

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

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Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

32. Justice

Composed by Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. Justice in Action

Topics encompassed by the theme of justice together form a very large proportion of what the Bible says about how to relate to other people. It is essential that we incorporate the Bible's teaching on these topics into our own lives. In doing so, we must be mindful that acting justly involves not only doing what is right ourselves; it also involves ensuring that others are treated fairly – notably the needy.

a) Do What Is Just and Right

Practice justice and so act justly

DEUT 16:20 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *You must pursue justice alone* so that you may live and inherit the land the LORD your God is giving you.

MIC 6:8 No, the LORD has told us what is good. *What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.* GNT

In acting justly, do what is right . . .

ISA 1:17 [GOD:] *Learn to do what is right! Promote justice!* Give the oppressed reason to celebrate! Take up the cause of the orphan! Defend the rights of the widow!

PROV 21:3 *To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.* ISV

. . . and do no wrong to others

PS 15:2B–3 [DAVID, SPEAKING OF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE:] Such people speak the truth from their hearts³ and do not tell lies about others. *They do no wrong to their neighbors* and do not gossip. NCV™

Strive to do what is right in the eyes of both God and people

2COR 8:21 [PAUL:] *We intend to do what is right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of people.* ISV

Acting justly brings blessing, . . .

PS 106:3 *Blessed are those who defend justice and do what is right at all times.* GW

PS 112:5 *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.* ESV

. . . whereas injustice brings God's judgment

EZEK 9:9B-10 [God:] “The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is extremely great; *the land is full of murder, and the city is full of corruption*, for they say, ‘The LORD has abandoned the land, and the LORD does not see!’ ¹⁰But as for me, *my eye will not pity them nor will I spare them; I hereby repay them for what they have done.*”

In what sorts of decisions and actions in your life do you need to be particularly mindful of the command to “do what is just” (Mic 6:8)?

Why is it more important to do what is right and just than to make offerings to God (cf. Proverbs 21:3)?

Can you recall doing wrong to someone? What could you do towards making amends for this wrong?

b) Administering Justice

Administer and maintain justice

JER 21:12 *Each new day, make sure that justice is done, and rescue those who are being robbed. Or else my anger will flame up like a fire that never goes out.* CEV

ISA 56:1 This is what the LORD says: *Preserve justice*, and do what is right. My salvation is about to come. My righteousness is about to be revealed. GW

Judge justly

ZEC 8:16B [GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH:] *Practice true and righteous judgment in your courts.*

Do not show favoritism in judging . . .

LEV 19:15 [GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *You must not deal unjustly in judgment: you must neither show partiality to the poor nor honor the rich. You must judge your fellow citizen fairly.*

. . . nor show favoritism in other matters

1TIM 5:21 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, I solemnly charge you to *carry out these commands without prejudice or favoritism of any kind.*

Further instructions about legal judgments

EZEK 44:24A [GOD:] In all disputes the priests must act as judges and *make decisions based on my laws.* GW

DEUT 19:15 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *One witness is not enough to convict a man of a crime; at least two witnesses are necessary to prove that a man is guilty.* GNT

JOHN 7:51 [NICODEMUS:] *“Our law doesn’t condemn a man unless it first hears from him and learns what he is doing, does it?”*

A person must not be condemned without first being given a hearing.

Have the same laws for foreigners as for the native-born

LEV 24:22 [GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *“The law will be the same for the foreigner as for those from your own country. I am the LORD your God.”* NCV™

Note: Avoid going to court

MATT 5:25 *If someone brings a lawsuit against you and takes you to court, settle the dispute with him while there is time, before you get to court. Once you are there, he will hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, and you will be put in jail.* GNT

What can you do to promote justice in your society and/or overseas?

When do you find it hard to not show favoritism? What can you do to make yourself less disposed to doing so?

What interaction do you have with foreigners, or with people from an ethnic background? Do you need to guard against treating them unfairly in any way?

c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

Do not mistreat the needy . . .

ZEC 7:10 *You must not oppress the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, or the poor, nor should anyone secretly plot evil against his fellow human being.*

. . . and treat foreigners the same as your native-born

LEV 19:34 *The foreigner who resides with you must be to you like a native citizen among you; so you must love him as yourself, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*

Note that in Israel foreigners (or aliens) were generally seen as being vulnerable and needy (cf. Zec 7:10 ↑).

