

Sunday, March 1, 2026

God & Governance - Session 6

Division is Distraction: Celebrating Biblical Justice & Good News in Our World

Summary

In a world saturated with headlines of division and despair, we're invited to shift our gaze toward the remarkable ways God's people are quietly transforming our world through biblical justice. This message challenges us to move beyond political distraction and recognize the extraordinary good happening all around us. We discover that Christians, regardless of political affiliation, are the most generous givers—contributing more time, money, and even blood than their secular counterparts. We learn about stunning victories in child mortality rates, with millions of children's lives saved through clean water initiatives largely funded by faith-based organizations. Crime rates are dropping, drug overdose deaths are declining, and religious freedom is being protected in court after court. Perhaps most encouraging, we see denominations like the Southern Baptist Convention courageously confronting sexual abuse within their ranks, creating accountability systems that protect the vulnerable. Meanwhile, Gen Z and Millennials are returning to church in unprecedented numbers, nearly doubling their weekly attendance since 2019. This isn't naive optimism—it's recognizing that while icebergs of challenge surround us, we're not on a sinking ship. When we focus on outcomes rather than political personalities, we find countless reasons to celebrate how God is working through His people to bring justice, mercy, and flourishing to our broken world.

Homework

Homework from this lesson had two main parts:

- **Research and share good news**
 - Choose one of the positive topics mentioned (e.g., Christian generosity, child mortality and clean water, crime and drug overdose decline, immigration, anti-sex trafficking efforts, church growth among young people, religious liberty court cases, etc.).
 - Look up statistics or updated information about it (verify, update, or expand what was shared).

- Have a conversation with someone else about what you found—intentionally share some good news this week.
- **Submit questions for future sessions**
 - Email Pastor Chris and/or Pastor John a thoughtful, helpful question related to the class material (faith, politics, biblical justice, division as distraction, etc.).
 - They may use these questions when the class resumes in April.

Extra Credit Homework

1. Reflection Essay (1–2 pages)

Prompt:

“Division is distraction.” Reflect on how this has shown up in your own life and church experience.

Include in your essay:

- Where you feel the pull of division
- Describe one way political or cultural division has:
 - Distracted you from loving others, or
 - Distracted you from the mission of Christ (evangelism, discipleship, serving the poor, etc.).
- Good news you might have missed

Choose one encouraging area mentioned in the lesson (for example):

- Decrease in child mortality / clean water progress
- Decrease in violent crime or drug overdose deaths
- Christian generosity and charity
- Victories against sexual abuse / trafficking
- Religious liberty court cases
- Increased church engagement among Gen Z / Millennials

Briefly describe how focusing on “bad news” might keep you from seeing or celebrating this good news.

Personal response

- What is one attitude or habit you sense God inviting you to change?
- How might that change help you stay focused on Christ’s mission rather than on division?

2. Faith-in-Action Exercise

Goal: Practice biblical justice in a small but concrete way this week.

Choose one of the following:

- Encouragement toward a pastor or church leader
 - Write a handwritten note, email, or text to a pastor or ministry leader:
 - Thank them specifically for one way they have served faithfully.
 - Assure them of your prayers.
 - Then pray for them by name at least twice this week.
- Support a justice / mercy ministry
 - Give time, money, or a practical item to a ministry that serves “the least of these” (e.g., local mission, food pantry, Compassion, World Vision, anti-trafficking ministry, etc.).

Do at least one of:

- Volunteer for 1–2 hours, or
- Make a meaningful financial gift (relative to your means), or
- Donate specific needed items (food, clothing, hygiene items, etc.).
- Cross-the-line conversation

Intentionally initiate a kind, listening-oriented conversation with someone who:

- Differs from you politically, or
- Is from a different ethnic background, or
- Is not a Christian.
- Your goal is not to debate but to:
 - Ask questions,
 - Listen well,
 - Look for shared concerns or hopes (especially about justice, suffering, or the good of your community).

