

Practicing Justice, 8 Practical Steps to Make Your Life Better

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

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Wise old Thomas Jefferson, a good man in any day, subject today to the same types of attacks suffered throughout history by Jews, is quoted as saying, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever." These are wise words, and an awesome warning, worthy of any Sage of Torah or Biblical prophet.

Long ago, God's Word instructed us to pursue justice. Justice is considered the bedrock of civilization. In our world today, we are choked with piles and piles of laws and regulations. While we have many courts of law, we have an appalling lack of justice! And we expect the Just God to continue to withhold justice, all in the name of mercy, for how much longer?

We live in very dangerous times, and I do not foresee the dangers subsiding or magically disappearing any time soon. Here we are today in a world that grows more and more complex, difficult, divisive, confrontational, intolerant, evil, violent, and bursting at the seams with rampant out-of-control hatred. While I would love for this not to be true, I cannot deny what my eyes see.

With everything that is wrong with our country, and our world, I still believe in the good righteous remnant of people found everywhere. I believe that we have to get together and bring about whatever changes that we are able to make. Yet, change begins at home, and in the heart. Rather than continue with generalities, let me now share with you some specifics. These are actual things that we can do. Maybe they can make a difference.

1. Set a daily time to study valuable and significant material. Do not waste your time on intellectual entertainment, pretty stories, inapplicable religious teachings and mere words of encouragement. We have already heard all the words. Now it is a time for deeds. Be rational and practical in learning. Learn what you do not already know. Educate yourselves. Learn new things, like skills, that you can actually use. There is no greater study of God's Word, more than that which can be put into practice.
2. Cut back on superfluous spending. Stop the stupid attitude that "it's my money and I'll do what I want with it." True, your money is yours (and certainly not the government's), but you still have a moral obligation to spend wisely and properly. First, invest wisely and properly in yourself and family, and then give your 10% (or more) to a cause(s) that really need it. Support the poor, not big institutions! Put your money where it really counts. Remember, God gives you the blessing, and Heaven expects you to use it properly.

3. Get your health in order. Stop making excuses. Stop being lazy. There will never be any teshuva (repentance) all the while that one abuses one's own bodies. If you have any real medical issues, address them in a way that brings healing, and not a furtherance of dependence upon drugs and doctors. Your health is your responsibility. Stand upon your own feet, and God will contribute to your efforts to making yourself well, both physically and psychologically.

4. Stand your ground. What do you believe? Is it important? If it is, isn't it worth fighting for? If what you believe is not worth fighting for, then accept that others will fight you to get you to believe like them! If you are not willing to stand up, and fight for what you believe is right, then get ready to be attacked by those who do. If you are viewed as one who is weak, you will be targeted for constant attack. Your values will be attacked, your cherished beliefs will be attacked, even what you think and do daily will be under constant scrutiny, by either public or private concerns, who are determined to make sure you are always what they define as politically correct. Fight for your freedoms now, or don't complain when they are taken away from you fully and permanently.

5. You say you want to live for God? Well, stop talking about it and start doing it! Reach out to others in need. Don't make them come looking for you. You go looking for them! Help others with their real needs. Money can't buy everything, so help with your hands, with your time, and with your work. Reach out and do actual, real physical things. Help someone clean their homes, or repair something, or to build, or rebuild something. Help them take care of their kids, their dogs, or their cats. Help! Help! Help others! ***One thing I think is clear throughout all scripture is this, that God wants us to help one another more than anything else. It is not the job of government to help us, it is our job to help one another!*** The government never can, and never will, exempt us from our own personal obligations towards one another.

6. Stop complaining! Life is always hard, and for the most part (for many), life always sucks! There, that's it! So, accept that life is harsh, accept that we do not live in a garden, but rather in a jungle. Accept what is real and adapt. Stop sticking your head in the sand, stop intoxicating your mind, and numbing your feelings with all kinds of lies, distractions and other drugs of choice. Your own denials and delusional thoughts can be just as much a destructive drug as any external substance. We have life! Be thankful for that! Make life the best it can be! Stop whining how hard things are. We all know it! Get to work! Make things better. Every day, pick or plan a chore and do it. Every day do something small. In time, you will see how all those small things add up into a really big accomplishment.

7. Stop all this divisive B.S.!!! Stop looking at others by how different we are. Let the truth be told. We are all equally human souls, created in the Divine image. There are no male souls or female souls. There are no blacks, there are no whites, or souls of any other color. There are no rich souls and there are no poor souls. Whatever be our differences, beneath them all we are just mere mortal human beings. We share a common origin and we will all share a common end. This has never been, and never will be changed, or avoided, and it can never be denied. We all bleed red blood. Souls are judged by what they do, and all flesh ends up in the grave. We must start to embrace our common identity as fellow human beings, instead of being torn apart by foolish, superficial and irrelevant differences.

8. All our beliefs, be they political, religious, economic, or social, whatever they are, are subject to mistake and therefore subject to change. We all argue about everything that divides us. This is the B.S. This has got to stop. We are all children of the Creator, and the packages that we are wrapped in do not matter much. It is the gift inside the box that counts, not the wrapper that covers it. Remember this, UNITED WE STAND OR DIVIDED WE FALL. And there are no shortage of enemies out there that lust for our fall, so that they can conquer, imprison, abuse, and destroy us.

I fear for my country, and I fear for my planet, because there is such a lack of justice everywhere that God cannot do anything else but judge us harshly. I do not think that the entire world can be saved. But I do believe firmly that there are too many good people worth saving to let the whole thing go down the drain. So, we have to get together as best as we can and bring about change.

In our Torah tradition, as we contemplate teshuva/repentance at this time of year before the High Holidays, let us remember, repentance is not something to think about. Repentance is something to do. Repentance is something that we do to makes our lives better, and it also helps to make things better for those around us.

Think about this, when you say you want to get closer to God. You do not get closer to God by drawing further away from the other human beings that God has created. Drawing close to our fellow human beings is how we draw close to God. This should be the simplest and most obvious of truths. So, please! Let it be!

Let me conclude with the wise words of one of God's servants, Master Yoda, "do or do not, there is no try." All kidding aside, sometimes wise words are to be found in the most mundane of places. This is because, if you chose to look and if you chose to see, God and His path can be found everywhere. This is because God is everywhere and in everything. If we make the efforts to look, we will be rewarded with the success to find.

Now, as the Sage Hillel once said, "go, do it."