

Social justice assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Social Justice What is social justice and how does it relate to liberation theology? How do sin, love, grace, and human freedom affect social justice? What restricts freedom and social justice? And how does all of this play a role in the Kingdom of God? Social justice is a concept of a society in which every human being is treated justly, without discrimination based on financial status, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. Grace is a gift from God that we don't deserve, which helps us choose the good, therefore it promotes social justice.

On the other hand, sin, which can be regarded as a lack of love and care for "others," distances us from social justice. Therefore, love and grace are essential aspects of social justice and without them there could be no social justice in the world. Liberation theologians, major supporters of social justice, have multiple elements in their beliefs that respond to major social justice issues such as: unfair distribution of wealth, goods and services; oppression of people based on gender, race, and ethnicity; and the unjustness of social structures and institutions towards the underprivileged.

Lastly, the ends of God's kingdom and the ends of social justice are one in the same: Humans acting out of love to serve and give everything to those less fortunate and in need. In this idea of social justice is the belief that every human is entitled to specific political, economic, social, and human rights. However, in reality many people are stripped of these rights, leaving them without power and privilege, in other words leaving them less than human.

They are subject to political structures making decisions for them, which is unjust because political figures with power, acting on behalf of those without power, don't always make decisions that promote the well-being of the underprivileged. Laws passed by the government can be seen as “ organized violence made to serve the interests of individuals... So everyone exists in a world in which he looks out for himself, each insists upon his rights, each fights for his existence and life becomes a struggle of all against all even when the battle is involuntarily fought (Haughey, 96)”.

For example, most laws promote an “ eye-for-an-eye” type of legal system. This encourages people to retaliate or “ get even” with others, which is seen so often in America's lawsuit-happy citizens. This is obviously in contradiction to the ends of social justice, which promote love and brotherhood. Social justice is not an “ us versus them” mentality; rather it is a “ were in it together” mentality where the powerful and powerless work together. Obviously those who are in need are the poor and oppressed: women, African-Americans, Jews, Latin Americans, etc.

However, due to the fact that these people are in these oppressive situations, they gain insight into the injustices that surround them specifically, and society in general. Although they are made poor by those in power and the structures, institutions, and organizations run by those in power, they still possess “ strength to resist, capacity to understand their rights, [and the ability] to organize themselves and transform a subhuman situation (Boff, 1)”. The poor and oppressed are held above the rich and powerful, in other words are given preferential treatment.

Due to their oppression in life, they have more faith in Jesus, and therefore when the Kingdom of God comes the social order will become inverted.

Those who are rich and powerful, mainly from oppressing others, will have the benefit of material objects in life, but will receive no further consolation in God's Kingdom. Those who are financially distraught and oppressed can offer the powerful people insight into injustices that are overlooked all too often.

It is the job of both of these groups, the powerful and powerless, to make strides together towards a more just and loving society that allows everyone to participate; Not some one-sided social order that only allows the powerful oppressors to continue to gain additional wealth and influence at the expense of the less fortunate. Sin plays a key role in social justice and the Kingdom of God. Gustavo Gutierrez, the author of *A Theology of Liberation*, explains that “ sin is not considered as an individual, private, or merely interior reality.

Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men (Gutierrez, 175)”. Sin is very powerful, which is a main reason as to why we have yet to experience utopia. It not only dehumanizes the person who sins, but it also takes away from the humanity of others. Sin represents selfishness in humanity making people live for themselves and not for others. The act of sinning, thus, disconnects us from God and others. It is “ the desire and tendency of man to live for himself alone in a world of social and religious isolation; it is the equivalent of living according to the flesh (Haughey, 96)”.

Freedom from sin is what allows us to be servants to others out of love, becoming “ a slave to all (1 Cor. 9: 19)”. However, sin has become so ingrained in modern life that it is nearly impossible to dissociate. Sin is not only in our everyday individual lives, but is also present in structures, institutions, and organizations. Governments, churches, schools and companies all have sin as a part of them because they were created by those already in power and for their own benefit. For example, corporations and for-profit organizations do not want social justice, instead they want more money.

