

Charity and Justice

Below is a basic chart to help clarify the distinction between works of justice and works of charity.*

Charity ... Social Services	Justice ... Social Change
<p>Scriptural Reference: Good Samaritan Story</p> <p>The Gospel story does not attempt to survey the causes of highway banditry. The Samaritan provides temporary and immediate relief.</p>	<p>Scriptural Reference: Exodus Story</p> <p>Moses does not ask for food and medicine for the Jewish slave-labor force. He challenges the institutional system.</p> <p>Message: "Let My People Go."</p>
Private, individual acts	Public, collective actions
Responds to immediate need	Responds to long-term need
Provides direct service	Promotes social change in institutions
Requires repeated actions	Resolves structural injustice
Directed at the effects of injustice: symptoms	Directed at the root causes of social change
Examples	
Homeless shelters, food shelves, clothing drives, emergency service	Legislative advocacy, changing corporate policies or practices, congregation-based community organizing.

"Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account.... Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice." --Pope Pius XI

*A resource from the Office of Social Justice. This is not an in-depth analysis of contrasts, but a rather simple comparison.