Defend the cause of the needy

PS 82:3–4 *Defend the weak and the orphans; defend the rights of the poor and suffering. ⁴Save the weak and helpless; free them from the power of the wicked.* NCV™

PROV 31:8–9 *“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing. ⁹Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.”* NCV™

Give to the needy . . .

ACTS 10:2 Cornelius was a religious man. He and all the other people who lived in his house worshiped the true God. *He gave much of his money to the poor* and prayed to God often. NCV™

. . . Provide the needy with food and clothing

LUKE 3:11 John answered them, *“The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise.”*

ACTS 9:36, 39 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which in translation means Dorcas). *She was continually doing good deeds and acts of charity. . . .* ³⁹So Peter got up and went with them,

and when he arrived they brought him to the upper room. *All the widows stood beside him, crying and showing him the tunics and other clothing Dorcas used to make while she was with them.*

Even sell your possessions so as to give to the poor

LUKE 12:33 [JESUS:] *Sell your possessions and give to the poor.* Provide yourselves purses that do not wear out – a treasure in heaven that never decreases, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

ACTS 2:45 *They [the believers] made it their practice to sell their possessions and goods and to distribute the proceeds to anyone who was in need.* ISV

Almost all of us are able to do much more to provide for the poor. What could you do? What do you intend to do?

What are some groups of needy people you are aware of “who cannot speak for themselves” (Prov 31:8)? What can we do to speak up for them and defend their rights?

Was Jesus using hyperbole or speaking literally when he said: “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Luke 12:33)? How should we respond to this command?

d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

Defending and providing for the needy are a vital part of true religion . . .

JER 22:15B–16A [GOD, REFERRING TO KING JOSIAH:] *He always did right— he gave justice to the poor and was honest.* ¹⁶*That’s what it means to truly know me.* CEV

JAMES 1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

. . . Providing for the needy is associated with righteousness

MATT 25:37–40 *Then the righteous will answer him [the king, Jesus Christ], ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.’*

Meeting the needs of “these brothers or sisters of mine” (v. 40) is correlated here with being identified as “righteous” (v. 37; cf. v. 46). Note that “these brothers of mine” probably refers primarily to Christians, here obviously ones who had been in need.

Providing for the needy brings oneself blessing, . . .

PROV 19:17 *The one who is gracious to the poor lends to the LORD, and the LORD will repay him for his good deed.*

LUKE 6:38 [JESUS:] *Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure you receive.*

Quite possibly Jesus has giving to the poor primarily in view. This teaching is at least inclusive of it.

. . . but giving to the needy must be done in an appropriate manner

MATT 6:1–4 [JESUS:] *Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*² *“When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets in the synagogues and on the streets so that people will see them and honor them. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward.*³ *So when you give to the poor, don't let anyone know what you are doing.*⁴ *Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.* NCV™

Blessings include one's own needs being met . . .

Ps 41:1 *How blessed is the one who treats the poor properly! When trouble comes, the LORD delivers him.*

2COR 9:7–8 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver.⁸ *And God is able to make all grace overflow to you so that because you have enough of everything in every way at all times, you will overflow in every good work.*

Those who give to the needy will be blessed by God with all that they need. This includes what they need for themselves, as well as for “every good work”, such as further giving to others.

. . . There will also be reward in the afterlife

1TIM 6:18–19 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TIMOTHY WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Tell them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous givers, sharing with others.¹⁹ *In this way they will save up a treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the future and so lay hold of what is truly life.*

The phrase “the future” (v. 19) appears to have the afterlife in view (cf. NIV).

In contrast, God will punish those who mistreat the needy . . .

PROV 22:22–23 *Do not exploit a poor person because he is poor and do not crush the needy in court, ²³for the LORD will plead their case and will rob those who are robbing them.*

EZEK 22:29, 31 [GOD:] *The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have wronged the poor and needy; they have oppressed the foreigner who lives among them and denied them justice. . . . ³¹So I have poured my anger on them, and destroyed them with the fire of my fury. I hereby repay them for what they have done, declares the sovereign LORD.*

. . . God will also punish those who ignore the needy

MATT 25:41–46 *“Then he [Jesus Christ] will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not receive me as a guest, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not give you whatever you needed?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.’ ⁴⁶And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Why is caring for the needy closely associated with godliness and righteousness?

