



**LIVE JUST.LY**

**GLOBAL EDITION**

**EDITED BY: JASON FILETA**



GLOBAL EDITION

*Micah Challenge* →

**tearfund**

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*Designed by Danny Palmer.*

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# Introduction

We need to do justice to 'doing justice'

Live Justly was first published in the US in 2014. The resource has been used widely by hundreds of groups, and has inspired thousands of people to live differently - to live justly. Micah Challenge USA has partnered with Tearfund to bring you this exciting new global version of Live Justly. We reimagined the content for a global audience and listened to the Holy Spirit as we continue to discern the sacred work of mobilising the church for God's kingdom. And we've added new content from authors from around the globe, including India, Bolivia, Brazil and Niger.

Tearfund has been working with poor communities around the world for fifty years. We work through local churches, because they're Jesus' body on earth, ready to care for the whole person - and the whole community - inside and out. Tearfund has been part of a global effort to lift people out of poverty that has had much success. However, Tearfund sees that current environmental damage, rampant inequality and unjust economic systems threaten to push many people back into poverty. We believe that poor communities need the world's economy to get closer to the biblical principles of Jubilee: environmental restoration, alleviation of poverty, and fair allocation of wealth. We call this vision the 'Restorative Economy', and are building a movement

of Christians praying, living justly, giving and speaking out to bring it about.

Micah Challenge USA has been working for over a decade to mobilise Christians to seek justice and advocate to end extreme poverty. What we've learned in this time is that "doing justice" is much larger than simply joining a campaign, signing a petition or giving financially. The scriptures we use to inspire action in our supporters are calling on all of us to do so much more than sign a petition or join a day of prayer - we are called to not simply do justice, but to live justly. We want to do justice to the concept of "doing justice" by highlighting the deep and sacred nature of this calling.

Justice is often invoked by passionate teachers, pastors and leaders inviting us into NEW action. For example, a pastor may preach on justice to encourage the church to volunteer or give to a project or charity. Justice is often focused upon doing something new, but what about the actions you and I take every day?

In the Bible we see that justice isn't always about doing something new, it's about aligning what we already do with kingdom values. We wake up every day and make about fifty decisions. We decide what clothes to wear, what food to eat, how to travel to work or school, how to treat our friends, family and strangers, what to pray for, where to invest our money, and so on and so forth. Justice isn't an action once a year; it is a lifestyle. Our prayer is that our everyday actions would be infused with justice - not our definition, but God's definition as revealed to us in the Bible.

The scriptures and the movement of the Holy Spirit have deeply touched our own lives here at Micah Challenge and Tearfund. The call to seek justice has permeated our everyday life choices, pushing us not simply to seek justice but to live justly. Perhaps you too feel that call to live justly. We are not alone in feeling this call. Countless churches, youth groups, small groups, families, and individuals have asked us "what's next?"

Enter Live Justly.

## Principles

Live Justly is series of in-depth scriptural and practical studies to help people live justly in six key areas of life: advocacy, prayer, consumption, generosity, relationships and creation care. Live Justly was written on these core principles:

- Justice is part of the character and nature of God, and to live justly we must encounter God in a personal and powerful way
- The Holy Spirit is our guide
- People change through relationships not statistics, so Live Justly is designed to create a culture and community among participants that enables honest, convicting discussion about justice
- We will not reduce justice to an activity, it is a lifestyle
- We will not sacrifice the dignity of people living in oppression and poverty for the sake of inspiring action
- We particularly focus upon the role of advocacy, which is a historic action of the church, but has become less common in recent years. The ground is fertile for a revival of action that has the potential to be incredibly transformative. We define advocacy as: Influencing the decisions, policies and practices of powerful decision-makers, to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support development. We recognise that we cannot ask our leaders to practise things we are not willing to do ourselves. With this in mind, Live Justly is both inwardly and outwardly focused

## How To Use This Book

These studies are designed to help you and those in your community in your pursuit of biblical justice - whether that's at church, in work or elsewhere - both in understanding and in practice. The goal is to come out of the ten sessions with:

- Deepened relationships with your small group
- A deep understanding of biblical justice
- Passion and inspiration for action
- An individual action plan that shows what practical steps you will take, or shifts you will make, to live justly. This is shared with your small group in Session 9
- A collective action plan to mobilise your church for justice

The first three sessions provide a baseline of understanding of three core concepts: justice, integral mission and advocacy. If you feel your group already has a strong foundation in these concepts, feel free to begin at Session 4. If ten sessions are too much, you could adapt the resource for your context. We suggest combining Sessions 1, 2 and 3 into one session (“foundations”), and then continuing the studies from Session 4.

### Each Session Includes:

- **Definitions:** to make sure everyone has the same base of knowledge
- **Story:** a short, provoking story to help you see that session's topic played out in real life
- **Reflection:** a concise summary of the session's main topic. This is a great source for your group discussion

- A Bible passage: to examine what the Bible has to say on that session's topic
- Questions to help you generate a lively discussion
- Activities that we call “Together” for you to do as a group to help understand and explore the concepts further
- Solo work: light homework to help you process the small group time, reflect, pray and slowly develop an action plan
- For those with good internet access you can find additional resources online at [www.livejust.ly](http://www.livejust.ly) including:
  - A list of key resources where you can read more on a topic, and dig deeper into an issue. Your group may decide to assign these as homework
  - A video for each session to help encourage discussion. These videos were made for the original Live Justly US version and as such only include US voices on the topics

## A Word About the Logo

The Live Justly logo is a visual representation of our hopes and dreams for this resource:

