

VCBC Second Grade – God is Just

Here are the penalties for major crimes committed in Connecticut (as of 2008):

- Murder – 25 to 60 years in prison
- Assaulting a pregnant woman, resulting in the loss of the baby – 10 to 25 years in prison
- Kidnapping – 1 to 25 years in prison
- Home invasion – 10 to 25 years in prison
- Manslaughter – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Assault – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Burglary with a weapon – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Robbery with a weapon – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Computer crime related to terrorism – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Operating a car without a license – 90 days to 1 year in prison (third offense)
- Selling drugs to a child – 2 years in prison
- Terrorism – 5 to 20 years in prison
- Source: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/rpt/2008-R-0619.htm>

Major crime questions:

- What do you think should happen to people who commit these crimes?
- What would you think if the judge ignored the bad things they did, and said they didn't have to go to prison?
- Would the judge be just if he let them go without serving their prison sentences?

Bible verses about God's justice:

- Romans 3:10-12 – “As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- Romans 3:22b-23 – “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...”
- 1 John 1:8 – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
- Romans 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death ...”
- Numbers 14:18 - ‘The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;
- Isaiah 5:16 – “But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will be proved holy by his righteous acts.”
- Psalm 11:7 – “For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.”
- Psalm 50:6 – “And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice.”
- Psalm 89:14 – “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.”

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- Isaiah 42:1 – “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.”
- Zephaniah 3:5 – “The Lord within her is righteous; he does no wrong. Morning by morning he dispenses his justice, and every new day he does not fail, yet the unrighteous know no shame.”
- Matthew 12:18 – “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”
- Luke 18:7 – “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?”
- Acts 17:31 – “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Bible questions:

- For God to be just, what must he do about the sins we’ve committed?
- What would you think of God if he ignored the bad things we’ve done and allowed us to go unpunished?
- Would God be just if he allowed our sins to go unpunished?

Story:

A sixteen year-old girl stood before a judge in a courtroom. She was trembling. The judge, dressed in a black robe, held a paper in his hand. He looked down over his glasses at her, then read from the paper: “This police report states you crashed your car into a building on April 15th and caused significant property damage. It also states you were drunk – your blood alcohol level was way above the legal limit. It notes you lied about it to the police officer – you told him you hadn’t been drinking any beer or wine that night. Finally, the police officer found illegal drugs in the back seat of your car. How do you plead?”

Tears streamed down the girls’ face. “Guilty, your honor.”

The judge adjusted his glasses. “Very well, let the record show that the defendant has entered a guilty verdict. I will now sentence you. Since this is your first offense, you will not be sent to prison.”

The girl let out a sigh.

“However, you’ll be fined \$25,000.”

The girl jaw dropped. “\$25,000? Your honor, I can’t pay that fine. I don’t have enough money.”

The judge stood up, took off his robe, walked toward the girl, and stood beside her. He reached into his pocket, pulled out his checkbook, and wrote a check for \$25,000, then handed it to the bailiff.”

The girl lunged toward her father and hugged him. “Thank you, Daddy.”

“You are free to go, my child. Go and sin no more.”

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The girl nodded and left the courtroom.

Story Questions:

- Was the judge just?
- Was the judge merciful?
- How could the judge be both just and merciful?
- What would have happened if the girl had said, “Not guilty.”
- How is this story similar to how God wishes to be just and merciful toward us?

Commentary:

Various views about God exist in our culture, but if there is one belief that people hold in common across religious lines, it is that “God is love.” This would not be a problem if the belief that God is love were defined by biblical content, for Scripture does indeed reveal that God is a loving God. Regrettably, however, some of the loudest proponents of the notion that God is love in modern Western culture are those who are the least likely to actually define what that means biblically. For many people, the idea that God is love means that our Creator overlooks or ignores our sin. His forgiveness is unconditional, demanding no payment for our transgressions.

In reality, God does not simply overlook sin, and there is a condition that must be met if we are to be forgiven. For while Scripture talks often about the love of God, it is just as emphatic that God is just (Deut. 32:4). The Lord who is revealed in the pages of the Bible does not allow sin to go unpunished. He does not “clear the guilty” (Num. 14:18), that is, He does not simply wipe the slate clean when He forgives a person. His forgiveness is costly; the only question is who will pay the cost.

On a human level, we regard it as a great injustice if a guilty person escapes punishment for a crime. How much more, then, would it be unjust for the perfectly righteous God not to punish sin? For God to be just, He must impose a penalty for transgression. The consistency of His character is at stake. If He were not to punish sin, He would not be truly just, and if He were not truly just, we could not believe what He has revealed about Himself, for He has told us that He is a just God (Isa. 5:16).

At the same time, God also tells us that He is merciful, unwilling that any of His people should perish (Ps. 86:15; 2 Peter 3:9). He wants to justify His people, to declare them righteous so that they can live forever. And yet He must do so in a manner that preserves His justice. That, of course, is what He does in our justification. Romans 3:22b–26 says God found a way to show mercy without denying His justice by having His Son pay the price for our sin in our place. This makes God both just and justifier (v. 26). Unlike the God revealed in other religions, the one true God does not compromise His character when He forgives. He does not simply wave sin away but punishes it in the person of Christ. He remains true to what He has revealed about Himself, so we know we can trust Him

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God is both just and the justifier. He shows mercy without compromising His character. Because He is always true to Himself, we know that we can trust Him. He does not tell us that He is one thing and then act like another. No, because He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), we know that He can be trusted in all things.

Source: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/justification-just-god/>

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Bible verses for printing:

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Luke 18:7 – “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?”

Acts 17:31 – “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Psalms 86:15 – “But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Romans 3:26 – “... he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”
