The People’s Bible Church Singapore Dr. Rick Griffith

Title

6 August 2017 Single Message

NLT 40 Minutes

**Rectifying Wrongs**

***Deuteronomy 21***

**Topic:** Justice

**Subject:** How can we treat people fairly?

**Complement:** Treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs.

**Purpose:** The listeners will rectify wrongs done to others.

# Introduction

### Interest: Last week a friend felt I had treated her unfairly. She said that she got fairer treatment from non-Christians! I had to rectify this wrong by asking her forgiveness where I “ate humble pie.”

Injustice

### Need: This got me thinking if this is true for us as believers: Do we believers treat people less fairly than unbelievers do?

#### God is fair to us, so we should be fair to others.

#### But are we? Do we value people? "Since the 15th century, Lady Justice has often been depicted wearing a blindfold. The blindfold represents objectivity, in that justice is or should be meted out objectively, without fear or favor, regardless of money, wealth, power, or identity; blind justice and impartiality.

Lady Justice

#### All over the world, you can see statues of Lady Justice brandishing a sword, holding a scale and wearing a blindfold. They are posted in front of Court buildings and their message is clear; Justice will prevail."

#### Would those who know you say you are just and fair?

Peeking

### Main Idea: *Treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs.* That is the key idea in today’s passage.

MI

#### Correct offences. Handle others justly by undoing inequalities you may have *done* to them—or when you are *tempted* to be unfair to them. Value human lives. The title of this message is simply “Rectify Wrongs.”

#### But what does *rectifying wrongs* look like? How should we correct offences—or better yet, not do injustices to start with?

Subject

Bkgrd

### Background: Israel needed to know how to treat people fairly.

#### Israel had been treated unjustly for 400 years in Egypt. That was when they were the underdogs. They were slaves and the Egyptians were their overlords. As a result, they experienced generations of injustice.

Map

#### However, now the tables were about to turn. They would soon conquer Canaan and become the people of power. As Israelites looked towards becoming the ones with more potential to injustice, they needed God’s instructions. Otherwise, they would repeat the same wrongs of the Egyptians. How could Israel prevent such inequalities?

Israel  
Map

• Injustice

### Preview: Today we’ll see *five examples* how we must treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs. Sadly, more than half of these examples were in families, where injustice often is most evident!

Deut 21

5 Examples

### Text: Deuteronomy 21 gives us these five situations and what to do in them.

(What’s the first example how we must treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs? We see in the first nine verses that…)

# I. Murder must be treated seriously (1-9).

MP

[Human life is valuable so we should investigate every homicide.]

## Israel’s unsolved murders required leaders to kill a heifer nearby (1-9).

### Murdering an innocent man polluted the land (1).

### The way to turn God’s wrath away from the people was for the leaders to publicly declare their innocence (2-9).

### How does breaking the neck of a heifer atone for sin (4)? Is there something significant about not shedding this animal’s blood?

#### Note that shedding the blood was the typical way they killed sacrificial animals—but not so here.

#### “Breaking the heifer’s neck symbolized that the crime deserved capital punishment, and the washing of the elders’ hands over the heifer symbolized their innocence in the matter. This ritual demonstrated how extremely valuable God considers life. For even though no murderer was found, the land and the people both incurred the guilt of shedding innocent blood. The animal sacrifice, accompanied by the petition of the elders, made atonement, that is, turned the wrath of God away from the people” (Jack Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *BKC*, 1:300).

Deere Quote

## We must value human life publicly.

Gavel

### All societies have laws to value human life.

### We should go beyond these laws, though, such as protecting the life of the unborn even if the country’s laws do not do so.

### Some Christians fed their maids with the food scraped off their children’s plates!

### Employers in JB got perturbed when employees accidentally cut off their fingers.

(What’s a second example how to treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs?)

# II. Women must be highly valued (10-14).

MP

[Ladies should never be abused simply since they’re weaker physically.]

