



Do your Weights Measure Up?

When injustice exists at a national or societal level it is often easy to see and, from the comfort of our own homes, apparently easy enough to rectify. After all, we can all ‘put the world to rights’. But justice, like charity, begins at home. It begins with me, and you, and how we behave towards each other. Justice needs to be apparent in the small scale business of our every-day lives, in our homes, our workplaces and our church. In this third and final study on justice we are going to come closer to home and consider some of the ways in which we are called to act justly as individuals.

Business is Business

- ➔ Read Deuteronomy 25:13-16. Here is the original ‘double standard’. Obviously, with light and heavy weights to hand anyone trading in the market could mis-weigh every deal to their own advantage...
- ! The Hebrew word used in verse 16 for ‘detestable thing’ is a strong one. In the Old Testament it is often used to describe God’s view of idols.
- ? How quick are you to trust a company or business-person who offers you a deal? Do you generally expect them to be above board, or are you on the look out for the hidden catch, the ‘small print’ or the fiddle? Are ‘sharp’ business practices so widespread that we just accept them as normal?
- ? Do Christians need to ‘go along to get along’? How realistic is it to suggest that as Christians we should be utterly honest in the workplace?
- ? Do you think that the statements of Proverbs 21:6 are borne out in practice?
- ? Have you ever been put in a position where you were under pressure to behave deceptively? How did you handle the situation?

Useless Facts

- The English word sincere comes from the Latin *sin cera* – ‘without wax’.
- Wax was commonly used in Roman times to fill in and conceal the cracks and faults in marble statues in an attempt to make them fetch a better price than they were worth.
- Wax was also sometimes used in metal weights to lower their mass.
- Hence *sincere*, “without wax”, became the boast of the honest tradesman.

Fair’s Fair

- ➔ Read Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Whilst this was written specifically to the legal profession of the time, the principles apply equally to any situation where we are in authority over people, whether that be at work, in church, as a parent in the home or elsewhere.
- ! This short passage immediately follows instructions about three of the main religious festivals of the Jewish calendar, ‘Passover’, ‘Weeks’ and ‘Tabernacles’. Once again we see a close link between worship and the administration of justice.
- ? Have you ever been in a position where you felt that others were being given preferential treatment? Talk about how it made you feel.
- ! The phrase translated “do not show partiality” in verse 19 is literally “do not recognise faces”. In other words, treat people according to the situation and without any regard for who they are.
- ? As a parent, boss, youth leader, manager etc., how can you guard against having ‘favourites’?

Greasing the Wheels

- ➔ You are a missionary involved in distributing urgent humanitarian aid in an impoverished third world country. Your truck-load of food and medical supplies will mean the difference between life and death for dozens of people in the village you are making for. However, there is a problem – your truck has been impounded by local officials at a makeshift roadside check-point. They say your paperwork is incomplete. They say it could take two or three weeks to process the necessary forms. Unless, that is, you can find \$250 cash for “emergency

paperwork”, which it turns out they could process in just a few minutes...

You have the money, and you know that without the supplies people will probably die. But does that justify offering such a flagrant bribe?

❓ Without looking up any of the Bible passages, discuss together how you would react in this situation.

❓ Now read the following passages (and any others you think might be relevant):

Proverbs 17:23

Ecclesiastes 7:7

Isaiah 33:15-16

Proverbs 17:8

Proverbs 21:4

Do these scriptures shed any light upon, or in any way change your mind about, the best course of action? Did any of the verses surprise you?

❓ Would your answers to the original question be any different if you had been transporting, say, Bibles to otherwise safe and well people? How about if you had just been visiting the country as a tourist?

❓ When faced with a corrupt system, or corrupt individuals within the system, is it ever justified for Christians to accept the situation and work within it, or should we always confront and oppose injustice at every turn?

To do peace, you must get up off your apathy
Yolanda King