

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

*Galatians 6:9-10*  
*Lesson #25*  
*Do Good to All*  
*04/02/2023*

**Social Justice is about respect for the “image of God” in every human.**

How much is the distribution of material wealth an issue in a society that equates net worth with self worth and a ticket to many basic goods and services?



**“Materialism is a toxic preoccupation with material things**

that can be expressed as a passion for financial wealth, an obsession with frugality, or even in a despising of material possessions.”



**Both the rich and poor can be materialistic.**



**Both the “have-nots” and the “have-lots” can say “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”.**

**The “have-nots” need to realize that KINGDOM peace, power, and dignity do not require GAINING material wealth.**



**The “have-lots” need to realize that KINGDOM dignity does not depend on KEEPING worldly wealth & power.**

## Social Injustice

sets the stage for a “power response” by both the “have nots” & “have lots”.

## The WAY of the Cross

Walk in and by it and don't get in the way of it.

Are we mocking the way of the world, or the Way of the Cross?



**1. It's not only about suffering in this life but also about joy in the life to come.**

*Hebrews 12*

“1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **run with endurance** the race that is set before us, 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may **not grow weary and lose heart.**”

## 2. It's not just about us and them, but more so about us and God.

### Matthew 25:40

“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, **you did it to Me.**”

### Acts 17

“<sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though **He is not far from each one of us**; <sup>28</sup> **for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’**”

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## 3. It extends to the whole world, but starts with the church.

### Galatians 6

“<sup>9</sup> And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we **do not grow weary**. <sup>10</sup> So then, **while we have opportunity**, let us do good **to all men**, and especially to those who are **of the household of the faith.**”

- “Growing weary” (discouragement) **because of delayed results should be expected.**
- “Opportunity” (not reward) is what should **motivate us to do good.**
- “all men” (not just believers) are in view. **We are our brother's keeper.**

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## 1 Corinthians 12

“<sup>23</sup> and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, <sup>24</sup> whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, <sup>25</sup> that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And **if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**”

**Social justice is about “empathy”.**

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## 2 Corinthians 8

“<sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup> For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of **equality** — <sup>14</sup> at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be **equality**; <sup>15</sup> as it is written, “**He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.**””

**Social justice is about “equality”.**

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## Acts 4

“<sup>32</sup> And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. <sup>33</sup> And with great **power** the apostles were giving **witness** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant **grace** was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, <sup>35</sup> and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.”

**Social justice SHOULD be “voluntary” and from the heart.**

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## 4. It's not just about words, but also about action.

### James 1:27

“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**”

**Authentic Christianity is active compassion and avoiding false, carnal hopes.**

**Good deeds are DEEDS.**

**Good works are WORKS.**

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## 5. It's not just about individuals but also about systems.

Acts 6:1

"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the **Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews**, because their **widows were being overlooked** in the daily serving of food."

Those in power TEND to:

1. **shape the system**
2. **officiate the service**
3. **keep the score**
4. **tell the story**



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## Seedbeds for systemic social injustice

**Political tribalism, Medical specialties, Ethnic history, Gender, Nationalism, Theological sects, Economic classes, Etc.**

### Prophylactic Precautions

**Know your own prejudices, Exposure to and celebration of diversity,**

**Major on majors not minors, Kingdom theology, Avoid stereotypes, Listen, Learn, Love**



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Acts 6

"2 And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task ... 5 And the statement found **approval with the whole congregation**; and they chose **Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and **Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas** and **Nicolas**, a proselyte from Antioch."

**Social justice needs wise, empathetic, team leadership.**

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Revelation 7

"9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, **from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10 and **they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."**

**Kingdom theology is diverse: Culturally, Racially, Economically, Politically, Denominationally**

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## The "Have-nots"

1. Should not feel victimized, but blessed as **OVERCOMERS**.  
**Their power is magnified by their response through what they suffer.**
2. Worldly hopes make us bitter not better, prouder not meeker.  
**A "thorn in the flesh" can be a blessing while yet a thorn.**
3. **"That's not fair"** sounds more like Uncle Sam than Jesus.

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## The "Have-lots"

1. Should feel thankful and **GENEROUS**.  
**What they do with their worldly blessing will testify to their spiritual wealth or poverty.**
2. Should honor the "have-nots" as family.  
**Living as a community of "general welfare".**
3. Should fear the danger of worldly wealth, that is not treated as a stewardship.  
**Wealth is not a sign, but a gift. Giving is not a gift, but a SIGN.**

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### *Does your life invite questions?*

1. Does your life raise questions in “hungry hearts”?
2. Do you see your response to failure & injustice to be more important than your pain and disappointment?
3. Do you see personal injustice & suffering as an opportunity for your true hope to be revealed?
4. Are you prepared to give a sensitive response to those “hungry hearts” that have “ears to hear”?

- *Start with a renewed commitment to Christ as Lord.*
- *Be as passionate to understand as to be understood.*
- *Look for opportunities daily to let your light shine.*
- *Clear your eyes to see as Jesus sees.*

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### *Common Concerns*

1. **Worldliness** defined by actions not perspectives & posture.
2. **Expectations** of the Kingdom before its time and without its King.
3. **Attachments** to political philosophies as God’s will.



*The Easter Response!*

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## *A Berean’s look at ...*



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