## Israel required care for a captive wife by allowing her to mourn her family and requiring her husband to free her if he later didn’t want her (10-14).

### Taking a wife from among captives in battle was allowed (10-11).

### To prevent mistreating her, she had a month to grieve and could be set free if her husband changed his mind about her (12-14).

### How could Israelites take a captive woman (11)? Weren’t all the Canaanites supposed to be slain?

Deut 7

(3 slides)

Question

#### Captives were not to be taken for battles in Canaan (cf. 7:1, 3-4).

#### Therefore, this passage must apply to war outside Israel (cf. 20:15).

### Why did a soldier have to wait a whole month before taking the captive women as his wife (13)?

#### “The full month allowed the captive woman a proper amount of time for mourning…”

#### “… and it also gave the prospective husband opportunity to reflect on his initial decision to take her as his wife. For with a shaved head she would be less attractive” (Deere, 1:300).

#### In contrast to this humane law, the Mid East was known for raping women taking in battle. Here we see not only must he marry her, but also he must be patient to do so.

Cake

## We must honor women and marriage today.

### Wherever Christianity has gone, the rights of women have increased.

### Jesus himself was the best example of one who cared for women—he touched them when they were diseased, he cared for his own mother while suffering on the cross, and he died for all women!

(What’s a third example how to treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs?)

# III. Wives must have financial security (15-17).

MP

[Men must care for every wife—even unloved wives.]

## Israel had to protect an unloved second wife by requiring her husband to grant her son the double portion rights if he was the older son (15-17).

### Some men would take two wives and prefer the one loved more in his will (15-16).

### This man must assure financial security for the wife he didn’t love by giving her firstborn son the double portion (17).

### Why must there be a double share given to the firstborn son (15-17)?

Money Bag

#### It doesn’t say that he *had* to do this, but this was the practice then as it is today.

#### The point is that, when the rights of the firstborn were practiced, they must be done without favoritism.

#### God honored the firstborn son at the Exodus by preventing them from death (Exod 12).

## We must financially care for every wife.

Family Gavel

### This is why we have laws that require men to care for their wife, even if they divorce her.

### God is dishonored especially in the church when people do not care for their own relatives (1 Tim. 5:8).

(Speaking of relatives, what’s a fourth example how to treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs?)

# IV. Relatives must follow the same laws as others (18-21).

MP

[You can’t change the law just because the guilty one is related to you.]

## Israel could protect parents from an abusive adult son by the townsmen stoning him (18-21).

### In rare cases an adult son would be stubborn, rebellious, disobedient and a drunkard (18).

### His parents must take him to the elders for execution by the townsmen so all Israel feared evil (19-21).

### Why such a severe penalty for a rebellious son (21)?

Rock

#### “An extreme violation of the fifth commandment, ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (5:16), was to be punished by death. In view here was not an occasional lapse into disobedience but a persistent rebellion against one’s father and mother even after the parents had warned their son of the consequences of his rebellious actions. The son was ultimately rebelling against the Lord’s authority and therefore attacking the foundations of the covenant community. The legislation here was not cruel nor did it give parents a right to abuse their children” (Deere, 1:301).

#### “No record in the Bible or in extrabiblical literature has come to light which indicates that this punishment was ever carried out. The fear of death apparently deterred Jewish sons from being stubborn rebels” (Deere, 1:301).

Never Happened

## We must never favor relatives when applying the law—no nepotism!

Nepotism

### China passed a law making it a crime not to visit elderly relatives “often.”

China

### “This was more than a family concern, for it involved the peace and reputation of the community. The solidarity of the people of Israel was an important element in their civil, social, and religious life, for the sin of a single person, family, city, or tribe could affect the whole nation (see Deut. 13; Josh. 7:1–15). This is also true of the church, for as members of one spiritual body (1 Cor. 12), we belong to one another and we affect one another (1 Cor. 5)” (Wiersbe, 171).

