

Sunday, February 8, 2026

God & Governance - Session 4

Homework Assignment

Suggested Homework / Ways to Go Deeper This Week

If you're willing, here are some ways to continue processing and applying what we covered:

Re-read the key passages on justice

Spend time slowly reading and praying through:

- Genesis 1:27
- Luke 6:31
- Proverbs 31:8–9
- Zechariah 7:9–10
- Isaiah 59:14–15
- Psalm 146:7–9
- Luke 14:12–14
- Matthew 25:31–40

As you read, ask:

- What does this passage show me about God's heart for justice?
- Which group(s) does it highlight (orphan, widow, foreigner, poor, "least of these")?
- Is there anyone in my actual life who fits one of these descriptions?
- Identify real people, not just categories
 - For each of the four key groups (orphan, widow, poor, resident foreigner), write down:
- At least one person you know (or one local context you're aware of—e.g., foster kids, a single parent, someone food-insecure, an immigrant family).
- One concrete way you could move toward justice/shalom in their life (prayer, encouragement, help with a need, connecting them to resources like the Gospel Mission, etc.).

You don't have to do all of it this week—but do the thinking. Ask God, "Who are you putting in front of me?"

Practice the tools in one conversation

Sometime this week, intentionally use at least one tool:

- Clarify: “Are we talking about facts, opinions, or feelings right now?”
- Or mentally place an issue into Box 1, 2, or 3 to gauge how certain you should be.
- Or ask yourself: Is this a Die, Divide, Debate, or Decide issue?

Make a quick note afterward of how it affected the tone and outcome of the conversation.

Optional reading recommendation

If you’d like to go even further, Pastor John mentioned:

Generous Justice by Timothy Keller – an excellent exploration of biblical justice, shalom, and God’s heart for the vulnerable.

Consider picking up a copy or skimming a summary/review if you’re not ready for the whole book.

Summary: Biblical Justice: Understanding God's Heart for the Vulnerable

This powerful teaching invites us into a transformative exploration of biblical justice—not as mere punishment for wrongdoing, but as righteousness in action. Drawing from Genesis through the prophets and into the teachings of Jesus, we discover that justice means making things right, creating shalom where everything is as it ought to be. The session walks us through Scripture's consistent call to protect four vulnerable groups: orphans, widows, the poor, and resident foreigners. These aren't exhaustive categories but representative of all who cannot speak for themselves or protect themselves. We're challenged to see beyond literal definitions—orphans include foster children and trafficking victims, widows encompass single parents and divorcees, the poor extend to those struggling with addiction and mental illness, and foreigners remind us that every human deserves dignity regardless of documentation status. The heart-piercing truth emerges: we are called to speak for the voiceless, stand for the powerless, and treat every person with the dignity befitting God's image. This isn't about political affiliation but about Christ-like compassion. As we navigate our complex world, we're equipped with practical tools to evaluate information, engage in difficult conversations without destroying relationships, and practice our Christian civic responsibilities with wisdom and grace.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned Scripture References:

Genesis 1:27 - God created humankind in his own image; male and female he created them

Luke 6:31 - Treat others in the same way that you would want them to treat you (Golden Rule)

Proverbs 31:8-9 - Speak on behalf of those unable to speak for themselves

Zechariah 7:9-10 - Exercise true judgment; do not oppress the widow, orphan, foreigner, or poor

Isaiah 59 (specific verses not stated) - Description of when justice is driven back

Psalms 146:7-9 - God vindicates the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, protects foreigners, lifts up orphans and widows

Luke 14 (appears to be verses 12-14) - When you host a meal, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind

Matthew 25:35-39 - "I was hungry and you gave me food..." (Parable of the Sheep and Goats)

Amos 5:24 - "Let justice flow like a torrent of water, righteous actions like a stream that never dries up"

Psalms 33:5 - Referenced as showing parallelism between justice and righteousness

Additional References Mentioned:

Matthew 8 (chapters earlier than Luke 14) - "If you love only those who love you, what credit is that?"

The Lord's Prayer concept - "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes Not Explicitly Cited:

Based on the sermon's themes of biblical justice, the following verses align with the discussion:

Micah 6:8 - "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."