Money is not a bad thing, but greed is because it interferes with us being human. By thirsting for material objects we treat others as less than human. For example, a firestone comic strip once portrayed the president of the organization at a cemetery. To his back was an astounding amount of headstones representing all of the people that died due to the firestone tire blowouts, and to his front was one single tombstone that represented the company’s lost profits. Although it is a twisted joke, there is some truth to it and it shows how a strive for profit pulls your focus away from loving others and narrows it in on a materialistic lifestyle.

Universities and schools of business encourage people to focus on working hard to make money, but do little to encourage social justice. “ Education must teach people to base their whole lives on the Gospel’s message of personal morality and social responsibility. But all too often, education teaches individualism and exalts material possessions (Catholic Conference, 21)”. They begin to engrave into young minds that a life of wealth, not love,

is what constitutes a happy life. However, sin is not the only thing that limits our freedom.

Financial status, gender, race and ethnicity also work to place boundaries on our justice and freedom. Women have been oppressed since the beginning of time. Feminism strives to recognize women as being equal to men and looks to recognize the females' role in history. Although the majority of those who attend church services are female, leaders of the churches have always been male dominated. Females in many societies have a submissive role in which they are inferior to men. They are seen as objects of lust rather than love, and are treated as means to an end instead of an end in themselves.

This limits their freedom and choices and acts as a barrier by denying them due justice. Similarly, slavery limited, and still limits to this day, economic opportunity. By holding people against their will, we not only take away their freedom to a pursuit of happiness, but also impede on their ability to grow intellectually. This does not provide them with an equal opportunity and is therefore unjust. In addition, poverty also works to limit freedom. By passing on our line of wealth to our families we give them an unfair advantage over those born into poverty.

This in turn becomes a vicious, endless cycle that allows the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. In 1998 in the United States, the top 5 percent of the wealth distribution “ owned 59 percent of all wealth. Or to put it another way, the top 5 percent had more wealth than the remaining 95 percent of the population, collectively (Wolff, 1)”. This further portrays how the rich continue to make money at the expense of the underprivileged. The

Church also has to do with this idea of social justice as well. “ Somewhere along the journey, the church lost her way, lost her purpose.

Somewhere along the way, we started treating the world as a polluted lost cause, and that our only purpose was to get people into some kind of lifeboat, where we could all huddle together until Jesus comes back. (Dazet, 2)”. This explains how the church’s mission should no longer be about how many lives it can save; instead it should be about siding with the poor and oppressed and promoting social justice. God’s justice is also important.

Would you want God to judge you like a judge? No, and due to his mercy and compassion shown towards sinners, he does not.

Social justice is a big responsibility that entitles everyone to certain rights and helps fulfill the needs of all people. Those with power and influence, such as those in politics and church, have a responsibility to act on behalf of those without such power and influence. Those who are powerless have a responsibility to work towards social justice and encourage change to those who are blind to oppression. Social justice takes a less individualistic approach to life and emphasizes the need to love others and treat them justly.

By fighting against the oppression of females, blacks, Jews and impoverished, we are slowly heading towards a positive change towards a more socially just society. However, due to the fact that our sin is ingrained in our social structures and institutions, social injustice continues to be a part of modern society. Many of us are recipients of social justice, but are only willing to give “ others” merely crumbs off our plate. Until we can fall in love

with these others and give them equal opportunities, there will still be injustice in this world.

Love, not selfishness, must be the motive behind a person's actions in order for there to be social justice. Works Cited 1. Haughey, John C. *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*. Broadway, New York: Paulist Press, 1977. 2. U. S. Catholic Conference. *To Campaign for Justice*. Washington, D. C. : The Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc. , 1982 3. Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1971. 4. Cory, Catherine. Landry, David. "Augustine of Hippo." *The Christian Theological Tradition: Second Edition*.

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