### Favoritism divides the church in many ways.

Divide

#### Don't allow divisive people come to church. Sometimes schizophrenics or others can disrupt a church to the degree that the church must prevent them from coming and dividing the body.

#### One leadership principle that I have had to learn repeatedly is not to show such grace to one person that others suffer as a result. I have hired principals or even brought on pastors or elders with the sincere belief that they can learn the ropes, but then lost a bunch of people over my attempt to show grace!

(What’s the last example how to treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs?)

# V. Corpses of the condemned also deserve respect (22-23).

MP

[The body is sacred, no matter what kind of life the person lived.]

## Israel had to respect an executed man’s corpse by burying it before dark (22-23).

### People could be tempted to mistreat the body of one executed by hanging it overnight where it could be eaten by animals (22).

### Instead, the body had to be treated respectfully with a decent burial on the day of execution so God would not curse the land (23).

### Why was it wrong to leave a body hung on a tree overnight (23)?

#### “Hanging a criminal on a tree was not for the purpose of putting him to death. Rather, after he was executed for a capital offense ... his body was hanged on a tree as a warning to all who saw it not to commit the same offense. The criminal was under God’s curse not because his body was hung on a tree but because he had broken God’s Law by committing a crime worthy of death. Therefore his body was not to be left on the tree overnight. This text was used by the Apostle Paul (Gal. 3:13) to support the doctrine of Christ’s penal substitutionary death for sinners. Christ’s being under God’s curse (cf. comments on Mark 15:34) enabled Him to redeem ‘us from the curse of the Law’” (Deere, 1:301).

## We must show respect in death as well as in life.

Feet

MI

Palm

### “Since a dead body was unclean, it was taken down at sundown so as not to decay further and defile the land. Also, the Lord didn’t want executed criminals to get too much attention lest they become heroes” (Wiersbe, 175).

### I think this helps us also appreciate the death of Christ: “This rather gruesome symbolic act reminded the people that God cursed people who committed capital crimes. In Galatians 3:13, Paul applied this truth to our Lord’s death on the cross: ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)’ (NKJV). Those who trust Christ cannot be condemned by the law (Gal. 3:10) because Christ bore that curse for them” (Wiersbe, 175-76).

(So what’s the main teaching of this chapter once again?)

# Conclusion

### *Treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs* (Main Idea).

### These five examples are not exhaustive, but they all follow the principle that all life is sacred.

### This is OT law, but doesn’t the principle of *rectifying wrongs* show up in our lives today?

List

#### Where do you have power to abuse or show fairness?

##### Are you just with your relatives?

##### Do you treat your employees with equity?

##### Would your students accuse you of bias?

##### What wrong do you need to correct?

#### How can you rectify a wrong you have done to others?

##### Do you need to ask forgiveness—and with whom?

##### What policy or practice must you change?

##### Men, do the women in your life feel valuable?

##### But do you unfairly show nepotism?

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Deuteronomy 20 distinguishes between making peace with distant cities and destroying Canaanite cities.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### This chapter highlights the importance of rectifying wrongs.

### Since God deals with us all fairly, God’s people must deal with others justly as well.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Moses is giving instructions to Israel just before he passes away and just prior to the people entering Canaan.

### They have lived as slaves for 400 years. This involved much injustice done to them—and likely to one another as well.

### Now they need to learn to live in a just and fair society.

# Questions

### How does breaking the neck of a heifer atone for sin (4)? Is there something significant about not shedding this animal’s blood?

#### Note that shedding the blood was the typical way they killed sacrificial animals—but not so here.

#### “Breaking the heifer’s neck symbolized that the crime deserved capital punishment, and the washing of the elders’ hands over the heifer symbolized their innocence in the matter. This ritual demonstrated how extremely valuable God considers life. For even though no murderer was found, the land and the people both incurred the guilt of shedding innocent blood. The animal sacrifice, accompanied by the petition of the elders, made atonement, that is, turned the wrath of God away from the people” (Jack Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *BKC*, 1:300).

