



# Family Values

## Virtue Realities

### Fairness

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Bruce Strade, Director of Congregational Research, Lutheran Community Services Northwest

“Life is not fair,” is a phrase we may have either used and/or had spoken to us. Most often it is a response to the pleading accusation, “But that’s not fair!” The implication is that an injustice has occurred. For the sake of fairness, the person responsible is expected to make it right. The pronouncement that life is unfair in essence gets that person off the hook.

There certainly is an element of truth to the assertion that life is unfair. The writer of Ecclesiastes 9:11 makes this point in the following: *“Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all.”* In addition, what might be considered fair to one person could be considered unfair to another. Fairness in many respects is a personal, subjective experience.

So where do we start in defining fairness? A key aspect of fairness is the concept of justice, which also is an attribute of God. This characteristic is clearly stated in the Song of Moses, where God is described as: *“The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God without deceit, just and upright is he.”* (Deut. 32:4) Our God is faithful. Our God keeps his promises and does not lie to us. Our God delivers. Our God is just.

This theme also comes out in the New Testament when Peter tells a gathering at Caesarea: *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”* (Acts 10:34) Paul says something similar: *“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.”* (Romans 10:12) God treats everyone the same. He is there for those who seek Him.

Fortunately for us, God is more generous than fair. God does not treat us as we deserve, but sends His Son to put us in a right relationship with the Father. This is a supreme act of unfairness, since Christ does not deserve it. The parable of the landowner who hires workers at different times of the day but gives everyone the same wage expands on this principle. To those who filed a complaint, the landowner replies:

*“Friend, I am doing you no wrong, did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?”* He then adds, *“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?”* (Matt. 20:13,15) Grace trumps fairness.

For Christians, fairness is evidence of God’s generosity flowing through us. Because God is understanding, accepting and forgiving, we are in a position to do the same to others. Because God shows us mercy, we can show mercy to others. Certainly this is the point of the parable of the king who forgives a slave his sizeable debt. When that slave refuses to do the same to someone who owed him a little, the king is angered and hands him over to torturers until his bill is paid in full. (Matt. 18:23-35) We have received much and are expected to give much in return.

Fairness means that we do not insist on our rights above the rights of others. We consider another person’s point of view. We treat others the way we want them to treat us. We resist *“acts of favoritism”* (James 2:1) and instead follow the mandate of the Lord *“to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Micah 6:8b) And sometimes that’s not fair!

The following are ways to practice fairness:

- 1. Remind yourself of God’s generosity.** Daily let yourself know the many ways in which God blesses you.
- 2. Be a blessing to others.** Show mercy and kindness in your dealings with other people, especially children.
- 3. Treat everyone with respect.** Do not discriminate against people or play favorites at the expense of others.
- 4. Be fair to yourself.** Do not sacrifice your well-being or dignity to satisfy someone else.
- 5. Pursue justice.** Advocate for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized.

**Affirmation: Today I will show no partiality.**

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Portland Office  
605 S.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland, OR 97214  
503-231-7480 • www.lcsnw.org