

Justice, Mercy, and Peace

It's a tough world right now, locally, nationally, and internationally. With war, crime, political strife, and natural disasters being broadcast 24/7, it's not always easy to keep our heads on straight. Some I know have opted out of TV news because they have been struggling to keep their inner peace.

Keeping our balance while seeing so much bad, evil, negative strife is a bit like walking a tight rope. Deep inside we know evil has always flourished, but in recent years we keep seeing crime increase while punishment decreases. For those with biblically aligned values, the lack of proper justice is deeply disturbing. It has become increasingly difficult, even for mature Christians, to balance justice and mercy, punishment and forgiveness. It's a bit like a 4-sided see-saw in a high wind, it just won't keep its balance.

For a healthy, mature spirit to rule in our heads and hearts, we must continue to find the biblical balance of justice and mercy. And that calls for a biblical understanding of when and where to apply each of those two things. If we allow anger and frustration to dominate our thoughts, personal revenge will raise its ugly head. But if we over-apply compassion and grace, we will be unhappy with biblical justice; it will seem too harsh to those who are out of balance.

I see these challenges:

1. For those with a finely honed sense of justice, giving grace will be a deep challenge.
2. For those with a strong sense of gentleness and grace, allowing justice to take place will seem mean-spirited.
3. For those with protective sheepdog mentality (protecting others at all cost), the temptation will be to react too quickly for fear of not protecting those in your charge.

These challenges are genuine, daily, and very practical. And if we are not carefully biblical, these challenges can lead to strife between our brothers and sisters. The "He deserves to hang," crowd is at odds with the, "He needs to be forgiven," faction. The "hang them" crowd has a keenly developed sense of justice (consider 1 Corinthians 5:1,2). The "forgive him" crowd has a keenly developed sense of mercy (Luke 17:3).

But God's word calls us to a keenly developed sense of the proper application of justice or mercy depending on the details of each and every individual situation. A "one size fits all" approach to justice or mercy is not a biblical approach. God, Himself, ripped the throne from King Saul (1 Samuel 15) yet forgave King David and let him stay on the throne (see 2 Samuel 11, 12).

To be pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9) we must be well-versed in His word and properly balanced according to each, individual situation.

We must deal with the reality of the evening news yet maintain a balance of justice and mercy. We must develop and maintain the fine art of assessing reality while still meditating in the pure and beautiful things of Philippians 4:4-8. Please understand living in the real world, protecting yourself and your family (nuclear or church) and still live in the deep peace that comes from thinking (meditating, pondering) the positive things of this passage. Keep your balance, or you will fall.

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