



**WHAT IS A
BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF
JUSTICE?**

SIX OBSERVATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH
OF THE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

JEFF MYERS, PH.D.

PRESIDENT OF SUMMIT MINISTRIES

In 1955, an African-American teenage boy named Emmet Till was visiting relatives in Mississippi when he was accused of disrespecting a white woman in a grocery store. Till was abducted, brutally beaten, and shot in the head by the woman's husband and his brother.

After Emmet Till's body was recovered from the Tallahatchie river, his grieving mother insisted on a public funeral with an open casket. Published photographs of the boy's grotesquely mutilated body, and the subsequent acquitting of the killers by an all-white jury, forced America to confront the violent evil of racism.

Today we find ourselves in another Emmet Till moment. This time, though, the moment is captured forever on an eight-minute, 46-second video showing George Floyd dying an agonizing death of suffocation at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer. Though we do not yet know whether the officer acted out of racial hatred, Floyd's horrific killing fits a deeply disturbing pattern. It followed closely on the heels of the killing of Ahmaud Arbery by a former police officer and his son in Brunswick, Georgia, the killing of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky by police who broke down her door with a "no knock warrant" and shot her eight times after her boyfriend tried to defend their home.

George Floyd's death was a tipping point. Demonstrators spilled into the streets in protests that quickly spiraled into violence. Rioters and looters piled injustice upon injustice, injuring

hundreds of police officers, destroying small businesses, and killing innocent victims including a retired African-American St. Louis police officer named David Dorn.

In the Bible, the Psalmist cries out:

*How long, Lord? Will you forget
me forever? How long will you hide
your face from me? How long must
I wrestle with my thoughts and day
after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph
over me? (Psalm 13:1–2)*

The outrage cuts across all religious, racial, and economic barriers, and yet America grows more divided by the day. Peaceful protests have been disrupted by violent extremists. Rhetoric becomes more extreme by the minute. Social media posts have quickly fallen to the lowest common denominator, making accusation and anger seem the only common language of the land.

What is happening behind the scenes is deeply disturbing as well. As the days have passed, progressive and left-leaning activists have devised what many see as a new religion in which the world's brokenness is explained as "white privilege" from which all may be saved through "systemic change."¹ Systemic change means different things to different people, but according to published policy demands of the Black Lives Matter organization as revealed on its various websites, it means the "radical transformation" of society through defunding of the police, the scrapping of private education, reparations for slavery, abolition of the nuclear family, and the collective ownership of wealth.²

This agenda is fueled by a well-organized fundraising campaign in which those who want to contribute financially to organizations they believe will help the black community are having their donations funneled into the campaigns of Democratic candidates and those who support them. For example, the “Donate” button on the Black Lives Matter and NAACP websites takes donors to “ActBlue,” a political action committee dedicated to “Powering Democratic candidates, committees, parties, organizations, and c4s [political action committees] around the country.”³ ActBlue is a fundraising juggernaut, boasting more than 10 million regular donors and more than 5 billion dollars raised.

Christians through history have advanced human rights, brought about the abolition of slavery, secured the basis for women’s and children’s rights, established modern education, formed the practice of modern medicine, instituted principles of modern charity, built the foundations of modern science, and shaped the arts.

How are Christians to respond? Micah 6:8 guides believers: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah’s admonition is based on the principle of *shalom*, a Hebrew word meaning “Peace, prosperity, completeness, safeness, salvation, health, satisfaction, contentment, and blessing.” It is the

word for “welfare” used in Jeremiah 29:7, “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

In Bible times, *shalom* was the goal of Hebrew life in community. Following this principle, Christians through history have advanced human rights, brought about the abolition of slavery, secured the basis for women’s and children’s rights, established modern education, formed the practice of modern medicine, instituted principles of modern charity, built the foundations of modern science, and shaped the arts. The influence of Christianity has been so profound that even the atheist philosopher Luc Ferry has said that it is to Christianity that Western Civilization “owed its entire democratic inheritance.”

In line with the principle of *shalom*, many believers have called for racial reconciliation and a greater sensitivity to the structural sin of racial injustice. Others have demanded practical policy solutions, such as more humane police procedures and a reform of police unions that protect bad cops.

Many Christian, however, have responded with a shame-based appeal to racial guilt, often accompanied by self-exalting pronouncements of their anti-racist credentials. Many of these messages employ cult-like persuasive techniques, demanding conformity, playing on the emotional vulnerability of those who crave acceptance, cultivating an “us versus them” mentality, insisting on public confession, and isolating and humiliating those they deem to be insufficiently pure.