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."

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 - God defends the cause of the fatherless and widow, and loves the foreigner

James 1:27 - "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress"

Leviticus 19:33-34 - Treatment of foreigners/aliens

Discussion Questions

- How can we distinguish between venting to process our feelings and gossiping about others, and what biblical principles should guide our conversations when we need counsel about difficult relationships?
- In what ways might our efforts to help the poor, orphans, widows, or immigrants actually create dependency rather than empowerment, and how can we ensure our justice work leads to long-term flourishing?
- How does Genesis 1:27, which teaches that all humans are made in God's image, challenge us to treat people with dignity even when we disagree with their legal status, political views, or life choices?
- What does it mean that Jesus said the warrior who lays down his life finds eternal life, and how does this differ from the biblical teaching that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone?
- How can we practice speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves in our daily contexts, whether at work, school, or in our communities?
- What are the modern equivalents of the biblical categories of orphan, widow, foreigner, and poor in our society, and who might we be overlooking in these groups?
- How should Christians balance supporting law enforcement of immigration policies while also ensuring that immigrants are treated with the dignity, value, and worth that reflects their status as image-bearers of God?
- In what ways might people in our own congregation or community be poor in spirit, relationships, or emotional support even if they appear materially comfortable?
- How can curiosity serve as an antidote to judgmentalism, and what questions might we ask to better understand people before making assumptions about them?
- What government policies should Christians support that would promote biblical justice while fostering long-term independence rather than creating cycles of dependency?

5-Day Devotional: Biblical Justice and Compassion

Day 1: Created in God's Image

Reading: Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 139:13-16

Devotional: Every person you encounter today bears the divine image of their Creator. This foundational truth transforms how we view justice—it's not merely a social construct but a sacred responsibility. When we advocate for the vulnerable, we're protecting God's image-bearers. The widow struggling financially, the foster child seeking stability, the immigrant facing discrimination—each reflects God's handiwork. Before forming opinions about policy or people, pause and ask: "Am I honoring the image of God in this person?" This perspective shifts justice from obligation to worship. Today, look at someone society overlooks and recognize the divine fingerprints on their life. Your treatment of them reflects your understanding of God's creative work.

Day 2: The Golden Rule in Action

Reading: Luke 6:27-36; Matthew 25:31-40

Devotional: Jesus revolutionized justice by making it personal: treat others as you want to be treated. This isn't merely good advice—it's the lens through which we evaluate every interaction. When considering immigration policy, ask yourself: "If I were fleeing danger, how would I want to be treated?" When encountering someone experiencing homelessness, consider: "If I lost everything, what dignity would I hope to maintain?" Christ identifies so completely with the marginalized that serving them becomes serving Him. The hungry, the stranger, the prisoner—these aren't distant causes but encounters with Jesus Himself. Biblical justice isn't about political alignment; it's about recognizing Christ in unexpected places. Who is the "least of these" in your life today?

Day 3: Speaking for the Voiceless

Reading: Proverbs 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:16-17; Zechariah 7:9-10

Devotional: Scripture repeatedly commands us to advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves. This includes the foster child navigating a broken system, the single mother working multiple jobs, the elderly widow isolated in her home, and the trafficked youth trapped in exploitation. Speaking up requires courage—it means challenging systems, confronting injustice, and sometimes standing alone. It means choosing curiosity over judgment, asking "What's your story?" instead of assuming we already know. Biblical advocacy isn't about being loud; it's about lending your voice to amplify theirs. Consider who in your sphere lacks advocates. Perhaps it's the coworker everyone gossips about or the socially awkward teenager. Your voice matters. Silence in the face of injustice makes us complicit.

Day 4: Justice as Shalom

Reading: Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 146:5-9

Devotional: God's vision of justice extends beyond punishment for wrongdoing—it's about shalom, making things the way they ought to be. Justice and righteousness flow together like an endless stream, creating environments where people flourish. This means addressing not just symptoms but root causes. It means asking: "What help actually helps?" Sometimes our assistance creates dependency rather than

empowerment. Biblical justice teaches people to fish rather than just providing fish. It requires wisdom to discern between enabling and empowering, between short-term relief and long-term transformation. God loves the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner—not because of their circumstances but because they're His image-bearers. How can you promote shalom in someone's life today?