#### “The entire ritual speaks of the grace of God, for man’s works could never earn God’s forgiveness. The red heifer had never been worked, the ground in the valley had never been tilled, and the elders, judges, and priests had done nothing special to merit God’s forgiveness for His people. The sacrifice wasn’t even made at the sanctuary or offered by a priest. ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast’ (Eph. 2:8–9 NKJV). The offering of the innocent red heifer pointed to the offering of the Son of God, whose death brought cleansing, forgiveness, and the annulment of God’s judgment” (Warren Wiersbe, *Deuteronomy,* BEC, 165).

### How could Israelites take a captive woman (11)? Weren’t all the Canaanites supposed to be slain?

#### Captives were not to be taken for battles in Canaan (cf. 7:1, 3-4).

#### Therefore, this passage must apply to war outside Israel (cf. 20:15).

### Why did a soldier have to wait a whole month before taking the captive women as his wife (13)?

#### “The full month allowed the captive woman a proper amount of time for mourning, and it also gave the prospective husband opportunity to reflect on his initial decision to take her as his wife. For with a shaved head she would be less attractive” (Deere, 1:300).

### Does this passage allow marriage to two women (15)?

#### “Monogamy was always the divine ideal for marriage in the Old Testament (Gen. 2:20-24). Polygamy, though practiced by some, never appears in a positive light in the Old Testament; the Bible never describes a truly happy polygamous marriage. One reason was that one of the wives would always be loved more than the other(s). The husband was forbidden in this case to follow his feelings and disregard the Law. His firstborn son must be given the double share of the father’s inheritance even though he was the son of his father’s unloved wife” (Deere, 1:301).

### Why must there be a double share given to the firstborn son (15-17)?

#### It doesn’t say that he *had* to do this, but this was the practice then as it is today.

#### The point is that, when the rights of the firstborn were practiced, they must be done without favoritism.

#### God honored the firstborn son at the Exodus by preventing them from death (Exod 12).

### Why such a severe penalty for a rebellious son (21)?

#### “An extreme violation of the fifth commandment, ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (5:16), was to be punished by death. In view here was not an occasional lapse into disobedience but a persistent rebellion against one’s father and mother even after the parents had warned their son of the consequences of his rebellious actions. The son was ultimately rebelling against the Lord’s authority and therefore attacking the foundations of the covenant community. The legislation here was not cruel nor did it give parents a right to abuse their children” (Deere, 1:301).

#### “No record in the Bible or in extrabiblical literature has come to light which indicates that this punishment was ever carried out. The fear of death apparently deterred Jewish sons from being stubborn rebels” (Deere, 1:301).

#### “**The rebellious son (vv. 18–21).** This boy was the original ‘prodigal son’ (Luke 15:11–32), except that he didn’t leave home to disobey the fifth commandment, dishonor his parents, and disgrace his community. Day after day, he resisted the pleas, warnings, and chastenings of his parents as he refused to work, reveled with the drunkards, and contributed nothing to the home or the community. This kind of sin was so heinous that it was included in the curses read in the land of Canaan (Deut. 27:16; see Ex. 21:17)" (Wiersbe, 170-71).

#### “This was more than a family concern, for it involved the peace and reputation of the community. The solidarity of the people of Israel was an important element in their civil, social, and religious life, for the sin of a single person, family, city, or tribe could affect the whole nation (see Deut. 13; Josh. 7:1–15). This is also true of the church, for as members of one spiritual body (1 Cor. 12), we belong to one another and we affect one another (1 Cor. 5). The parents of the rebellious son were to take him to the local council at the gate, bear witness of his rebellion and obstinacy, and let the council decide. If the boy refused to change his ways, then the only verdict was death by stoning, with all the men of the community participating. Why? In order to “put away evil” and to warn other profligates of what might happen to them. The phrase “put away evil” is found nine times in Deuteronomy (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21–22, 24; 24:7), and the phrase “hear and fear” four times (13:11; 17:13; 19:20; 21:21). The Lord and Moses believed that the public punishment of offenders could be a detriment to others sinning. Furthermore, the future of that family was at stake if this son were allowed to continue in his sins” (Wiersbe, 171).

