

Doing Justice: A Hard and Confusing Drama

BETWEEN 6:00 AM—9:00 PM: “FRIENDS WITH TENSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Mic. 6:8 “...what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

THE THREE PEOPLE IN THE SCENE

INA: She’s 30, works as a software engineer in the Valley. The killing of George Floyd shocked her. She’s a Christian and active member of her church’s young adults group.

AIDAN: He’s 29, works in sales and marketing for a biotech company. He’s deeply troubled by the riots and lawlessness that followed Floyd’s killing. He’s also a believer and active in the young adults group.

HANNAH: She’s 27 and teaches Honors English at a local High School. She’s relatively new in the faith. She’s trying to figure out what to think about the woke movement.

When the curtain rises, they’re sitting six feet apart at an outdoor table at a coffee house. Their masks are off and paper coffee cups make a triangle on the iron-mesh table top.



Ina: It’s cool to sit down and talk in person after the back and forth we did online.

Aidan: Thanks for the latte. I’m surprised you paid after our little dustup.

Ina: I’m not gonna soften it, I think you’re seeing the world through your privilege as a white man. That’s the problem — you have no idea what’s it like to be judged all the time by your skin color.

Aidan: Hold on...

Ina: No, your defensiveness is proof. God hates the injustice — it’s stained everything — schools, cops, businesses. Christians have been silent — even complicit — long enough.

Aidan: Honestly, I don’t think your definition of injustice matches what I see in the Bible. Justice says, we’ve all screwed up — people of every color. White people aren’t the only guilty ones. Justice starts with people recognizing that everyone is responsible for the mess we’re in.

Ina: That’s a convenient perspective, because you’re at the top of the power pyramid...

Aidan: That “power” lingo drives me nuts.

Ina: Let me finish. White people — and especially those with your XY chromosomes — have gotten A-level treatment from day one in this country.

Aidan: What? Americans fought a civil war to end slavery. Then we’ve had civil rights legislation and affirmative action. Things aren’t perfect but they’ve gotten better in this country. You won’t like this, but left wing people are using all this to grab power. Yes, there’s racism, and black people haven’t had it easy, but can we ever talk about cultural renewal and personal responsibility? That’s a justice issue too. The Bible tells us to keep our commitments and obey the law. But you

can’t talk about this stuff without risking getting cancelled.

Ina: We gotta have an honest reckoning about race in this country. You know who should take the lead — Christians. We should call for a truth and reconciliation commission — that’s what they did in South Africa after Apartheid. We need national repentance. Then, like Zacchaeus, we should give back what we stole.

Aidan: You mean reparations?

Ina: Maybe.

Aidan: I’m suspicious. I think Critical Race Theory has infected this whole country worse than Covid. CRT religion says, “In the beginning, there were oppressors and oppressed.” But the Bible says that a just God made it all and that we — all of us — messed it up. We can’t leave out evangelism — that’s what changes the heart.

Ina: Maybe CRT is pointing out what most evangelical Christians have ignored for centuries, that justice is about the here and now, and not just about the hereafter. Our churches have made it about an invisible, far-off kingdom that we fly off to someday. How about God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven?

Aidan: [Long pause] I don’t know where to go from here. This debate can tear our group apart, make us into a red and blue church.

Ina: Let’s listen, let’s learn. Here’s something that opened my eyes a ton, it’s called *The Color of Compromise*. Take my copy.

Aidan: Ha! Thanks. I got something for you too, it’s called *Why Social Justice is Not Biblical Justice*. Its hard-hitting.

Ina: I guess we each have some homework to do before Round 2. Hannah, you haven’t said a word. What do you think?

BETWEEN 9:00 AM—12:00 PM STRIVING TO BE SOLOMONIC

Step into Hannah's shoes. Your friends want your opinion. What do you say? Where do you begin? The issues are complex. Maybe the best place is on your knees. In 1 Kings 3, Solomon has recently been made king. Despite his robe and crown, he knew he couldn't perceive the truth and make fair decisions. He had God's statutes, but he needed God's savvy (*"he knows what lies in darkness"* — Dan. 2:22) to apply God's truth to real-world situations. One night, God came his way and Solomon was ready with a life-altering request.

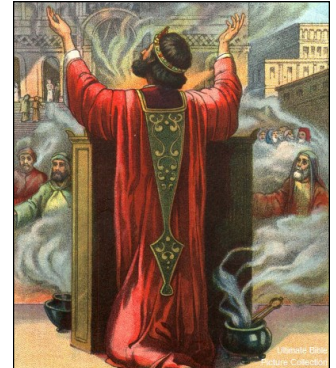
1Kings 3:5 *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."*

1Kings 3:6 *And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day."*

1Kings 3:7 *And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.*

1Kings 3:8 *And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude.*

1Kings 3:9 *Give your servant therefore an understanding mind [lit. a hearing heart] to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"*



Look back at v.9. Notice what this guy who could barely grow a beard asks for: an *"understanding mind."* That's a good thought-for-thought translation, but in Hebrew it's literally a "hearing heart." This means more than being a good listener, and — for example, reflecting back with statements like, "OK, I hear you saying..." (I learned this skill in a listening seminar once.) Rather, a God-given, listening heart is one that has divine insight to sift what is said for truth. It listens with humility, sensitivity and discretion for the purpose of being in touch with reality and discharging important responsibilities. See, in his role as judge, Solomon would have to listen to the parties in front of him so that he could render sound judgments and make fair policy. In other words, to decipher between *"good and evil"* in the real world.

