

Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry
Series 2, Lesson #3:
“God’s Attributes: Wisdom and Justice”
teacher’s guide

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

Preparation:

1. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; read through the teacher’s version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
2. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
 - attendance/prayer request sheets
 - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don’t** staple the pages.)
 - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
3. Other optional materials to bring:
 - White board marker and eraser
 - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

Before and as students arrive:

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don’t have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

Focus points for this Lesson:

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion)

- **God’s wisdom and knowledge is far beyond our comprehension and worthy to be trusted and followed**
- **God’s justice is completely impartial and infallible; everyone will be judged and “rewarded” in the End**
- **God is holy and calls us to strive toward holiness**

Lesson #3: "God's Attributes: Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness"

"God's Wisdom"

Romans 11:33 (NIV)

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

³⁴"Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?"^[i]

³⁵"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?"

³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

What is wisdom? (allow for responses and discussion)

Why do some people seem to have it and others don't? (allow for responses and discussion)

How is God's wisdom different from ours? (allow for responses and discussion)

In general, we consider wisdom to be the way a person uses knowledge and experience to "see the big picture" and make sound decisions accordingly. King Solomon has been credited as being the wisest human, and he received that gift from God. The problem with understanding God's wisdom is that it is so much bigger than what we can comprehend. A good way of expressing it in terms we can understand is this: "The wisdom of God allows only the best possible results, by the best possible means, to accomplish the highest possible purpose, for the longest time, for the most people in and around your life." (p. 132)¹ The only one who could possibly accomplish this is God! However, ignoring God, we arrogantly persist in trying to make everything work out right by our own efforts.

What evidence do we have of God's wisdom? (allow for responses and discussion)

We need look no further than the natural world to see the evidence of God's wisdom in the incredible design of everything in the entire universe, from galaxies to microbes, and how it is all so precisely and intricately made and balanced. The Bible confirms God's wisdom in creation in Romans 1:20, Psalm 19, and Psalm 104:24.

We see evidence of His wisdom through the good things that He provides and works out for our good (Romans 8:28).

We can see God's wisdom for humankind in His plan for redemption – how He would buy us back from the slavery of sin / Satan. Christ was the ransom (Mark 10:45). Even Satan was not prepared for this one!

Colossians 2:15 (NLT)

¹⁵In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

Ultimately, His wisdom is revealed to us in the life of Jesus who is God in the flesh. If we truly want to understand how life is supposed to work, we have to know Jesus intimately enough to do what He would do.

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NLT)

³⁰God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom.

James 3:17 (NLT)

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere.

When we live our lives in faith, tapping into God's wisdom, we can see the difference it makes! The evidence speaks for itself.

Is there a difference between knowing about God's wisdom and responding to it? (allow for responses and discussion)

It is one thing to know about God's wisdom, it is another matter entirely to respond to and benefit from it. Just because we know something is good, like eating our vegetables, doesn't always mean that we will do it and benefit from it.

How can / should we respond to God's wisdom?

- God wants us to live our lives by exercising His wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. ¹⁶Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. ¹⁷Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.

- Those who live wisely will show reverence and honor to God.

Proverbs 9:10 (Contemporary English Version)

¹⁰Respect and obey the LORD!

This is the beginning

of wisdom. To have understanding,
you must know the Holy God.

- We receive and grow in God's wisdom by being in and learning His Word.

Psalm 119:97-101 (NLT)

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!

I think about it all day long.

⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,
for your commands are my constant guide.

⁹⁹ Yes, I have more insight than my teachers,
for I am always thinking of your decrees.

¹⁰⁰ I am even wiser than my elders,
for I have kept your commandments.

¹⁰¹ I have refused to walk on any path of evil,
that I may remain obedient to your word.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

- We must ask God with confidence for wisdom.

James 1:5-6 (NLT)

⁵If you need wisdom--if you want to know what God wants you to do--ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. ⁶But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

- We must trust God, understanding that His goals for us, and therefore His response, are not for our momentary pleasures but rather for our eternal happiness. He wants us to be like Jesus. In our asking, are our purposes and goals towards that end, too?

Conclusion:

"Until we grasp what it means that God is all-wise, we will never be able to trust and rest in His wise plan for our lives." (p. 130)¹ There is a better way than the stress of trying to figure out life for ourselves, it is God and His way. He has "charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him." (p. 131)¹

“God’s Justice”

Each of us has probably complained, “That’s not fair.” at some time or another. Even though we know from experience that life is not fair, we still somehow expect it to be. We want someone to be accountable. However, for those who do believe in God, this can pose a dilemma: How can there be a just God in a world that is so unjust? We see bad things happen to good people; we see good things happen to bad people; and we have to ask, “Where is God? If He is there, why would He allow this?” (allow for responses and discussion)

God’s Justice

What we think of as justice is usually based upon a set of laws which, as we’ve seen in reality, can be twisted and turned to affect the actual outcome. God’s justice is quite different from ours. God’s justice “involves an uncompromising and unwavering allegiance to a standard and God is the standard.” (p. 152)¹ God sees and knows all the details and nuances of our lives – both good and bad. He has all the facts and His justice cannot be manipulated by anyone. He alone is judge over all and from Him alone comes justice.

How does God’s justice work?