#### “This ‘law of the prodigal’ helps us understand one aspect of our Lord’s parable, the fact that the father ran to meet his son (Luke 15:20). In the East, it isn’t customary for older men to run. Of course, the father’s love for his son compelled him to hasten to meet him, but there was something else involved. The news of this boy’s wicked life in the far country had certainly drifted back to his hometown, and the law-abiding citizens knew that he had disgraced their city. Seeing the boy approach, the elders at the gate might have been tempted to refuse to let him in, or in their anger, they might have picked up stones to stone him! But with the father holding the boy in his arms, kissing him, and welcoming him, the elders could do nothing. Had anybody thrown stones, they would have hit the father. This speaks to us of Calvary, where God took our punishment for us that He might be able to welcome us home” (Wiersbe, 171-72).

### Why was it wrong to leave a body hung on a tree overnight (23)?

#### “Hanging a criminal on a tree was not for the purpose of putting him to death. Rather, after he was executed for a capital offense ... his body was hanged on a tree as a warning to all who saw it not to commit the same offense. The criminal was under God’s curse not because his body was hung on a tree but because he had broken God’s Law by committing a crime worthy of death. Therefore his body was not to be left on the tree overnight. This text was used by the Apostle Paul (Gal. 3:13) to support the doctrine of Christ’s penal substitutionary death for sinners. Christ’s being under God’s curse (cf. comments on Mark 15:34) enabled Him to redeem ‘us from the curse of the Law’” (Deere, 1:301).

#### “Since a dead body was unclean, it was taken down at sundown so as not to decay further and defile the land. Also, the Lord didn’t want executed criminals to get too much attention lest they become heroes” (Wiersbe, 175).

#### “This rather gruesome symbolic act reminded the people that God cursed people who committed capital crimes. In Galatians 3:13, Paul applied this truth to our Lord’s death on the cross: ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)’ (NKJV). Those who trust Christ cannot be condemned by the law (Gal. 3:10) because Christ bore that curse for them” (Wiersbe, 175-76).

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Rectify wrongs.

# Possible Illustrations That Apply

### Treat students fairly (project and reading options such as trading translations for bad quiz grades).

### Don't allow divisive people come to church (schizophrenics).

### Don’t show such grace to one person that others suffer as a result (hiring principals or pastors).

### Some Christians fed their maids with the food scraped off their children’s plates!

### Employers in JB got perturbed when employees accidentally cut off their fingers.

**Rectifying Wrongs**

***Deuteronomy 21***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way to rectify wrongs is to treat others fairly.

# I. The way to resolve an unsolved murder is for the leaders to kill a heifer near the murder (1-9).

## The murder of an innocent man is a wrong that will pollute the land (1).

## The way to turn God’s wrath away from the people is for the leaders to publicly declare their innocence (2-9).

# II. The way to care for a captive wife is for husband to allow her to mourn her family’s death and to free her if he doesn’t want her later (10-14).

## Taking a wife from among captives in battle is allowed (10-11).

## Mistreating her is not acceptable, so she must have a month to grieve and be set free if her husband changes his mind about her (12-14).

# III. The way to protect an unloved second wife is for husband to grant her son the double portion rights if he is the older son (15-17).

## Some men would take two wives and prefer the one loved more in his will (15-16).

## The man must assure financial security for the wife he doesn't love by giving her firstborn son the double portion (17).

