normalize the contemporary dimensions of white dominance.” (popularized by Ibram X. Kendi’s book, *How to Be An Antiracist*).

¹³ See also Dr. Josh Buice, “Brave New Religion: Intersectionality,” as found at: <https://sovereignnations.com/2019/01/30/brave-new-religion-intersectionality-dr-josh-buice/>. Accessed 4 May 2019. See also three helpful videos on “Intersectionality and Identity Politics”, delivered at Southern Seminary by David French, with the first found at: <https://youtu.be/eDwpzPne7QU>. Accessed 17 April 2019.

¹⁴ As found at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>. Accessed 17 April 2019.

¹⁵ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/white-privilege-racism-ibram-x-kendi-robin-diangelo/>

¹⁶ <https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/woke/>

SOME COMMON, UNRECOGNIZED, UNJUST BEHAVIORS TODAY

Slander—spreading a false report about others with the intent to do them harm (2 Samuel 19:7—Ziba and Mephisbosheth).

Gossip—passing along a bad report behind someone’s back for an unjust reason (Proverbs 26:20-28).

Lying—making false statements, whether explicitly or by the willful omission of relevant facts (Exodus 20:16—You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, the 9th commandment)

Busybody—a person who inserts herself in a situation that does not rightly concern her, even with an intent to ‘help’ (1 Timothy 5:13: “Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not”).

Usurpation—a person who seeks to exercise authority that has not been granted to him, most often in decision-making. This is to be distinguished from giving counsel as appropriate (cf. Numbers 16—Korah’s rebellion, esp. v. 3, “They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?’”).

Flattery/Recruitment—making much of others in order to recruit them to your side in a dispute (cf. Galatians 4:16-17: “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them”).

Racism—assigning inherent superiority to one’s ethnicity (pride) or inherent inferiority to others’ (hatred).

¹⁷ <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a32962206/what-is-anti-racism/>

KEY RESPONSES TO SOME POPULAR ASSERTIONS ON RACE

Are white Americans inherently racist?

Are black Americans inherently oppressed? Are women? Are 'sexual minorities'?

What should the church be doing about social problems?

How do we care for brothers and sisters who:

a) feel wronged by racism?

b) are caught up in Social Justice perspectives?

How does the doctrine of vocation help us to recognize and fulfill our social obligations (i.e., *do justice*)?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Read your Bible. Repeatedly and often. Consider and pray and ask God for wisdom.

Darrell Harrison and Virgil Walker, *Just Thinking* Podcast, available at: . You may want to begin with “George Floyd and the Gospel” (6/1/20), before listening to “Whiteness” (7/31/19) and “Black Lives Matter?” (8/19/20), among others. Available at: <https://justthinking.me/podcast-home/>.

Douglas Wilson and Randy Booth. *A Justice Primer*. 2nd ed. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2018.