Day 5: Difficult Conversations Without Division

Reading: James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 4:5-6

Devotional: Justice conversations often divide rather than unite. Yet God calls us to discuss difficult issues without destroying relationships. This requires humility—acknowledging we don't have all answers. It demands curiosity—seeking to understand before being understood. It necessitates distinguishing between facts, opinions, and feelings in our conversations. Not every issue is worth dividing over; most are worth debating and deciding together. When discussing controversial topics like immigration, poverty, or racial justice, remember: the person across from you is also made in God's image. Disagree without demonizing. Challenge ideas without attacking character. Speak truth with grace. The watching world needs to see Christians model how to navigate differences without hatred. Your gentleness and respect may open doors for the gospel that argument never could.

TOOLS: FOUR "D'S"

1. DIE
2. DIVIDE
3. DEBATE
4. DECIDE



TOOLS: THREE KINDS OF COMMUNICATION

1. FACTS
2. OPINIONS
3. FEELINGS



REVIEW: THREE PURPOSES

1. LEARN HOW TO EVALUATE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR WORLD.
2. LEARN TO TALK ABOUT DIFFICULT IDEAS WITHOUT DESTROYING RELATIONSHIPS.
3. LEARN AND PRACTICE CHRISTIAN AMERICAN CIVIL RESPONSIBILITIES.



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TOOLS: THREE BOXES

1. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS
2. WHAT WE UNDERSTAND FROM SCRIPTURE
3. WHERE THE SCRIPTURE IS SILENT



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LUKE 6:31

TREAT OTHERS IN THE SAME WAY THAT YOU WOULD WANT THEM TO TREAT YOU.



ZECHERIAH 7:9-10

"THE LORD WHO RULES OVER ALL SAID, 'EXERCISE TRUE JUDGMENT AND SHOW BROTHERHOOD AND COMPASSION TO EACH OTHER. YOU MUST NOT OPPRESS THE WIDOW, THE ORPHAN, THE FOREIGNER, OR THE POOR, NOR SHOULD ANYONE SECRETLY PLOT EVIL AGAINST HIS FELLOW HUMAN BEING.'



God &

PSALM 146:7-9

"THE GOD OF JACOB...VINDICATES THE OPPRESSED, AND GIVES FOOD TO THE HUNGRY. THE LORD RELEASES THE IMPRISONED. THE LORD GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND. THE LORD LIFTS UP ALL WHO ARE BENT OVER. THE LORD LOVES THE GODLY. THE LORD PROTECTS THOSE RESIDING OUTSIDE THEIR NATIVE LAND; HE LIFTS UP THE FATHERLESS AND THE WIDOW, BUT HE OPPOSES THE WICKED.



ISAIAH 59:14-15

JUSTICE IS DRIVEN BACK; GODLINESS STANDS FAR OFF. INDEED, HONESTY STUMBLES IN THE CITY SQUARE AND MORALITY IS NOT EVEN ABLE TO ENTER. HONESTY HAS DISAPPEARED; THE ONE WHO TRIES TO AVOID EVIL IS ROBBED. THE LORD WATCHES AND IS DISPLEASED, FOR THERE IS NO JUSTICE.



LUKE 14:12-13

HE SAID ALSO TO THE MAN WHO HAD INVITED HIM, "WHEN YOU HOST A DINNER OR A BANQUET, DON'T INVITE YOUR FRIENDS OR YOUR BROTHERS OR YOUR RELATIVES OR RICH NEIGHBORS SO YOU CAN BE INVITED BY THEM IN RETURN AND GET REPAID. BUT WHEN YOU HOST AN ELABORATE MEAL, INVITE THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE LAME, AND THE BLIND."



MATTHEW 25:35-37

FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD, I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK, I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU INVITED ME IN, I WAS NAKED AND YOU GAVE ME CLOTHING, I WAS SICK AND YOU TOOK CARE OF ME, I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU VISITED ME.' THEN THE RIGHTEOUS WILL ANSWER HIM, 'LORD, WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY AND FEED YOU, OR THIRSTY AND GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK?'