God’s first judgment on humankind came in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve exercised their free will and disobeyed God’s command to them (Genesis 3). That was the beginning of sin and this world has been in a “fallen” and sinful condition ever since. In a fallen world, things are not fair and justice is not served, however, the world is under God’s judgment until the final judgment on Judgment Day (Revelation 20). In the meantime, our Just and Perfect God is working with us in an imperfect and sinful world. In the end, He will make all things right. In the end, each person will stand before God and have to give an account for his/her life.

Romans 14:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹For the Scriptures say,

“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow to me and every tongue will confess allegiance to God.’” [a]

¹²Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.

We are assured that God is a righteous judge, and He will reward fairly in the end.

2 Timothy 4:8 (NASB)

⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

God is delaying His justice because He doesn’t want to bring condemnation on anyone; He wants to give ample time for all to repent and give their lives to Him.

We are glad when this applies to ourselves, but not always happy when God gives more time for others to repent.

Can God hate evil and still love the person who does evil? (allow for responses and discussion)

2 Peter 3:9

⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God is righteously indignant when it comes to disobedience and passionately hates evil. He has promised to bring His judgment against it.

Romans 1:18

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

How do we know if something is wicked or unrighteous? (allow for responses and discussion)

What does it mean to “suppress the truth by wickedness”? (allow for responses and discussion)

There is something innate in humankind with regard to morality. Certain things have been universally accepted as wrong among diverse cultures and across thousands of years such as murder, lying, stealing, adultery, and so on. People have something called a conscience that causes certain negative feelings when they think about or do violate these basic moral laws. This intuitive feeling is not a result of happenstance. It had to have come from the source of our existence, our Creator. This is discussed in Romans 2:14-16 and an example can be found in Acts 28:3-6.

God will reveal His justice on the Judgment Day as promised in many scriptures, including **Hebrews 12:23** and **2 Timothy 4:8**.

“The cross of Christ stands as the centerpiece of history; its shadow of forgiveness covers both the past and the future.” (p. 161)¹ The most fantastic way that God has revealed His justice is through the cross of Jesus. Because of His justice, God must punish sin. Because of His justice and His great love, God placed Himself as a substitute, an “atonement” or covering for our own sin. “Through the cross, God’s qualities converged (p. 161)¹; “what God’s justice demanded, His love provided.” (p. 162)¹

Romans 3:25-26 (New Living Translation)

²⁵For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times. ²⁶And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus.

Whether or not to accept God's atonement is our choice. However, we must understand that there will be retribution – the account will be settled on the "Day of Judgment". There are only going to be two options in how it can be settled: 1. eternal reward that can only be received through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ with the reward of a place with God in heaven; or 2. eternal punishment because of rejecting Jesus' atonement with the "reward" being a place far removed from God for those who do not love Him, a place of torment - hell.

We only get one chance, which is one lifetime, to make up our minds. Once we die, that's it, no more chances (Hebrews 9:27). None of us knows how many days God has appointed for our life (Psalm 39:4), so we should take the matter seriously and not delay.

How should we respond to God's justice? (allow for responses and discussion)

- Make your choice. Since everyone of us will one day bow before God and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ (Philippians 2:9-11), it only makes sense that we should do it in this life while there is yet time to affect our eternal destiny. Repentance from a life of disobedience to God followed by giving our life to Christ (Acts 2:38) is the only response that will secure our eternal home with God.
- Don't try to do God's job for Him. As humans, we want to see justice served on those who have done wrong and it is a human tendency to see vengeance. As Christians, we must wait on God to serve justice, and we must be careful not to even judge (Romans 12:17-21). We must learn to let offenses against us go by placing the situation in God's hands. When we harbor anger and bitterness, we are hurting ourselves and putting distance between God and ourselves.

Psalm 73

A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
- ² But as for me, I came so close to the edge of the cliff!
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
- ³ For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
- ⁴ They seem to live such a painless life;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.

⁵ They aren't troubled like other people
or plagued with problems like everyone else.
⁶ They wear pride like a jeweled necklace,
and their clothing is woven of cruelty.
⁷ These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!
⁸ They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.
⁹ They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.
¹⁰ And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.
¹¹ "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask.
"Is the Most High even aware of what is happening?"
¹² Look at these arrogant people--
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.
¹³ Was it for nothing that I kept my heart pure
and kept myself from doing wrong?
¹⁴ All I get is trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.
¹⁵ If I had really spoken this way,
I would have been a traitor to your people.
¹⁶ So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!
¹⁷ Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I thought about the destiny of the wicked.
¹⁸ Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.
¹⁹ In an instant they are destroyed,
swept away by terrors.
²⁰ Their present life is only a dream
that is gone when they awake. When you arise, O Lord,
you will make them vanish from this life.
²¹ Then I realized how bitter I had become,
how pained I had been by all I had seen.
²² I was so foolish and ignorant--
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
²³ Yet I still belong to you;
you are holding my right hand.
²⁴ You will keep on guiding me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on earth.
²⁶ My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.

- ²⁷ But those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon you.
- ²⁸ But as for me, how good it is to be near God!
I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

Conclusion:

We can find comfort in God's justice by keeping in mind that we live in a fallen world where things are not fair but that one day, God will balance the scales and justice will be served! He has provided a way to receive the prize and has given us the free will to choose. What choice will you make?

Closing the lesson / class:

Close the lesson with a prayer. If time permits, take prayer requests.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

Collect the attendance / prayer request sheets. Collect pencils if any were passed out.

After dismissing, talk/pray with individual inmates as needed and as time permits.

Lesson Sources:

¹ Ingram, Chip. ***God as He Longs for You to See Him***. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Definitions are from <http://dictionary.reference.com>