What should be our motivation/s for giving to the poor?

Which fellow Christians do you know of who are “hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison” (Matt 25:44)? How can you help them?

e) OT Structured Provisions for the Needy

Although some of the OT structured provisions for the needy in Israel may not be readily applicable in modern societies, they nevertheless provide principles and concepts that are relevant to all societies.

The providing of produce for the needy

LEV 19:9–10 *When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing along the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground. ¹⁰Don't strip your grapevines clean or gather the grapes that fall off the vines. Leave them for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the LORD your God.* CEV

DEUT 26:12 *Every year you are to give ten percent of your harvest to the LORD. But every third year, this ten percent must be given to the poor who live in your town, including Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. That way, they will have enough to eat.* CEV

The prohibiting of taking interest or profit from the poor

LEV 25:35–37 *If your brother becomes impoverished and is indebted to you, you must support him; he must live with you like a foreign resident. ³⁶Do not take interest or profit from him, but you must fear your God and your brother must live with you. ³⁷You must not lend him your money at interest and you must not sell him food for profit.*

The canceling of fellow Israelites' debts every seven years

DEUT 15:1–2 *At the end of every seven years you must declare a cancellation of debts. ²This is the nature of the cancellation: Every creditor must remit what he has loaned to another person; he must not force payment from his fellow Israelite, for it is to be recognized as "the LORD's cancellation of debts."*

The release of Israelite servants every seven years

DEUT 15:12 *If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.* ESV

The year of jubilee

LEV 25:10 *So you must consecrate the fiftieth year, and you must proclaim a release in the land for all its inhabitants. That year will be your jubilee; each one of you must return to his property and each one of you must return to his clan.*

In the year of jubilee there was to be “a release” for those who were in bondage. As such, poor people were able to return to and reclaim ancestral property that they had sold (cf. vv. 28, 31, 33), and any poor person who had sold himself to work for another (cf. v. 39) was to be released (cf. vv. 40–41).

The right of redemption for Israelite servants and of ancestral land

LEV 25:47–49 *If a resident foreigner who is with you prospers and your brother becomes impoverished with regard to him so that he sells himself to a resident foreigner who is with you or to a member of a foreigner’s family, ⁴⁸after he has sold himself he retains a right of redemption. One of his brothers may redeem him, ⁴⁹or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or anyone of the rest of his blood relatives – his family – may redeem him, or if he prospers he may redeem himself.*

LEV 25:23–24 [GOD:] *The land must not be sold without reclaim because the land belongs to me, for you are foreigners and residents with me. ²⁴In all your landed property you must provide for the right of redemption of the land.*

Israelite servants (cf. Lev 25:47–49 ↑) and ancestral land (cf. Lev 25:23–24 ↑) could be redeemed (i.e. bought back) at any time for an appropriate price.

Can you apply the instruction in Leviticus 19:9–10 to anything you do or have? If so, how?

Is the provision for canceling debts relevant to us? If so, how?

How could your church actively support the Jubilee movement – born out of the Old Testament’s Jubilee laws – in “campaigning for the cancellation of harmful debt accumulated by developing countries, and for a more just and equitable world” (cf. www.jubileeaustralia.org)?

II. Being True

In order to do what is right in our relationships with others, we must be true – both faithful and truthful. It is important to remember that faithfulness and truth – with the trust that they generate – are absolutely essential for our relationships with others to work, for so many aspects of our relationships are dependent on them. Accordingly we must avoid deceitfulness and associated dishonest practices. Bear in mind that deceitfulness is arguably the prime characteristic of Satan and evil.

a) Faithfulness

Be faithful . . .

PROV 3:3–4 *Never let go of loyalty and faithfulness. Tie them round your neck; write them on your heart.* ⁴*If you do this, both God and people will be pleased with you.* GNT

MATT 23:23 [JESUS:] Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You give a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you neglect *what is more important in the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness!* You should have done these things without neglecting the others.

