

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

**Galatians 6:9-10**

**Lesson #42**

**Social Reform**

**06/03/2018**

## *Ephesians 6*

“<sup>5</sup> Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; . . .”

“<sup>9</sup> And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

***This teaching  
raises lots of questions***

1

## ***Thus far we have***

- seen this teaching as part of a broader theme.
  - “Be subject one to another.”
- shown how it is consistent with the broader teaching of the Gospel.
  - **The Word of the Cross** - suffering in this life
  - **The Kingdom of God** - will not be realized now
  - **The Bondage to Christ** - effects all believers
  - **The Freedom in Spirit** - not in circumstances

## ***We now need to address***

- **How are we to respond to social injustice** - systemic evil like racial discrimination, economic injustice, etc.

2

## ***Social injustice in the Bible***

- The Bible gives more attention to social justice teaching than to - heaven & hell, world evangelism, & prophecy **combined**.
- Almost all of the teaching on social justice is centered on relationships **within** the community of faith (Israel and church).
- When the N.T. addresses the believer's responsibility to social issues outside the faith community its emphasis is on **suffering & submission** rather than reform.

3

Two things that opened the door for the Gospel in the early church:

### ***Individual Christian's Response:***

- **to personal suffering.**
- **to the needs of others.**

4

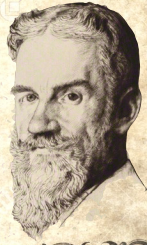
The current generation of young Christians are not nearly as interested in what the previous generation believed as in how their faith is expressed in what they do.

5



“The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that’s the essence of inhumanity.”

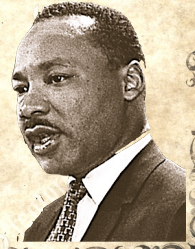
George Bernard Shaw



6

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Martin Luther King Jr.



7

## 1. Do good to all men.

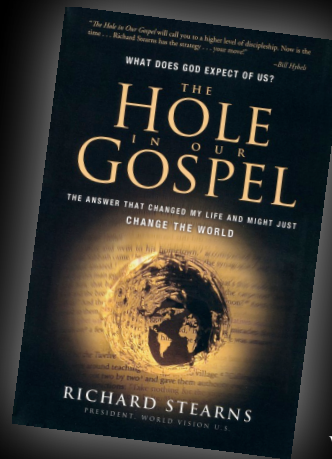
*Galatians 6*

“<sup>9</sup> Let us not lose heart in doing good, for **in due time** we will reap if we do not grow weary. <sup>10</sup> So then, while we have opportunity (**time**), let us do good **to all men**, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

- Starting within the church we should “do good” **to all people**.  
**Love** demands that we show the image of God by respecting all who bear that image.
- **Perseverance** and **patience** will bear fruit over time.

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## An argument for Christian social responsibility



Richard Stearns  
President  
World Vision U.S.



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“If we ask God why He allows poverty, suffering, and injustice when He could do something about it.”

“Don’t be surprised if -

**“He asks us the same question.”**

“We are called the Body of Christ for a reason.”

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### *Saving Starfish*

One early morning, after a fierce storm had hit the coast, I stroll to the beach for my morning walk. Horrified, I saw that tens of thousands of starfish had been washed up on the beach by the winds and waves. I was saddened by the realization that all of them would die, stranded on the shore, away from the life-giving water. Despairing that there as nothing I could do, I sat down on the sand and put my head in my hands.

But then I hear a sound, and I lifted my eyes. There, in the distance, I saw a man bending down and then standing up, bending down and standing up. Curious, I rose and walked toward him. I saw that he was picking up the starfish, one at a time, and throwing them back into the sea.

“What are you doing?” I yelled. “Saving the starfish,” he replied.

“But don’t you see, man, that there are tens of thousands of them? Nothing you can do will make a difference.”

He did not answer me but instead bent down, picked up another starfish, and cast it back into the water. Then he smiled, looked me in the eye, and said, “It made a difference to that one!”

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“We can do no great things, only small things with great love.”



Mother Teresa

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## 2. Rendering to Caesar

*Matthew 22:21*

“Jesus said “**Render to Caesar** the things that are **Caesar’s**; and to God the things that are God’s.””

*In Jesus’ day*

*In our day*

*Roman empire*

*Democratic Republic*

*people had little control of policy*

*people have a hand in policy*

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## 2. Rendering to Caesar

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*In the USA*

*Caesar = “we the people”*

*“A government of, for and by the people”*

*“Rendering to Caesar” = individuals taking responsibility for social policy*

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*The American system calls its citizens to respect the dignity of every human.*



Michael Novak

*The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*

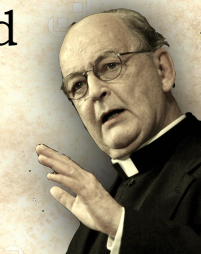


The American System

Biblical ethical spirit

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“Politics is chiefly a function of culture, at the heart of culture is morality, and at the heart of morality is religion.”



Richard John Neuhaus

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## Dimensions of Poverty

### Social

- not connected to a supportive community or the social structures of power.

### Spiritual

- not empowered from within to experience personal dignity, power, and hope from a relationship with God and His people.



### Material

- not able to afford basics (food, shelter, etc.)

### Political

- not empowered socially to effect change in one’s life situation.

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### Isaiah 10

“<sup>1</sup> Woe to those who make **unjust laws**, to those who issue **oppressive decrees**, <sup>2</sup> to **deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed** of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.”

**Prejudice + Power =  
Irrational Discrimination**

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### 3. Affirmative action

an action or policy **favoring** those who tend to suffer from negative discrimination (especially in relation to employment or education) is called **positive or reverse discrimination**.

#### **The great commandment**

- the **worship** of God through **favoring** those who **bear God's image** and yet are **marginalized** in the world's eyes -

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### 3. Affirmative action

#### **Example**

**A wise teacher should not give a poor student a high grade that they don't deserve**

**but rather give that student extra attention so that their high grade is earned.**



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#### **Biblical example #1 1 Corinthians 12**

“<sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup> and **those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness**, <sup>24</sup> whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, **giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked**, <sup>25</sup> that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

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#### **Biblical example #2 Acts 6**

“<sup>1</sup> ... a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ... <sup>3</sup> select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ... <sup>5</sup> ... and they chose **Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and **Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas**, a proselyte from Antioch.”

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#### **1 John 2:6**

“the one who says he abides in him, ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.”

- **Comfort** the wounded.
- **Listen** to the forgotten.
- **Honor** the lowly.
- **Defend** the powerless.
- **Share** with the poor.
- **Include** the marginalized.
- **Bless** those who differ with you.

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