

Understanding Social Justice Through A Biblical Perspective

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Week 1: Understanding Biblical Justice

1. All people are created with a basic moral compass.

2. Justice is the carrying out in a society the moral law.
 - Who determines what is moral and just may vary.
 - Christians are called to follow God's moral law even when it conflicts with society. (Acts 5: 29)

3. The Bible details two main forms of justice:
 - Mishpat: rules and laws which uphold God's ethical and moral standards.

 - Tsedaqah: living a moral and honorable life, including loving our neighbor, forgiveness, and charity.

4. Biblical justice: rendering impartially and proportionally everyone his due in conforming to the righteous standard of God's moral law.
 - a. **Impartial**
 - Rules, punishments, and rewards are to be handed out exactly the same for all people. (James 2:1-4)

 - God doesn't use sexual preference, melanin, checking account balance to determine what is just.

 - b. **Proportional**
 - Punishment must fit the crime.
 - Goldilocks Principal
 - Eye for an eye... (Lev. 24:20)

c. **Each His Due (Process)**

- You reap what you sow. (1 Cor 3:8)

- Ignorance is not an excuse.

- Fair and timely trial
 - o Must have two or more witnesses (2 Cor 13:1)

 - o Each person is judged individually (Rev. 20:12)

d. **Conformity to God's Moral Standards**

- Golden Rule (Luke 6:31)

- God's morals don't change based on time, person, season, or reason (Heb. 13:8)

e. **Biblical justice** is to be honored both in our lifestyle (tsedaqah) and our laws (mishpat).

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that all humans are born with a basic code of morality? Why or why not?
2. Give an example of offering *tsadeqah* justice as compared to *mishpat* justice?
3. Read Exodus 23:1-9. Can you think of examples in culture where these principles have been upheld or denied?
4. What are the four elements to Biblical justice?
5. The fourth criteria for Biblical justice is to reflect God's moral standards. What are some of those standards?
6. Have you experienced difficult conversations about the application of justice?
7. How did Jesus elevate *tsadeqah* justice over the reigning Jewish *mishpat* justice?