

VIRTUE 5

JUSTICE

Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

—Psalm 112:5-8

He has showed you, O man, 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.

—Micah 6:8

Reverend Tim Keller authored an entire book on the concept of Christian justice, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. When interviewed¹⁹ about this work and asked to provide a summary definition of justice, Reverend Keller said, "Caring for the vulnerable." He also provided an umbrella definition of justice: "Giving people what they deserve." While that definition can have a negative tone (i.e., finding and stopping evildoers), he described a positive aspect as well: "Looking to the vulnerable—to people made in the image of God—and asking ourselves: 'Are they

getting the kind of *care* they're due? As beings made in God's image, are they being cared for properly?" He then boils down justice to this: "Giving people what they are due. So we punish evildoers, and we care for the vulnerable." This is a very tight definition for a very complex issue.

Many might believe that applying the concepts of justice in modern times is limited to only those who work in the criminal justice system. But that's not the case. Modern knights living in virtually any life situation can work to uphold justice. Ethically practicing justice in all things great and small should be important to your life because they are important to God. It does not matter if you are lobbying to create or uphold laws that are just or dividing up cookies between your kids, for God desires each of us to apply justice within our sphere of influence and within the race He calls us to run.

Ramon Lull believed that justice is fundamentally intertwined with knighthood:

If a man without justice were a Knight, it would follow that justice would not be in that place where in fact it is, and that knighthood would be something altogether different from what it is. Nor is it relevant that a Knight may have a smattering of justice and believes himself to be in the Order of Knighthood—if he is, in truth, injurious, he doesn't belong at all. For knighthood and justice are so intimately intertwined that knighthood cannot survive without justice. An injurious Knight is an enemy to justice and defeats and expels himself from the Order.

Scripture reveals that God *loves* justice ("For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face" (Psalm 11:7)) and that justice is the *foundation* of his throne ("Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before

you” (Psalm 89:14)). Not only is justice the concrete that makes up the foundation of God’s throne, those who live by it are promised blessing: “Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right” (Psalm 106:3). We are given a promise in Scripture that if we seek the Lord, we will fully understand God’s definition of justice: “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully” (Proverbs 28:5).

Sometimes living justly can include actively working to establish and uphold justice as well as loosening the chains of injustice:

- **ESTABLISHING AND UPHOLDING JUSTICE:**
 - o By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down (Proverbs 29:4).
 - o To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I [Wisdom] hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power. By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth (Proverbs 8:13-16).

- **LOOSING THE CHAINS OF INJUSTICE:**
 - o “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to *loose the chains of injustice* and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard” (Isaiah 58:6-8).

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Believe it or not, God will give you several opportunities to exercise justice in both these ways of establishing justice and preventing injustice.

REFLECT

To administer justice badly or to neglect the customs that are most essential to his knightly duty is simply to despise the Order itself; therefore, as all these things aforementioned concern a Knight's physical preparedness, so justice, wisdom, charity, loyalty, truth, humility, strength, hope, promptness and all other similar virtues pertain to the preparedness of the Knight's soul.

—Ramon Lull

If a Knight is consumed with pride and seeks by that means to uphold the Order of Knighthood, he is in fact corrupting it, for his Order was founded on justice and humility with a view to protecting the humble against the proud.”

—Ramon Lull

RESPOND

1. How can a modern-day knight fight injustice?
2. How can a modern-day knight establish justice?
3. How can a modern-day knight uphold justice?
4. Why is justice important to God?
5. How do we actively pursue justice?