# IV. The way to protect parents from an abusive adult son is to require the townsmen stone him (18-21).

## In rare cases an adult son would be stubborn, rebellious, disobedient and drunk (18).

## His parents must take him to the elders for execution by the townsmen so all Israel fears evil (19-21).

# V. The way to respect the corpse of a man who deserved execution is to grant him burial on the day of his death (22-23).

## People could be tempted to mistreat the body of one executed by hanging it overnight and thus be eaten by animals (22).

## The body instead must be treated respectfully with a decent burial on the day of execution so God would not curse the land (23).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Wrong | The Right | The Parallel Today |
| Unsolved Murder | Leadership Innocence | Treat Murder Seriously |
| Mistreated Wife | Grief & Freedom | Value Women Highly |
| Bigamy Prejudice | Firstborn Double Portion | Support Wives Financially |
| Abuse of Parents | Purge Societal Evil | Equally Apply the Law |
| Disrespecting Corpse | Same Day Burial | Don’t Humiliate Criminals |

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will rectify wrongs done to others.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Last week a friend felt I had treated her unfairly. She said that she got fairer treatment from non-Christians! I had to rectify this wrong by asking her forgiveness where I “ate humble pie.”

### Need: This got me thinking if this is true for us as believers: Do we believers treat people less fairly than unbelievers do?

#### God is fair to us, so we should be fair to others.

#### But are we? Do we value people?

#### Would those who know you say you are just and fair?

### Main Idea: *Treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs.* That is the key idea in today’s passage.

#### Correct offences. Handle others justly by undoing inequalities you may have *done* to them—or when you are *tempted* to be unfair to them. Value human lives. The title of this message is simply “Rectify Wrongs.”

#### But what does *rectifying wrongs* look like? How should we correct offences—or better yet, not do injustices to start with?

### Background: Israel needed to know how to treat people fairly.

#### Israel had been treated unjustly for 400 years in Egypt. That was when they were the underdogs. They were slaves and the Egyptians were their overlords. As a result, they experienced generations of injustice.

#### However, now the tables were about to turn. They would soon conquer Canaan and become the people of power. As Israelites looked towards becoming the ones with more potential to injustice, they needed God’s instructions. Otherwise, they would repeat the same wrongs of the Egyptians. How could Israel prevent such inequalities?

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[Human life is valuable so we should investigate every homicide.]

## Israel’s unsolved murders required leaders to kill a heifer nearby (1-9).

### Murdering an innocent man polluted the land (1).

### The way to turn God’s wrath away from the people was for the leaders to publicly declare their innocence (2-9).

## We must value human life publicly.

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## We must never favor relatives when applying the law—no nepotism!

(What’s the last example how to treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs?)

# V. Corpses of the condemned also deserve respect (22-23).

[The body is sacred, no matter what kind of life the person lived.]

## Israel had to respect an executed man’s corpse by burying it before dark (22-23).

### People could be tempted to mistreat the body of one executed by hanging it overnight where it could be eaten by animals (22).

### Instead, the body had to be treated respectfully with a decent burial on the day of execution so God would not curse the land (23).

## We must show respect in death as well as in life.

(So what’s the main teaching of this chapter once again?)

# Conclusion

### *Treat people fairly by rectifying wrongs* (Main Idea).

### These five examples are not exhaustive, but they all follow the principle that all life is sacred.

### This is OT law, but doesn’t the principle of *rectifying wrongs* show up in our lives today?

#### Where do you have power to abuse or show fairness?

##### Are you just with your relatives?

##### Do you treat your employees with equity?

##### Would your students accuse you of bias?

##### What wrong do you need to correct?

#### How can you rectify a wrong you have done to others?

##### Do you need to ask forgiveness—and with whom?

##### What policy or practice must you change?

##### Men, do the women in your life feel valuable?

##### But do you unfairly show nepotism?

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

2016

Message of 13

**Rectifying Wrongs**

***Deuteronomy 21***

# Introduction

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Contrast** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Text-based question

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Application to your own Christian experience

Text

Text

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