

Olamide Dada encourages us to follow the example of Jesus as we pursue justice in our workplaces

JUSTICE IN THE WORKPLACE



The word 'justice' has been very much on the tips of our tongues recently. With global and national events exposing injustices, it seems everyone feels the need to make the world a fairer place somehow. Contemporary justice concerns include climate change, the refugee crisis, racial justice, and modern slavery, to name but a few.

As Christians, we ought to see our pursuit of justice as a demonstration of God's character.¹ God reveals his heart for justice throughout Scripture. *'For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice, the upright will see his face.'* (Psalm 11:7)

What our society believes to be 'the good' is constantly shifting. If we are to measure what is good by our own standards, we will fall short of the mark that God has set. While God is always good, what we mark as 'good' is not always of God. As humans, we are likely to redefine what is 'good' to our own advantage at the expense of others. In contrast, Scripture reminds us that *'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.'* (Micah 6:8)

Jesus is our great example. His way of life was righteousness. He encouraged his followers to do the same.² He was attentive to the needs of the marginalised and the outcasts of society.³ Jesus' vision for justice for the vulnerable arose from his teaching about the Kingdom of God, driving his intent and directing his actions.⁴ Jesus demonstrated love for God, self, neighbour,⁵ truth,⁶ righteousness,⁷ and justice.⁸ He continually righted wrongs, despite never being at fault himself.⁹ He championed freedom from oppression – discrimination, social exclusion, inequity, poverty, sin, and injustice. Through the life of Jesus, we see that to love is to be just and to be just is to love.¹⁰

Pursuing justice in the workplace requires intentionality. While occasional efforts may change some things, truly fixing the systems in which we work and offering equal access to tools and opportunities for all colleagues and patients requires more consistent action. In the busyness of our working lives, this can be particularly challenging.

Think back to when you or someone you know was mistreated just because of who they happened to be. How would you have wanted someone to support or fight for you when you were mistreated? It is easy to feel far removed from these issues when you have not been directly affected. However, it is not until you have personally experienced such instances of unfairness that you might feel the need to do anything about it.

We have an individual responsibility to bring about justice through our persistent love for others.

Learn to do good

Seeking justice starts with a personal commitment to continual learning. Our actions must be rooted in compassion and knowledge. Just as Jesus was attentive to the needs of the marginalised, we need to identify their needs and do what we can to meet them.¹¹

Seek justice

We must actively look for opportunities to promote fairness and equality in workplaces for everyone. Workplace bullying and discrimination remain an issue within the healthcare workforce. As Martin Luther King Jr famously said, *'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'*.¹²

Help the oppressed

To help, we must first get alongside the people we wish to support. Jesus sat with the prostitutes, tax collectors, orphans, widows, and lepers, embracing them and breaking cultural boundaries.

Defend the cause

We must actively choose to use our voice to speak with and for those on the margins. *'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy'*. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Fight for the rights of others

It won't always be easy, convenient, or comfortable. We must first truly believe that others are worth fighting for, viewing them just how God views them.

In summary, we need to remember that there is no one size fits all rule when it comes to fighting for justice. Learning to do good, helping the oppressed, defending their cause, and fighting for their rights will come in various shapes and sizes. This can mean designing strategies to alter processes, policies, practices, and perceptions. It may mean joining like-minded individuals campaigning for change or personally interacting with and valuing the opinions of marginalised groups. Every context requires a different approach.

I encourage you to reflect on how you can demonstrate justice in the coming weeks and months. You do not need to lead a revolution. Look around at your various professional and social settings to see how you can 'do justice'. What problems are people facing? How can you be a solution? And through doing so, you will be living a life that further resembles that of Christ.

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