. . . and so be trustworthy and reliable

1TIM 3:11 In the same way, women must be respected by others. They must not speak evil of others. They must be self-controlled and *trustworthy in everything.* NCV™

2TIM 2:2 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and *entrust them to reliable people*, who will be able to teach others also. GNT

Stand by others

LUKE 22:28 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *You are the ones who have always stood by me in my trials.* ISV

RUTH 1:15–17 So Naomi said, “Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her people and to her god. Follow your sister-in-law back home!” ¹⁶*But Ruth replied, “Stop urging me to abandon you! For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your people will become my people, and your God will become my God.* ¹⁷*Wherever you die, I will die – and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I do not keep my promise! Only death will be able to separate me from you!”*

Ruth’s promise to stand by her bereaved mother-in-law is a superlative expression of loyalty and commitment.

As such, do not desert others, . . .

JOSH 22:3 [JOSHUA, TO THE TRIBES OF REUBEN, GAD, AND EAST MANASSEH:] *All this time, to this day, you have never deserted your relatives.* You have carefully kept the commands of the LORD your God. GW

PROV 27:10A *Never abandon your friend nor your father's friend . . .*
ISV

. . . nor betray others

MATT 27:4A [JUDAS:] *"I have sinned by betraying an innocent man to death!"* GNT

JOB 17:5 *If a man denounces his friends for personal gain, the eyes of his children will fail.*

If one betrays his friend for reward, such will be the consequences that even his children will "suffer for it" (GNT).

Consequences of unfaithfulness

PROV 11:3, 6 The integrity of the upright guides them, but *the crookedness of the unfaithful destroys them. . . .* ⁶The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but *the faithless will be captured by their own desires.*

What is “faithfulness”? What does it involve doing? (Do not limit your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

When is it hard to stand by others? What things should we bear in mind in such circumstances?

Has there been a situation where you could have been more faithful? Is there something you can do about it now?

b) Truthfulness

Be truthful . . .

PS 51:6A [DAVID, TO GOD:] Yet, *you desire truth* and sincerity. GW

ZEC 8:19B *You must love truth* and peace. GNT

. . . Speak the truth

ZEC 8:16A *These are the things you must do: Speak the truth, each of you, to one another.*

Be honest

EPH 4:28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. *Be honest* and work hard, so you will have something to give to people in need. CEV

LUKE 8:15 Those seeds that fell on good ground are the people who listen to the message and *keep it in good and honest hearts*. They last and produce a harvest. CEV

Be sincere

2COR 1:12B [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] Our conscience testifies that *we have conducted ourselves in the world with pure motives and godly sincerity*, without earthly wisdom but with God's grace—and especially towards you. ISV

Have integrity . . .

1KI 9:4A [GOD, TO SOLOMON:] *You must serve me with integrity and sincerity, just as your father David did.*

. . . Integrity brings security

PROV 10:9 *The one who conducts himself in integrity will live securely*, but the one who behaves perversely will be found out.

Whenever you find it a challenge to be truthful, what reason/s do you have to motivate yourself to be truthful?

Has there been a time recently where you could have been more honest about something? Can you do anything to redress this?

What does integrity involve?

c) Deceitfulness

Do not deceive

LEV 19:11B *Never steal, lie, or deceive your neighbor.* GW

Do not lie . . .

COL 3:9–10 [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] *Do not lie to one another* since you have put off the old man with its practices ¹⁰and have been clothed with the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it.

. . . and so do not give false testimony

EX 20:16 *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

Do not use flattery

PS 12:2–3 [DAVID:] *People lie to one another; they flatter and deceive.*
³*May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that boasts!*

Do not plot evil schemes

ZEC 8:17A *Do not plan evil in your hearts against one another.*

PROV 12:20 *Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy.*

Avoid hypocrisy: Not acting in accordance with what you say; . . .

MATT 23:2–3 [JESUS:] *The experts in the law and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat.* ³*Therefore pay attention to what they tell you and do it. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach.*

. . . and false external practices – doing things for show

MARK 12:40 [JESUS, REFERRING TO THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW:] *They devour widows' property, and as a show make long prayers. These men will receive a more severe punishment.*

Deceptive practices bring oneself harm . . .

PROV 17:20 The one who has a perverse heart does not find good, and *the one who is deceitful in speech falls into trouble.*

PROV 21:28 *A lying witness will perish,* but the one who reports accurately speaks forever.