As those called to *"reign in life,"* we too have responsibilities (Rom. 5:17). And being aware of our commission to make things right for the mistreated (*"do justice"* — Mic. 6:8), while being aware of our inadequacy in these matters (*"I am but a little child"* — v.7), we should make Solomon's request. So, please pause to ask the Lord for the capacity to evaluate what is right and what is wrong with respect to racial justice, and to act accordingly.

Let's see how the *"King of the ages"* responds to King Solomon (1 Kgs. 1:17). Read the verses below.

1Kings 3:10 *It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.*

1Kings 3:11 *And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right,*

1Kings 3:12 *behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.*



Notice the Lord's reaction. He's proud of this barely-out-of-adolescence King. Then he says, "Solomon, it's a done deal. Receive this listening and penetrating intelligence you've asked for." But notice this: God gives him more than that. He give him triple what's he's asked for.

See, he gives Solomon a "listening heart" when he says *"I now do according to your word."* That's the answer. But you can't "exhaust God's generosity; he always has more. Notice in v.12 that God specifically adds on wisdom and discernment. That is, he implants "a wise and discerning heart" to go along with his listening one. He gives Solomon a triple grant of good judgment. The

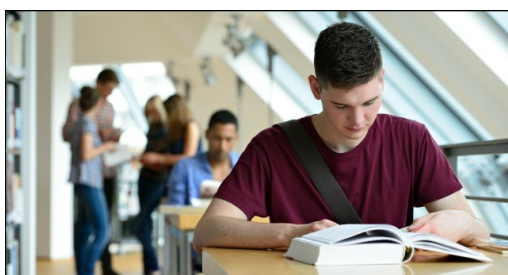
takeaway? There's no reason to believe God won't give us threefold wisdom as we wrestle with justice in our generation.

BETWEEN 12:00 PM—3:00 PM: OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BUILD ON GOD’S GENEROUS ANSWER

Solomon built on God’s generous answer. He didn’t sit on the gift. He applied himself throughout his life to learn. Read this verse from Ecclesiastes.

Eccl. 12:9 *Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.*

King Solomon collected truth in addition to conveying it. Written materials were an important part of his life. They’re called “proverbs,” which are concise sayings. He didn’t just write them. He evaluated the wise sayings of others — determining their truthfulness. He may have been familiar with foreign proverbs, assessing them rigorously. But he didn’t just swallow whole what he heard. He had a taste for truth. He was a student before he was a teacher. Notice these three key verbs in Ecc. 12:9:



- 1. He weighed.** The image is of scales. He assessed the words of others. He didn’t believe everything he read and heard. He had a “listening heart” to absorb information and critically assess it.
- 2. He studied.** Literally the text says that he searched and explored. He pondered and thought. We need to do the same.
- 3. He arranged.** He ordered knowledge for others, especially the young. He was logical and precise in his formulations.

He was even colorful and humorous to help people remember the point. We need to share, even if we’re not formal teachers.



BETWEEN 3:00 PM—4:00 PM: Join the Joel Moment Prayer Gathering. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.



ELENA JONES [She'll talk about her experiences serving on the Mercy ship, in the country of Ghana with International Justice Mission, and now her interest in God's mandate to "do justice" rather than just talking about it.

Mic. 6:8 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?





GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (6 min.): **Psa. 89:14** *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.*

Let's start by lifting up the Fair One. He knows the truth. No one can fool him. He'll render just verdicts on every life through his Son Jesus on the last day. Forget about everyone and everything but him for six minutes of focused praise.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (6 min.): **1Kings 3:7** *"...I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in."*

Let's face it, we're naïve when it comes to this justice pursuit. Like Solomon who said in effect, "I'm a toddler who can barely walk — I'm banging into walls— I don't know what I'm doing unless you show me," we ourselves don't know what perspectives and projects we should adopt to "do justice." But God's a Triple-Giver so let's take him up on his offer to give us the wisdom we need.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (6 min.): **Prov. 18:5** *It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice.*

This verse gives us a narrow path to walk. Let's pray for those in the justice system, from police officers to prosecutors to judges and defense attorneys. Let's also pray for all those who are in prisons and jails tonight, the guilty, the innocent, the sick, the lonely, the sinful and the saved.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #4 (6 min.): **Prov. 14:34** *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

Pray for the USA. Pray for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Pray for national repentance and the gift of rain. Pray for all the people you know who need healing, wisdom, friends, forgiveness and truth.

BETWEEN 5:00 PM-10:00 PM: **[Pray for and join our churchwide movie night and post-film discussion. It's TONIGHT, Jan. 20. Details below.]**

Wednesday, January 20 at 6.30 pm via a Zoom call

Post-film discussion lead by Valley's JUST LOVE AS 1 team

Register with bit.ly/true-justice

About the film: "True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality follows 30 years of EJI's work on behalf of the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned. This feature documentary focuses on Bryan Stevenson's life and career—particularly his indictment of the U.S. criminal justice system for its role in codifying modern systemic racism—and tracks the intertwined histories of slavery, lynching, segregation, and mass incarceration. Highlighting watershed moments involving cases and clients, True Justice offers a rare glimpse into the human struggle that is required when the poor and people of color are wrongly condemned or unfairly sentenced, and explores the personal toll it takes."