We need biblical thinking, and we need it urgently.

The goal of this white paper is to strengthen the ability of Christians to move beyond virtue-signaling to understand the times and discern

what America ought to do. We need the wisdom of a biblical worldview to have a serious dialogue about the source of true justice.

I'll make six observations about justice from a biblical worldview and conclude with several specific thoughts about where we go from here, applying biblical principles of justice to our current situation of racial tension and instability.

#1: GOD LOVES JUSTICE

Justice is the moral principle of equally observing the rights of all people and treating them fairly. Justice is not made real by “my truth” or “your truth.” It is an objective reality. Indeed, it is one of God’s attributes. Jeremiah 9:24 says, “I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight.” We ought to care about justice, and not just because there is sin in the world. Justice is important, period. We might even go so far as to say that because God acts justly and delights in justice, it would have been an important thing for us to pursue even if we were not fallen creatures.

In a world of sin, the cause of justice takes on great urgency. The doctrine of original sin says that humans are so thoroughly fallen that nothing remains unaffected by our fallenness. Bad people are not the only ones who do very bad things and make life miserable for the rest; *each of us* falls short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23).

When we are gathered in community, our individual sin natures can morph into “structural” evil, in which historical and cultural patterns, expectations, and habits are established that perpetuate sin from one generation to another.

Chattel slavery is an example of a structural evil. Ideas have consequences, and many America still suffer today in its aftermath.

We might be tempted to excuse ourselves from our part in structural evil. The biblical approach is that although we humans are stuck in a web of social evil we did not create, we ought to act intentionally against such evil. This involves speaking up. When a friend makes a racist comment, for example, or tells a racist joke, we should say something instead of making excuses for the person (see Matthew 18:15). Opposing structural evil involves more, however, including taking actions to ensure a just society and helping bring the ministry of reconciliation to hurting communities. As theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr. points out, to not act intentionally against sin is to perpetuate it.⁴

#2 JUSTICE IS NOT JUST AVOIDING WHAT’S WRONG; IT IS PURSUING WHAT’S RIGHT

Scripture describes justice as something we ought to *pursue*. The Hebrew word *tzedek*, which means “justice or righteousness,” implies that God’s people are to purposely seek to do what is *right*, not just avoid doing what is *wrong*. The call to be just, act justly, and pursue justice occurs over and over again in Scripture.⁵ The psalmist declared, “The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love” (Psalm 33:5, NIV).

To be clear, the Bible is not a book about how to set up legal statutes. But we can learn a great deal about what God cares about and what good law is by examining the advanced legal system God gave to Moses for the nation of Israel. The Mosaic Law (also called the Torah) is one of the earliest sources of written rules that God gave the Israelites. Newly freed from slavery, the Hebrews needed laws to govern themselves while surrounded by hostile nations and possessing no natural source of food and water. Survival was at stake. At its heart, the Torah tells the story of how life ought to be lived as newly freed people. It has profoundly helpful insights into justice, environmental stewardship, property, welfare, criminal law, marriage and divorce, and sex.⁶

Within this context, we can gain many insights into how God's revelation of himself translated into rules by which his chosen people were to live. Further, these laws were written down so that leaders could not change them, make up new rules, or enforce rules that did not exist. This accountability protected the people from injustice.

Rabbis counted 613 laws from the Jewish Bible. Jesus later affirmed that all these laws fall into two categories: loving God and loving our neighbor (Luke 10:26–28).

We love God with our all. Deuteronomy 6 reveals the Shema, one of two prayers that Jewish people say every day: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Everything else flows from this. We bear God's image. We are human *beings*, not human *doings*. Our worth comes from God, not from our activities. We are distinct and inherently valuable persons

regardless of size, age, gender, ethnicity, ability, or intelligence.

Since we are all image-bearers, loving our neighbor is one of the main ways we express our love for God. Loving our neighbors goes far beyond a cheerful hello. It is a practical kind of love that applies to all of society. Are our neighbors doing better because we are here? No one can solve every problem, but we all ought to be able to point to concrete steps we are actively taking to improve the lives of those around us.

