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# BEREAN DIGEST

STUDY. PRACTICE. TEACH.

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## Justice: What Does It Look Like? – Part 1



### Introduction

God has made man (humans) differently from all other creatures on the earth. While some will try to make man only a higher order of animals. The Genesis record indicates that we are like no other creature that God has made. We were made in the very “image of God” (Gen 1:26). Because all men are created in the image of God—all men are equal.

### All from One Man

While speaking to the Athenians Paul declares: “And he made **from one man** every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...” (Acts 17:26).

Notice that Paul indicates that God made every human being (man) that is found in every nation from one man. Thus, regardless of anyone’s skin color (melanin), height, weight, hair texture, or facial

feature—they all owe their existence to one man—Adam.

### Justice and Equity

#### What does justice and equity mean?

**Justice** has to do with protecting rights and punishing wrongs using fairness (**getting what one deserves without favor**). It has to do with the practice of what is right and just. Furthermore, it has to do with what makes for a right relationship – that is – it is not just what is right according to law books, but how individuals interact with others. For example, the Bible speaks about “**doing justice**” (Jeremiah 22:3; Micah 6:8; Proverbs 21:3). That is, man is to practice justice in all their dealings with others.

**Equity** has to do with situations in which everyone is treated equally. Basically, fairness in society.

**Why are justice and equity important? Because everyone deserves to be treated fairly regardless of his color, gender, or socioeconomic status in society.**

God declared to Moses, “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” (Leviticus 19:15).

**Thus, the law should be fair to both the poor and the rich. Justice is not only about meting out the appropriate punishment for a wrong that has been done but ensuring that certain benefits (needs) are aided to those lacking them. It is very easy to take advantage of those who are weaker – the foreigner, the widow, and orphan—basically the poor.**

## Widow, Fatherless, and Foreigner

God gives special attention in Scripture to the **widow, fatherless, and foreigner**. Inherent in this idea—culturally—is the idea that these individuals would be poor (and landless). Thus, it would be more likely that they would be lacking the daily needs of life or it would be harder for them to get access to them.

Thus says the Lord: **Do justice and righteousness**, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And **do no wrong or violence** to the **resident alien**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**, nor shed innocent blood in this place (Jeremiah 22:3).

He executes justice for the **fatherless** and the **widow**, and loves the **sojourner**, **giving him food and clothing** (Deuteronomy 10:18).

“You **shall not pervert the justice** due to the **sojourner** or to the **fatherless**, or take a **widow's** garment in pledge (Deuteronomy 24:17)

“Cursed be anyone who **perverts the justice** due to the **sojourner**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ (Deuteronomy 27:19)

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, **do not oppress the widow**, the **fatherless**, the **sojourner**, or the **poor**, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart” (Zechariah 7:9-10).

I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and **will execute justice for the needy** (Psalm 140:12).

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).

Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the

adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who **oppress the hired worker in his wages**, the **widow** and the **fatherless**, against those who thrust aside the **sojourner**, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:5).

## God is a God of Justice

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For **the Lord is a God of justice**; blessed are all those who wait for him (Isaiah 30:18).

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 (Isaiah 61:8).

## Conclusion

God is a God of justice for all—the rich and poor. Justice asks: “Is he innocent or guilty?”—based on the right standard. **Justice is blind**. It cares not if someone is rich or poor. Guilty is guilty and innocent is innocent. Justice is blind to racial, economic, or social differences. Basically, justice demands that everyone is equal. **Justice also seeks to uplift the needy because that is just too.**

## Study

How often does God mention widows, the fatherless, and sojourners in the Bible? What is the context of those occurrences?

## Practice

What can you do to help and encourage widows and the fatherless? How can you walk justly and be a voice for the voiceless (cf. Proverbs 31:8–9).

## Teach

Tell someone how God views justice for the widow, the fatherless and poor and why it is important.