

Voices: Justice looks like a healthy relationship

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EDITOR'S NOTE: "Justice looks like ..." is a special series in the Voices column. Readers will have the opportunity to consider justice from numerous viewpoints. The series is based on each writer's understanding of Scripture and relationship with Jesus Christ. Writers present their own views independent of any institution, unless otherwise noted in their bios.

You are encouraged to listen to each writer without prejudgment. Then, engage in conversation with others around you about what justice looks like to you.

[Click here](#) for more information about the series. [Click here](#) to read the full "Justice looks like..." series.

Seemingly competing demands to defund the police and to promote law and order agree on the same goal—to have justice.

Justice can be in the form of strict enforcement of rules, adjusting policy relating to demographic outcomes, providing equal distribution of resources, or mitigating harm done to a person. Perhaps viewing justice like a healthy relationship can lead to accomplishing each of these forms.

Justice requires discerning intent

There are times when an on-duty and uniformed police officer goes to the register to pay for a meal at a restaurant, only to be told the person ahead of the officer already paid for the meal.

There are times when a person lowers his or her window at the stoplight to get the attention of an officer in his patrol car, just to express gratitude and appreciation for the service he provides to the community.

There are teachers who deliver notes from students communicating admiration and praise for police service.

Police officers are trained to reject anything of value or benefit, because those things may be attempts at bribery. In fact, police are trained to look for criminal intent and to protect themselves from the bad acts of bad actors.

The normal case study involves something bad that happened to a police officer leading officers after that event to protect themselves by preparing and positioning themselves to avoid the possibility of that bad thing happening to them. Police officers even watch videos of these events.

Just as often, experienced officers coach new officers that not everyone is out to get them.

Types of officers

David Wood, who spent time in prison, explains [why some people hate cops](#) in a video posted to YouTube in connection with his ministry Acts 17 Apologetics.

Speaking about prison guards, Wood describes five types of officers:

- one who shows up to merely to collect a paycheck;
- one who is relaxed on enforcement in order to be popular;
- one who genuinely believes the offender made a mistake and works to solve problems and extends grace;
- one who wants to modify others behavior through swift, certain consequences; and

- one who genuinely is corrupt.

Wood says the corrupt officer is the only one remembered among all other encounters with police. He also says trying to resolve problems with a corrupt officer's conduct can be frustrated by systems that appear to protect the corrupt officer.

Good and bad cops

The officers Wood describes are people who can be found in any occupation. One truth to be noted is good cops hate bad cops, and the good want to get rid of the bad as quickly as possible, and often do.

The action to get rid of bad conduct is more aggressive in law enforcement than any other place of employment of which I am aware. Police officers commonly are more worried about what actions administrators take against them than what someone in the public might do to them during a service call.

Seeking justice in law enforcement

The effort to seek justice requires dialogue and action. To resolve conflicts, we often must give up something to build a bridge of compromise.

To manage people we love, we often have to forgive and extend grace. Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, we should value the people, even when they have wronged us.

Let's stop focusing on how we have been wronged, and focus on the good we do to each other. It's a natural trait to be angry and dwell on the bad, but it is godly and more constructive to extend grace within meaningful boundaries. When we do that, justice will look like a healthy relationship.

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[Click here](#) to read the full “Justice looks like...” series.