#3 STRUCTURES OF JUSTICE ARE IMPORTANT TO REMEDY STRUCTURAL EVIL

The Bible offers several principles of how a good community operates as love for our neighbor works its way into our role as citizens. Here are just a few examples:

We are responsible to look out for one another's interests. Exodus 21:33–34 says, "When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his." This law established relationships between neighbors. This principle has been enshrined into laws about negligence—what the legal system calls tort law (from the Latin word *torquere*, which refers to laws governing what happens when things get twisted out of shape).

As a neighbor, I must think of how my actions (or inaction) affects those around me. I must not do things that I could reasonably foresee would bring injury to others. If I see injustice occurring, I make it known by collecting evidence and presenting it to authorities, appealing to them to act justly. At no point is injustice to be repaid with injustice. If I act in a way that hurts another person or damages their interests, a biblical worldview would call for me to restore what was lost. It isn't about punishment—it's about restitution.

Robert Woodson, a former civil rights activist who now heads up Center for Neighborhood Enterprise in Washington, DC, provides an effective example of how the call to love our neighbor can actually cut down on crime. Woodson established a Violence Free Zones program that crafts peace agreements between warring youth factions and creates life skills programs, job training, and job placement services. The program looks for young people who are leaders, but using their influence negatively, helping them transform it for the good.⁷

Reexamining justice also calls for a national conversation about crime and punishment. In the last several decades, the United States has moved away from a justice system focused on restoration to a justice system focused on retribution. Now, approximately 20 million Americans have a felony criminal record and thus face significant obstacles when it comes to getting a job or even volunteering in church.⁸ And the prison system has led to massive government expansion, costing states \$50 billion a year.⁹ At the same time, victims of crime seldom gain a hearing for how they've lost loved ones in senseless acts of violence or had their property or livelihood destroyed by

crime. Various criminal justice reform initiatives have been made in the last few years, with wide bipartisan support. Time will tell whether these initiatives improve the situation.

If government shows favoritism toward certain races or classes of people—whether white or black or rich or poor—its leaders must be held accountable.

Meanwhile, here are three principles from the Bible that focus on remedying structural evil:

We must insist that government is honest. Judges in the Old Testament were appointed to decide disagreements between people according to God's laws and teachings (e.g., Exodus 18:13–16; Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 19:15–21). These judges were commanded to be honest and not take bribes or show favoritism (Exodus 23:1–8). Looking at how God instructed the ancient nation of Israel to operate, it's clear that he wants the process of justice to be equitable. Each person has the right to be judged by the same standard. Deuteronomy 1:17 (NIV) says, "Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike."

If government shows favoritism toward certain races or classes of people—whether white or black or rich or poor—its leaders must be held accountable.

We must protect the dignity of the accused. The Mosaic law treated those accused of a crime with dignity, avoiding hasty condemnation. Simon Greenleaf explains:

The importance of extreme care in

ascertaining the truth of every criminal charge, especially where life is involved, may be regarded as a rule of law. It ... does not inflict the penalty of death until the crime "be told thee" (viz., in a formal accusation), "and thou hast heard of it" (upon a legal trial), "and inquired diligently, and behold it be true" (satisfactorily proved), "and the thing certain" (beyond all reasonable doubt).¹⁰

Due to our fallen nature, our reason and will are corrupted. Human error is likely, not just possible. God instructed the Israelites to err in favor of the defendant rather than punish an innocent person.

Due to our fallen nature, our reason and will are corrupted. Human error is likely, not just possible. God instructed the Israelites to err in favor of the defendant rather than punish an innocent person. By this standard, George Floyd was clearly a victim of injustice. He was hastily condemned to death for the petty crimes of which he was suspected. Similarly, though, if Floyd's killer were to be injured or killed by a mob action, that would also be unjust. When we're angry, we expect revenge *right now*. Psalm 37:8 says, "Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil."

Justice takes time. Being a good citizen means being patient while still being persistent. As Edmund Burke said, "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is

within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."¹¹

We must protect the dignity of the victim. The Old Testament law focused on restitution. If someone stole an animal, he was to repay four or five times the value (Exodus 22:1). If a person lied on a contract or profited by deceiving his neighbor, he was to repay what was taken and add a fifth to it to compensate for the victim's inability to use in a profitable way what was stolen (Lev. 6:2–5). In Luke 19, Jesus befriended a tax collector who was known as a cheater. This man, named Zacchaeus, repented of his sins, offered half of his possessions to the poor, and committed to repay four times what he had taken. In this, Zacchaeus was showing his willingness to obey the Old Testament law as part of his repentance. Jesus affirmed this, saying, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9).