MATTHEW 25:38-40

WHEN DID WE SEE YOU A STRANGER AND INVITE YOU IN, OR NAKED AND CLOTHE YOU? WHEN DID WE SEE YOU SICK OR IN PRISON AND VISIT YOU?' AND THE KING WILL ANSWER THEM, 'I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, JUST AS YOU DID IT FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS OR SISTERS OF MINE, YOU DID IT FOR ME.'



Governance Class Schedule

- Session 1: January 18
- Session 2: January 25
- Session 3: February 1
- Session 4: February 8
- Session 5: February 15

- Session 6: March 1
- Session 7: April 12
- Session 8: April 19
- Session 9: April 26
- Session 10: May 3
- Session 11: May 17
- Session 12: May 31



From this class session, they sketched both the biblical categories and some modern equivalents. Here's a concise synthesis with specifics and examples.

1. Modern "Orphans"

Biblical idea:

Those without the protection, provision, and guidance of parents.

Today this includes:

- **Children in Foster Care**

Kids removed from their homes because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

Often moved from home to home; lack stable advocates and long-term attachment.

Example: A 9-year-old whose parents' rights were terminated due to addiction, now in his third foster placement in two years.

- **Children in Group Homes / Residential Programs**

Youth with significant behavioral or mental-health challenges who don't fit well in a typical foster home.

Example: A 14-year-old girl in a residential treatment center whose parents rarely visit and have largely disengaged.

- **Homeless and Trafficked Youth**

Runaways; kicked out by parents; "couch-surfing" teens.

High risk of being trafficked or exploited.

Example: A 16-year-old sleeping in a friend's garage, recruited by an older man who offers "work" and a place to stay.

- **Functionally Orphaned Children**

Parents alive but emotionally absent, addicted, incarcerated, or so dysfunctional that the child effectively has no parental care.

Example: A middle-schooler whose mom is in jail and dad is frequently drunk, raising himself and his siblings.

2. Modern “Widows”

Biblical idea:

Those—especially women—who have lost the economic, social, and protective covering of a spouse.

Today this includes:

Women and Men Whose Spouses Have Died

- **Often left suddenly with financial, emotional, and practical burdens.**

Example: A 70-year-old woman whose husband managed all finances; she’s now alone, confused by bills, and socially isolated.

- **Divorced Men and Women**

Not widowed in the literal sense, but often experience similar loss of support and stability.

Example: A 35-year-old mom whose husband left; now raising three children, working two jobs, battling shame and exhaustion.

- **Single Parents (Mothers and Fathers)**

Raising children largely or entirely alone.

Need support, practical help, community, and sometimes financial assistance.

Example: A single dad working nights so his kids can stay in their school; rarely sleeps and has no extended family nearby.

- **Abandoned or Deserted Spouses**

Legally married but emotionally and practically “on their own.”

Example: A woman whose husband hasn’t lived at home or contributed financially for years but refuses to finalize a divorce.

3. Modern “Foreigners / Sojourners / Resident Aliens”

Biblical idea:

Those living in a land not their own, without the normal protections and security of native citizens.

Today this includes, regardless of legal status:

Legal Immigrants and Refugees

People who have come lawfully but struggle with language, culture, or discrimination.

Example: A refugee family from Syria trying to navigate school enrollment, healthcare, and jobs in a new culture.

Undocumented Immigrants

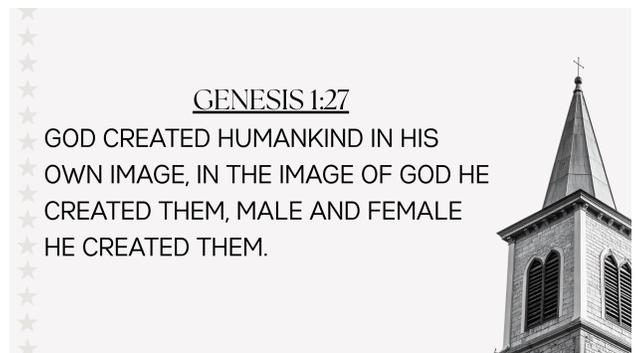
- Entered or remained without legal documentation. Whatever you believe about policy, biblically they are still image-bearers to be treated with dignity.

