

# Justice & Navigating Difficult Times

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## **Micah 6:6-8**

*With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.*

*And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Justice is on everyone's mind recently. There was debate and protest about the actions of the Government during the pandemic. Then there is an ongoing debate about race relations and justice in America. People are upset, some for wrong reasons and hate, but many for love and the right reasons. It is difficult as Christians to navigate such times.

Sin is a part of this world and injustice is a part of the human condition. I don't have all the answers and I can't tell you exactly what to do. You have to figure that out for yourself with lots of prayer and by using God's word. However, we can look at God's word together and consider a few things while we navigate these times.

## **We are Called to be Different**

### **Romans 12:2**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Simply by doing what God wants us to do we will become peculiar in our behavior. We will be different - or should be. If we aren't, something is wrong.

## **All Are Created in The Image of God.**

The foundation of all our interactions with any other person, and one of the reasons we are different, is this: All are created in the image of God. Every. Single. Person. You will never look into the eyes of a person that God does not love. Remember this as you watch the news or read Facebook or talk to someone. God wants us to treat everyone, even the least deserving, with this in mind. And Jesus died for every single one of them.

**Genesis 9:6**

*“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.*

**Watch your tongue** (and your fingers when they type)

**James 3:2-12**

*We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.*

*3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

*7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

*9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

We praise God and then we curse human beings like the Governor or the President, the protestors or the police, some famous person, or someone we disagree with. Stop it. Think about your words. Just don’t.

**Do Justice, Love Mercy****Micah 6:8**

*And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

**Act Justly**

We are to act justly or do justice, not love it. This justice, acting justly, is focused on serving others not ourselves. Often love for justice is inward focused, “I deserve justice!” or focused on retribution, “I demand justice!” This is not the type of justice we should focus on for retribution and vengeance will be taken care of by God, and the authorities he put in place.

**Romans 12:19**

*Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

**Romans 13:4-5**

*4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.*

Leave the vengeance and retribution to God and his authorities. We need to focus on restorative justice. We need to seek out vulnerable people, those being taken advantage of, the oppressed, and the suffering and we need to give them love, help, mercy, and justice. We need to stand up for those who need justice like God does. And that applies to current issues.

**Psalm 10:14**

*But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.*

**Prov 31:8-9**

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

**Isaiah 1:17**

*Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.*

**Proverbs 29:7**

*The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.*

Throughout history, Christians have been on the forefront of helping the oppressed and poor. It was Christian abolitionists that pushed Great Britain to outlaw slavery in 1833. It was Christian abolitionists that led the battle in this country. And Christians have been involved in the fight for fair courts and civil rights. We are called to speak up and those that came before us did.

**Love Mercy**

Mercy is compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power. also : lenient or compassionate treatment (Webster)

We are not to just do mercy, we are to LOVE mercy and mercy is the opposite of retribution. Mercy requires letting go of the need for justice and retribution. Mercy is more important than the rest of the law!

**Hosea 6:6**

*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*

**Matthew 5:7**

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

God will be on the side of those that seek justice for others and who give mercy freely to those that have wronged them.

**James 2:12-14**

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

**We are called to Forgive****Mark 11:25**

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

Forgiveness goes hand-in-hand with mercy and allows us to be different from the world. In these times so many are angry and upset at how they have been wronged by someone else. Even those in the church. Let these things go - every time you pray to God!

**We are called to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit****Galatians 5:22-23**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

A sure sign of the Christian life and maturity are the fruits of the spirit. If you want to navigate these times and make a difference in the world then make every effort to live the fruits of the spirit: In every interaction, everywhere, with everyone, show **love**. Be **joyful** in these times because we belong to Christ. Be at **peace**, radiate peace, seek peace, live in peace, promote peace.

**Matt 5:9**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

**Romans 12:18**

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

### **James 3:17-18**

*But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

**Forbearance** is patience on steroids. It is “patient self-control; restraint and tolerance.” **Kindness** and **goodness** should be self-evident. **Faithfulness** means in all our interactions from God to our spouses and children and everyone with whom we interact we should be faithful, keeping our word and our promises. We must be **gentle**, always gentle in how we behave and treat others regardless of the circumstance.

### **Philippians 4:5**

*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

And lastly, with all the other fruits of the Spirit is **self-control**. The thing most lacking in turbulent times and the thing most needed is to be self-controlled. To not let any outside influence have an impact on your words or your behavior. Without it all the other aspects of the fruits of the Spirit will be difficult if not impossible.

The fruits of the Spirit will make us very different people in deed. As we choose to practice and embrace these characteristics, it changes to church, it changes our relationships, it changes how we treat everyone else. It changes everything!

**We are called to shine our light.**

### **Matthew 5:16**

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Our job in these times is to be different, to love others, watch our tongue, act justly for the oppressed, love mercy, forgive, exhibit the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) and in doing all these things we will be very different than those around us and our light will shine before men!

### **What Next?**

As we all struggle to navigate these times let us practice what the Bible teaches us and let us seek good council in God’s word and those with wisdom that understand the times. We each should prayerfully examine our own hearts and minds. Christianity is a radical and selfless way of life that should make us stand out as different from those around us.

## Questions to Ask Yourself

- What are my priorities? Self or God and others?
- Am I seeking justice for others and uplifting the downtrodden and oppressed?
- Am I a person who acts justly and loves mercy?
- Am I giving in to the world or am I being a light for Christ?
- Is my behavior typical of those around me or different?
- Do others see Christ in my choice of words and actions?
- Am I living the fruits of the Spirit?
- Do people see Christ through all my interactions with others?

The earliest followers experienced this life of the Spirit, not just as a status of being saved, but as a power that changed their lives and compelled them to act.

Go and seek righteousness and justice for others. Courageously making other people's problems, your problems. This is what Jesus meant when he said love your neighbor as yourself. And in so doing take them Christ. This is a lifetime commitment to do what the prophet Micah said. A lifetime commitment fueled by God's strong plea in Micah 6:8:

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Jesus, to show us the Father, did exactly that and lived a different life of all the fruits of the Spirit. For every single human being. Jesus lived righteousness and justice. Jesus had mercy on us and died for us. And for every single human being.

If you want to know more about this different life, if you have any needs, want prayers, or want to know how to put on Christ on in baptism, please contact us at [camphillelders@gmail.com](mailto:camphillelders@gmail.com) or through our website or Facebook. We will respond.

I would like to close with a prayer and then we will have the closing song and announcements.

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear Lord, we bow before you and humbly ask that you would help us be tools in your service to do your will. Help us to be loving, give us wisdom on how to deal with those around us. Help us to be beacons of justice and mercy and to live the fruits of the Spirit. We pray that our actions and our words and our love would point people to you. Thank you for our blessings, for your Word that teaches us how live and love and thank you for salvation through Christ. We pray this in Christ name, amen.