Rioters and looters have caused billions of dollars of damage in the wake of George Floyd's killing. Thousands have been arrested. If a biblical sense of justice were to be applied, these individuals would be made to personally meet those who were harmed, listen to their grievances, and cooperate with authorities to restore what was lost—whether through work or financial payment.

#4 OUR RIGHTS COME FROM GOD

In the aftermath of World War II, the victorious nations wrestled with how to prosecute Nazis accused of war crimes, igniting a debate

over the source of law. One side said law was based on something everyone would know to be true about the world if they were not swayed by previous commitments or views of law. This idea is called natural law, and it goes back to the descriptions of humans as image-bearers of God in the Bible, to the Mosaic law, and the Christian theology of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), as well as various secular thinkers. When it comes to human rights, natural law says that people's rights are "inherent," meaning everyone has them without having to prove they are worthy of them.

According to natural law, a just society ought to secure the permanent rights of every person. In America, these rights are threefold: "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." No person may be separated from these rights without due process of law, as spelled out in the US Constitution. The Constitution's preamble makes clear the founders' conviction that government didn't *grant* the blessings of liberty but merely *secured* them. As the Declaration of Independence put it, those rights came from "Nature and Nature's God."

Such rights may not be taken away without due process of law. That each person has inherent rights is why, when someone is charged with a crime, the legal elements must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt before that individual's rights and freedoms can be taken away.

Not everyone agrees with the inherent-rights view. Those advocating "legal positivism" say that justice does not have its source in God.¹² Rather, justice is whatever people in that society say it is. Societies leaders are to discern what a "better" society is and then use the tools of law to make society function smoothly for as many people as possible. Often those holding this view treat justice as if it is not about the treatment

of individual people but about how groups of people relate in a well-ordered society. It is why governments increasingly express a willingness to *remove* rights from one group to *reward* them to another group, in the interests of order and fairness.

The Nazis on trial after World War 2 took full advantage of the disagreement between the natural law and the legal positivist camps. When confronted with evidence of their mass murder of millions of people, they said, "You have no right to judge us. We acted legally, based on the laws we were ordered to follow." Legal-positivism advocates were in a quandary. If they argued that law was based on what those in authority decided, they would be granting that they had the right to judge the Nazis only because the Nazis lost. This implies that, had the Nazis won, the Nazi cause would have to be acknowledged as just, giving them, in turn, the moral authority to judge allied nations.

According to natural law, a just society ought to secure the permanent rights of every person. In America, these rights are threefold: "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." No person may be separated from these rights without due process of law...

Natural law advocates face no such quandary. They argue that every human being knows it's wrong to kill people en masse just because their leader tells them to. The Nazi leaders should have known better, regardless of what the Nazi government's laws said.

Natural law advocates are suspicious of laws hastily made in a spirit of revenge. Instead, natural law advocates ask, “What laws should be passed to reflect what we know to be true in the natural law?” They would then identify what laws might need to be written or adjusted, or what people should be removed from positions of authority.

#5 PEOPLE ARE INDIVIDUALLY ACCOUNTABLE

Anger at injustice often incites a mob mentality, a blood lust to find those who are like the perpetrator of the injustice and punish them for that person’s wrongdoing. In the aftermath of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, many Muslims were assaulted by those who blamed them for the actions of the Muslim terrorists. This was wrong. In the same way, calls to harm police, for example, or calls to harm white people or conservatives, are also dangerous and desperately misguided.

This notion that people’s guilt or innocence can be established merely by looking at their outward characteristics is at the heart of every mass slaughter in history: “Blame the rich.” “Blame the royals.” “Blame the Jews.” “Blame the Tutsi.” For anyone who lived long enough to see what humans are capable of doing to one another, it is obvious why the Bible speaks so clearly against the idea of making a whole group responsible for the blood shed by those who share those characteristics.

Without question, the Bible calls for reconciliation between people who are at odds. Injustice must not be permitted to continue. Things must be set right. But in the Old

Testament, judges were not to give preference to the poor or the rich (Leviticus 19:15). Family members were not to be punished for the sins of their ancestors or descendants. Each person is individually responsible (Ezekiel 18:20). People are not guilty based on arbitrary categories of race or sex or income level. Nor are they innocent based on any of those categories. Each person is an image-bearer of God with inherent rights. Each person must be accountable for his or her own actions.