After you do it, write 1–2 paragraphs describing:

- What you did
- How it felt
- What you learned about yourself or others

3. Bible Study (Personal or Group)

Study the connection between unity, justice, and witness in Scripture.

Read and answer the questions for each of these passages:

A. Micah 6:6–8

- What does God not primarily desire in this passage?
- How does He describe what He does desire (justice, mercy, humility)?
- In your context today, what would “doing justice” and “loving mercy” look like?

B. Philippians 2:1–4

- What motivations for unity does Paul give (v.1–2)?
- What attitudes destroy unity (v.3–4)?
- Identify one place in your life where you tend to act from “selfish ambition” or “vain conceit.” What would “considering others more significant” look like there?

C. Matthew 5:13–16

- What does it mean for Christians to be “salt” and “light”?
- According to verse 16, what is the purpose of our “good works”?
- How does doing visible good in the world help counter the narrative that Christians don’t care about justice or the poor?

D. Revelation 7:9–10

- How is the diversity of God’s people described?
- How does this future vision of worship challenge divisions we see today (race, nationality, politics)?
- What is one tangible way you can begin to live more in light of this future reality now?
- Write brief answers (bullet points are fine) and bring them next time.

4. Practical Application Plan (One-Week “Good News & Justice” Plan)

Create a simple, one-week plan to live out what you’ve learned. Include:

- One habit of focus
- Identify one “bad news” source or pattern that feeds anxiety, anger, or division for you (e.g., a certain news show, endless scrolling, particular social media threads).
- Decide one concrete limit for this week (e.g., “no political talk radio,” “no news after 7 p.m.,” “10 minutes max per day on news apps”).
- One habit of gratitude and celebration

Each day, intentionally note one piece of good news:

- From the world (justice, mercy, lives saved, ministry impact), or
- From your own life/church.

- Write it down and thank God for it in a short prayer.
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One justice-related step

Based on Micah 6:8 and what you heard in class, pick one small action this week that:

- Helps the poor, the vulnerable, or the marginalized, or
- Promotes reconciliation and unity rather than division.

Be as specific as possible:

“I will invite X (who disagrees with me politically) for coffee and ask about their story.”

“I will donate \$___ to a clean water initiative.”

“I will volunteer at _____ on Saturday.”

- Write your plan in three lines:

I will limit: _____

I will celebrate and thank God for: _____

I will do this one justice/mercy action: _____

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned:

Revelation 7 - Referenced regarding worship from every nation, language, tribe, and tongue

Romans 1 (end) and Romans 2 (beginning) - Paul's discussion of Christian hypocrisy and judging those outside the church

Psalms (general reference) - Discussion of biblical lament and the question "How long, O Lord?"

Alluded to or Thematically Referenced:

Matthew 6:10 - "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (mentioned in closing prayer context)

Matthew 25:31-46 - "The least of these" (referenced multiple times regarding caring for vulnerable groups)

Philippians 4:8 - "Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable" (alluded to in prayer about focusing on good things)

Genesis 1:26-27 - Humanity created in God's image and likeness (mentioned in prayer)

James 3:1 - Teachers/leaders held to higher standard (referenced regarding pastoral accountability)

Discussion Questions

- How does the statistic that religious people give more to charity than secular people challenge or affirm your understanding of what it means to live out biblical justice?
- In what ways might the dramatic reduction in child mortality worldwide reflect the church's call to care for the least of these, and how can we celebrate these victories without attributing them solely to political figures?
- The sermon suggests that division is distraction from our mission. What are some practical ways Christians can maintain unity while holding different political views?
- Pastor Carlton Harris emphasized that Christianity is fundamentally relational and that transformation happens in relationship. How does this challenge our tendency to withdraw from those with whom we disagree?
- The concept of biblical lament was presented as a response to cultural turmoil. How might regularly practicing lament help us process difficult national events while staying grounded in the gospel?
- Given that 40 percent of pastors feel burnt out but only 1.2 percent actually leave ministry, what does this reveal about God's sustaining power, and how should we as congregants support our spiritual leaders?
- The sermon highlighted that good leadership often looks boring and follows expected patterns. How does this contrast with our culture's attraction to sensational or charismatic leadership?
- How should the increasing church attendance among millennials and Gen Z shape the way established church members welcome and disciple the younger generation?
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- The Southern Baptist Convention's response to sexual abuse allegations demonstrates the importance of bringing sin into the light. What systems of accountability should every church have in place to protect the vulnerable?