Example: A farmworker afraid to report wage theft or abuse because of



Christian-American
Civil Responsibilities

- PRAY
- VOTE
- COMMUNICATE WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS
- SPEAK OUT AGAINST IMMORALITY
- SEEK BIBLICAL JUSTICE

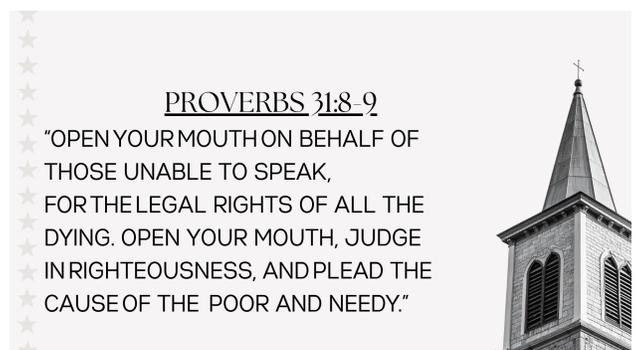


GENESIS 1:27
GOD CREATED HUMANKIND IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED THEM, MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.

deportation fears.

International Students and Temporary Workers

- Far from home, often isolated,



PROVERBS 31:8-9
“OPEN YOUR MOUTH ON BEHALF OF THOSE UNABLE TO SPEAK, FOR THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF ALL THE DYING. OPEN YOUR MOUTH, JUDGE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PLEAD THE CAUSE OF THE POOR AND NEEDY.”

sometimes exploited.

Example: A grad student from India who spends holidays alone in a dorm, never invited into a local home.

Ethnic and Racial Minorities Experiencing Prejudice

- Not “foreigners” legally, but socially treated as outsiders.
- Example: A second-generation citizen routinely profiled or mocked because of accent or skin color.

4. Modern “Poor”

Biblical idea:

Those lacking what’s needed to live and flourish—with special concern for those easily exploited or overlooked.

Today this includes:

Materially Poor

- Homeless individuals; working poor; people with chronic unemployment.
Example: A family living out of their car, both parents working but still unable to afford rent.

Food-Insecure Children and Families

- Unsure where the next meal is coming from.
Example: A middle-schooler who always takes extra food at youth group because there isn’t enough at home.

People Trapped in Addiction

- Often impoverished financially, relationally, and spiritually.
Example: A man who lost his job and housing due to meth addiction, cycling between the street, jail, and shelters.

Those with Serious Mental Illness Without Adequate Support

- Frequently homeless, unemployed, or exploited.
Example: A woman with untreated schizophrenia, living under a bridge, frightened, and unable to navigate systems.

Socially Poor / Relationally Isolated

- Lonely, rejected, bullied, or chronically on the margins.
Example: The student who eats lunch alone every day, mocked online and ignored in person.

5. “The Least of These”

Jesus’ category in Matthew 25 expands beyond any one list. It captures:

Anyone Overlooked, Powerless, or Easy to Dismiss

- Prisoners: people in jail or prison, or recently released and stigmatized.
 - The disabled: physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities.
 - The elderly: especially in care facilities, rarely visited.
- Example: A man in prison with no visitors; a woman in a nursing home whose family never comes.

People with Social Stigma

- Those whose sins or struggles are “visible” and therefore condemned more harshly.
Example: A woman with a history of prostitution now trying to follow Christ, but constantly judged by her past.

People Gossiped About or Socially Targeted

- Even if they’re not materially poor, they are “poor” in safety, respect, or relationships.
Example: A classmate or coworker everyone jokes about or slanders, who rarely gets defended by others.

Those Caught at the Intersection of Multiple Vulnerabilities

- A trafficked minor (orphaned + poor + exploited).
- A refugee single mom with children (foreigner + widow + poor).
- A disabled, undocumented worker (foreigner + disabled + poor).