One implication of this is that we as individuals are responsible to identify and remedy injustice. Proverbs 24:12 says that God understands all hearts and does not accept as an excuse that we remain blissfully ignorant of wrongdoing. We don’t get to define justice, but we are to know what it is and act on it. Justice begins with you and me.

#6 JESUS SHOWS US THE WAY TO JUSTICE

Many people today see Jesus mainly as a social justice warrior who came to earth to tear down societal structures that hurt the poor and oppressed. True, the Old Testament longing for a Messiah was, in many ways, a longing for liberation. The Messiah would bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and set the prisoners free (Isaiah 61:1–2). Humanity’s sin knocked the moral universe out of its orbit, affecting every person and aspect of creation. But through the Messiah, God makes all things new and enables us to become “right-makers.”

Christians believe, based on the testimony of fulfilled prophecy, the reliability of Scripture, and the evidence of Jesus' resurrection, that Jesus is the Messiah. Speaking as the Messiah, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). It's a threefold claim that has significant implications for justice.

First, Jesus claimed to be the way. His disciples would have recognized the term "the way" as the Hebrew word *derek*, which refers to the overall direction of a person's life. There is a good way to go and a bad way to go. Jesus doesn't just point the way; he *is* the way. His teachings show what redemption looks like lived out. Neighbors seek peace, resolve anger, speak forthrightly, resist retaliation for personal offenses, love their enemies, and give to those in need. The kingdom journey is not a set of rules but a person, leading to a God who sees us not as his slaves but as his children (John 1:12).

Second, Jesus also claimed to be the truth. A biblical worldview—as opposed to a secular, Marxist, or postmodern one—tells us that the tension over race and justice must be guided by reality, not the naked pursuit of power. Jesus claimed to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy about the coming Messiah (Luke 4: 21). Isaiah 42 says of the Messiah, "He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth." Christians should not talk about truth as if it is a matter of opinion. There is no room for "my truth" or "your truth." It is about the truth. Truth exists. Justice is real. We know things are not as they ought to be because we know what "ought" is. The Messiah is the truth.

Finally, Jesus claimed to be the life. Through Jesus, a life of shalom—wholeness or completeness—becomes possible. Shalom doesn't

divide; it multiplies. In shalom, we ask, *How can we help each other grow as persons and flourish as image bearers of God?* Shalom doesn't just feed the hungry or rescue the oppressed. It transforms the poor into good stewards who bear fruit. It turns the rescued into rescuers. And it rescues the rescuers from patronizing pride as they realize that they are growing and benefiting every bit as much as those they seek to help.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

C. S. Lewis said, "[Christianity] thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again."¹³ We are not the politically pure bringing enlightenment to the masses. Rather, we the redeemed bear the good news to others who, like

We are at a unique moment in history. Brutality, race-based discrimination, and lawlessness must be addressed, and biblical principles of justice can guide us.

ourselves, are hopelessly lost without it. We love our neighbor not just by avoiding doing wrong things, but by doing what is in our power to make things right.

We are at a unique moment in history. Brutality, race-based discrimination, and lawlessness must be addressed, and biblical

principles of justice can guide us. Here are some examples:

- Does your worldview recognize that our worth as humans comes from God, not from our activities? Do you see others as distinct and inherently valuable persons regardless of size, age, gender, ethnicity, ability, or intelligence?
- Have you mistreated someone based on their group identity? If so, ask for forgiveness. This is not a call to a generalized sense of guilt, but to identify and seek reconciliation for specific sins against specific people.
- How has sin caused structural evil? What structures of society are broken that can be fixed? What role can you play?
- Are your neighbors doing better because you are there? What concrete steps can you take to actively improve the lives of those around you?
- Have you seen injustice occurring? If so, make it known by collecting evidence and presenting it to authorities, appealing to them to act justly. Don't use shame or threats to force others to see it your way. Injustice cannot remedy injustice. It isn't about punishment—it's about restoration.
- Do the actions of the judicial system and government show favoritism? What steps may be taken to hold those in authority accountable?
- Are those accused of crimes being treated with dignity? Do arrest procedures, incarceration procedures, and trial procedures need to be changed? How can you as a citizen work toward needed changes?
- Is restitution taking place for victims of specific actions that have caused injury or harm to their interests? How might government play a role in not just punishing the guilty, but restoring what was lost?
- Are the societal changes being called for in a time of racial unrest based on a desire to secure

the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or are they designed to exact revenge for wrongs?