- Considering the multiple legal victories for religious freedom in recent years, how should Christians balance celebrating these wins with maintaining humility and compassion toward those who disagree with our beliefs?

Devotional - Celebrating God's Justice and Faithfulness

Day 1: The Heart of Biblical Justice

Reading: Micah 6:6-8; James 1:27

Devotional: God's call to justice isn't about political posturing—it's about loving action. Micah reminds us that the Lord requires us to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." This week's message revealed how Christians are leading the charge in reducing child mortality, providing clean water, and caring for the vulnerable. These aren't just statistics; they're lives transformed by believers living out biblical justice. James defines pure religion as caring for orphans and widows in their distress. When we give generously, serve sacrificially, and advocate for the powerless, we reflect God's heart. Today, consider: How is God calling you to do justice in your sphere of influence? Remember, biblical justice isn't distraction—it's our mission.

Day 2: Generosity as Worship

Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Acts 20:35

Devotional: The research is clear: religious people give more generously than secular people, regardless of political affiliation. This isn't coincidence—it's evidence of transformed hearts. Paul teaches that God loves a cheerful giver and provides seed to the sower. Our generosity flows from recognizing that everything we have belongs to God. When Christians support clean water initiatives, sponsor children through Compassion International, or give blood, we're not earning salvation—we're responding to grace already received. Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive. Our giving isn't motivated by guilt or obligation but by joy in participating in God's redemptive work. Today, thank God for His generosity toward you, and ask Him to reveal one way you can bless someone in need.

Day 3: Bringing Darkness to Light

Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14; John 3:19-21

Devotional: Scripture teaches that anything exposed by light becomes visible, and that's exactly what we're witnessing in our generation. From the Southern Baptist Convention addressing sexual abuse to activists shutting down trafficking websites, evil is being dragged into the light where it can be dealt with. This is painful but necessary work. Jesus said people loved darkness because their deeds were evil, but those who live by truth come into the light. As believers, we must have courage to expose injustice, even—especially—within the church. The SBC's willingness to investigate and reform demonstrates true repentance. We cannot judge the world while

tolerating sin in our own house. Today, pray for continued courage for those exposing evil and for healing for victims of abuse.

Day 4: Unity Amid Division

Reading: Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:1-6

Devotional: Carlton Harris's letter reminds us that Christianity is fundamentally relational. In our politically divided world, the enemy's strategy is clear: divide and distract. But Paul urges us to maintain unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith. When we allow political tribes to supersede our identity in Christ, we've lost our way. The psalmist declares how good and pleasant it is when God's people dwell together in unity. This doesn't mean we'll agree on every policy position, but it does mean we prioritize relationship over being right. We must learn to have difficult conversations without destroying fellowship. Today, reach out to a believer with different political views and affirm your shared faith in Christ.

Day 5: Hope for the Next Generation

Reading: Psalm 78:1-7; Joel 2:28-29

Devotional: The statistics are stunning: church attendance among Gen Z and millennials has nearly doubled since 2019. God is moving powerfully among young people, pouring out His Spirit on the next generation. The psalmist writes about telling the coming generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord. We have a responsibility to share not just the challenges we face but the victories God is winning. Young people need to hear the good news—that lives are being saved, justice is advancing, and God's kingdom is breaking through. Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on sons and daughters. We're witnessing this fulfillment. Don't be discouraged by headlines; be encouraged by what God is doing in young hearts. Today, pray specifically for young adults in your church and community, that they would encounter Christ powerfully.