

Digging Deeper: Belhar Confession, Article 4

Using the following scenarios, explore aspects of justice and the relationship between justice and unity. Read each scenario and determine whether you see justice and/or unity present in that situation.

- Mother comes home from the bakery with an apple pie. She gives Ronnie and Bonnie equal-sized pieces.

What is the relationship between fair distribution of goods, justice, and unity?

- Mother comes home from the bakery with an apple pie. Because Ronnie, who is in the living room, is her favorite, she gives him a large piece, and she gives Bonnie, who is upstairs in her bedroom, a smaller piece.

Can unequal distribution of goods be acceptable if the shorted party is unaware of the inequality? Can there be true unity of two parties when one party is aware of an inequality and the other is unaware?

- Mother comes home from the bakery with an apple pie. She gives Bonnie, who has finished vacuuming her bedroom, a large piece, and she gives Ronnie, who has not vacuumed his bedroom, none.

Is it just to base distribution of goods on effort, merit, or achievement? Is it always just?

- Mother comes home from the bakery with apple pie. She gives Bonnie, who has finished vacuuming her bedroom, a large piece, and she gives Ronnie, who has not vacuumed his bedroom, none. Ronnie informs Mother that the vacuum hose is plugged with Bonnie's dirty sock, which Ronnie has been unable to dislodge.

Is it just to base distribution of goods on achievement when there has been unequal opportunity?

- Mother comes home from the bakery with an apple pie. She gives Bonnie a large piece, and to Ronnie she gives a very small piece. Mother explains to Ronnie that because he is diabetic, he must watch his sugar consumption.

Is it just to base distribution of goods on need? If so, what sorts of criteria could be used to determine need?

- Bonnie comes home with an apple pie given to her by the baker, who was clearing out an end-of-day surplus. Bonnie thinks about three options: eating the whole pie herself (after all, it is her pie), giving a small piece to Ronnie and eating the rest herself, or dividing the pie in half and sharing with Ronnie.

How do things change for Ronnie and Bonnie when one of them suddenly acquires ownership? What are the obligations of the owner with respect to justice and unity? In which of the scenarios could justice be maintained, and with what conditions? In which scenario(s) can unity be maintained?