- Are you assessing blame for what is happening based on group identity—whether rich or poor, white or black, city or suburban, liberal or conservative? Instead, identify the individuals or legislative bodies or judicial authorities responsible for specific harms, and call for specific changes.
- Have you observed wrongdoing and not acted? If so, commit to know what is right and wrong and determine to act the next time you see injustice occurring.
- Are you a person who seeks peace, resolves anger, speaks forthrightly, resists retaliation for personal offenses, loves your enemies, and gives to those in need? It is not just about what “Washington DC” does; we are personally called to live out and displaying the way of Jesus.
- Do you know God's nature and character and his plan for history? If not, become a good student of Scripture who does not need to be ashamed by ignorance of who God is and what He is doing in the world.
- What programs and organizations in your area can you support with your time, talent, and treasure that transform the poor in spirit into good stewards who bear fruit?

For believers who care deeply about injustice, there are many opportunities to dive into the nitty-gritty work of criminal justice. Christians are very much needed in law, criminal justice, and social work. Volunteers are essential, too. Given the number of opportunities, there is no reason for Christians to fall for politically-motivated redistribution schemes in the name of helping the less fortunate.

The Christian worldview makes a difference because it is rooted in the original idea of justice as pursuing righteousness, not just avoiding wrongdoing. To put it another way, the Christian worldview goes beyond rehabilitation to focus on transformation. Says Woodson, the former civil rights activist,

If I'm killing myself, I do not need to be rehabilitated. I need to be transformed. I need to become a new person. Therapy does not make you another person. Rehabilitation rarely removes bad stuff. Transformation, on the other hand, replaces the bad stuff with good stuff. That is the difference.¹⁴

Why does a focus on transformation work so well? Sociologist Byron Johnson spent six years studying the answer to that question. Through observation and interviews of participants in a program called the Innerchange Freedom

Initiative, Johnson found that participants were truly being transformed. They saw themselves as genuinely loved by God and others, they recognized their reliance on God, they overcame blame and developed compassion, they developed resilience to face their hardships, and they expressed gratitude for their new lives.¹⁵

Transformation moves us from being tough to transparent, from being takers to being givers. It looks a lot like what the apostle Paul, the evangelist who was once an accessory to murder, described in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” It is through Christ that we have hope of seeing Amos’ prophecy fulfilled, for justice to roll down like waters (Amos 5:24). It’s not just about rightly ordered communities. It’s about the heart of God himself. God delights in justice. We should too.

ENDNOTES

¹ See, for example, Michael Barone, “The New Religion of Woke Anti-Racism,” *Washington Examiner* Op-Ed, June 11, 2020, <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/the-new-religion-of-woke-anti-racism/>

² See <https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>; <https://m4bl.org/about-us/>; <https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/freedom-thrive-reimagining-safety-security-our-communities>

³ See mission statement at <https://secure.actblue.com/>

⁴ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 24-26.

⁵ See, for example, Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 16:20, Psalm 106:3, Proverbs 29:7, Isaiah 51:4-5, Micah 6:8, and Zechariah 7:9.

⁶ See chapter 16, Jeff Myers, *Understanding the Culture* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2017); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice*

and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Dennis Prager, *The Rational Bible: Exodus* (Washington DC, 2018).

⁷ Byron R. Johnson, *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could Matter More* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton, Press, 2011), p. 47.

⁸ Warren Cole Smith and John Stonestreet, *Restoring All Things: God's Audacious Plan to Change the World Through Everyday People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), p. 102.

⁹ Richard Viguerie, “Op/Ed: A Conservative Case for Prison Reform,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/opinion/a-conservative-case-for-prison-reform.html?_r=0

¹⁰ Simon Greenleaf, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, Volume 3, 16th Edition, Revised, Enlarged, and Annotated by Edward Avery Harriman (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899), p. 35. This quotation is found in

a footnote and consists of Greenleaf citing the reasoning of Lord Matthew Hale (the reference in the British record is “2 Hale P.C. 290; *Sumner v. State*, 5 Blackf. 579”).

¹¹ Edmund Burke, “Letter to Francois Louis Thibault de Menonville,” published as “Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, 1791,” in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 289.

¹² Richard Posner, *The Problem of Jurisprudence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 228-29.

¹³ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1974), p. 45.

¹⁴ Byron R. Johnson, *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could Matter More* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton, Press, 2011), p. 45, 122-129.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.