. . . Deceptive practices ultimately bring God's judgment

Ps 52:3–5 [DAVID, AS IF SPEAKING TO A WICKED MAN:] *You love evil more than good, lies more than speaking the truth. (Selah)* ⁴*You love to use all the words that destroy, and the tongue that deceives.* ⁵*Yet God will make you a permanent heap of ruins. He will scoop you up and remove you from your home; he will uproot you from the land of the living. (Selah)*

REV 21:8 But to the cowards, unbelievers, detestable persons, murderers, the sexually immoral, and those who practice magic spells, idol worshipers, and *all those who lie, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is the second death.*

Is telling a lie ever justifiable?

What is "hypocrisy"? Do you ever catch yourself being hypocritical? If so, when?

Deceit may well be the attribute most commonly ascribed to evil in the Bible. Why do you think that deceit is such a central or key aspect of evil?

d) Dishonest Gain

Note that because much of what can be described as “dishonest gain” involves deceitfulness, a good portion of this section is also relevant to the previous section, *Deceitfulness*.

Do not pursue dishonest gain

1TIM 3:8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, *not greedy for dishonest gain*. ESV

Do not steal . . .

Ex 20:15 *You shall not steal.*

. . . and do not defraud

LEV 19:13A *You shall not cheat your neighbor ...* NKJV

Do not take excessive interest or extort money

EZEK 18:17–18 [EZEKIEL, SPEAKING OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON:] He keeps his hand from doing wrong. *He does not take too much interest or profit when he lends money. He obeys my laws and lives by my rules. He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live.*¹⁸ *But his father took other people’s money unfairly and robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people. So he will die for his own sin.*

NCV™

Do not accept bribes

Ex 23:8 *Never take a bribe, because bribes blind those who can see and deny justice to those who are in the right.* GW

Ill-gotten gain does not last . . .

PROV 13:11A *Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished ...* NKJV

. . . and ill-gotten gain has ill consequences

PROV 1:19 *Such is the way of all those who seek illicit gain—it takes away the lives of those who possess it.* ISV

1COR 6:10 *... thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Is there a situation where you might be tempted to make dishonest gain? How can one who is susceptible to such temptations learn to resist?

Are there any situations in which we should charge no interest?

If someone steals from us or defrauds us, how should we respond?

e) Addendum: Oaths

The swearing of an oath has two main usages: to affirm the truthfulness of a statement; and to confirm the sincerity and binding nature of a pledge or agreement. The OT law stipulated that it was to be done in God's name – as opposed to that of a false god – appealing to or invoking God as a witness to the integrity of what was said. It cannot be done falsely – or lightly (cf. Lev 5:4) – and cannot be broken (cf. Num 30:2; Josh 9:3–21).

The practice of swearing oaths, in God's name – not to be done falsely

DEUT 6:13 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] You must revere the LORD your God, serve him, and *take oaths using only his name*.

LEV 19:12 [GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *You must not swear falsely in my name, so that you do not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.*

Swearing oaths to assert the truthfulness of a statement

MATT 26:63–64A But Jesus was silent. The high priest said to him, *“I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”* ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, *“You have said it yourself.*

Here the high priest invokes a legally imposed oath, which by law Jesus had to answer.

2COR 1:18 [PAUL:] *But as God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No.”*

By linking the truth of his words with the certainty of God being faithful, Paul to all intents and purposes swears an oath based on God's faithfulness if not his name.

Swearing an oath to confirm a pledge . . .

NUM 30:2 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *If a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath of binding obligation on himself, he must not break his word, but must do whatever he has promised.*

. . . Such oaths are barred by NT teaching

MATT 5:33–37 [JESUS:] Again, you have heard that it was said to an older generation, ‘Do not break an oath, but fulfill your vows to the Lord.’³⁴ But I say to you, do not take oaths at all – not by heaven, because it is the throne of God,³⁵ not by earth, because it is his footstool, and not by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Do not take an oath by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let your word be ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no.’ More than this is from the evil one.

Possibly in response to abuse of such oaths associated with pledges, Jesus taught that we should not swear them at all (v. 34a), but instead simply state our intention (v. 37).

What is the significance of swearing an oath “in God’s name”?

What are the dangers of swearing an oath to confirm a pledge?

Are oaths of any relevance to the Christian life?

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There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

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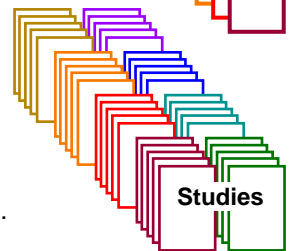
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Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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