- Each side of the hexagon represents one facet of life in which you will be equipped to live justly: advocacy, prayer, consumption, generosity, relationships and creation care. The circle represents the holistic nature of living justly. If we are incredible advocates, but do so at the expense of our personal relationships, then we are missing the mark. If we are compassionate to those who are poor, but fail to challenge unjust structures that cause their oppression, then we too miss the mark. The circle represents a holistic, unified lifestyle pointed towards justice

- The fire symbolises our attitude of worship. We live justly not as the pharisees seeking to follow the law as a checklist, but rather recognizing that justice is part of the character and nature of God. So every decision we make for the kingdom of God, whether small or large, is an act of worship
- The bread symbolizes the essential need for community. We cannot live justly without pursuing meaningful, accountable, authentic community. The circle will break if it is not held together by many hands and voices

### **Let's Do This**

The content of this book will not give you a prescription for living justly, but our prayer is that you will encounter God, be influenced by the Holy Spirit, sharpen your passions and find community that spurs you to renewed action. We are excited and honoured to journey with you to live justly!

# Session One

## What is Biblical Justice? A Theology of Justice

“If you are trying to live a life in accordance with the Bible, the concept and call to justice are inescapable.”  
- Tim Keller

“Part of living justly is recognising that the decisions we make affect not only the people around us but communities and environments around the world. We must live our lives and make choices with that in mind.”  
- Kimberly Hunt

## Definitions

**Biblical Justice:** The condition and action required for the state of wholeness and flourishing due all of God's creation.

**Shalom:** Hebrew word for peace, completeness, and wholeness. Where there is justice, there will be shalom.

**Jubilee:** Every fifty years, the Israelites were to partake in a year of celebration and liberation. They would restore lands, property and property rights to original owners, and slaves were set free.

## Doing Justice Is Never That Simple by Mari Williams

A church in a very affluent part of a big city decided to start a project to help people in a much poorer area of the city. They arranged a church meeting to discuss the needs of the poorer community. They didn't know anyone from the community, nor did they think to ask what their needs might be, but they decided that food was surely a priority for them. The church would donate food to the poor community, so that parents could feed their children.

A project team was formed. They bought food, packed it into boxes and delivered the food parcels once a week to homes in the poorer area. The team would knock on people's doors and greet them with big smiles, a food parcel, and assurances of God's love for them.

On the whole, the adults seemed very grateful, if a little embarrassed, and the children were extremely excited. At Christmas time, the church decided to buy gifts for the children. They held a special collection so that they could really bless the children with expensive toys. The team was surprised that some of the fathers looked somewhat taken aback by this gesture, but the children were so very happy when they received the gifts.

The project was going extremely well. Or so it seemed to the affluent church.

In actual fact, the project was unintentionally contributing to a deep seated sense of shame and lack of worth amongst people in the poor community. Many of the adults in the community wanted to work, but struggled to find employment. Their self esteem was already low. Being given handouts, without any sense of ownership, choice or involvement, attacked their dignity and self-worth further. Some of the fathers had worked hard to save money to be able to buy their children small gifts at Christmas. But when they saw the church's expensive gift, they knew their gift would look small and insignificant in comparison.

The church's response was driven by compassion, but it was a simplistic, knee-jerk reaction to injustice that didn't tackle the real issues and actually made things worse.

Imagine if the church had asked the community what their needs were and whether there was any way that they could partner together to begin to address them? If food was a priority need, imagine if they had worked with the community to set up a food cooperative owned and run by those who would use it, empowering people and building self-sufficiency. Imagine if the church had gotten into the much more complex but dignifying work of listening to the community, working with people to help them find employment and presenting opportunities for them to provide for their families?

If doing justice feels simple, it may not be doing justice at all.

## God Loves Justice

### by Nicholas Wolterstorff

What the Hebrew and Christian scriptures have to say about justice functions for many people nowadays mainly as a source of golden nuggets of rhetoric - if it functions for them at all. Who could improve on the following if one is urging the importance of doing justice:

“Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” - Amos 5:23-24

or this:

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” - Micah 6:8

What scripture says about justice is more than “nuggets” of wisdom. There is a clear way of thinking about justice in the scriptures – and what those writings say about justice is an inextricable component of the message. **Pull out justice, and everything unravels.**

Some of the skeptics of justice in scripture are secularists who have gotten the impression that christianity is all about love and not about justice. But a good many are Christians who have not so much gotten the impression that christianity is all about love and not about justice, but are committed to interpreting scripture solely through the lens of love. And then there are those who concede that scripture speaks of justice but assume that it refers to kings and courts in the administration of justice. When I say that justice is an inextricable component of the biblical message, I have in mind primary justice.

There are two different kinds of justice in scripture: primary justice and reactive justice.

Reactive justice punishes the wrongdoer, condemns the wrongdoer, is perhaps angry at the wrongdoer, and so forth - reacting to one's wrongdoing. Reactive justice renders justice to a wrongdoer.

What that implies, obviously, is that reactive justice is relevant when someone has wronged someone else, when someone has treated another person unjustly. And what that implies, in turn, is that **reactive justice cannot be the only kind of justice. There has to be another kind of justice, a kind of justice such that, when someone violates this other kind of justice, and is thus a wrongdoer, reactive justice becomes relevant.**

I am going to call it **primary justice. Reactive justice becomes relevant when there has been a violation of primary justice.**

God loves primary justice. God has a heart for primary justice. God is devoted to justice. So it comes as no surprise that God says: “Seek justice; do justice; let justice roll down like waters; imitate me in loving justice”. But is God speaking of reactive justice, reserved for courts, kings, and judges, or primary justice, which applies to all people? I believe that, in many cases, these scriptures are speaking of primary justice.

### **MISHPAT & TSEDEQA**

The Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is usually translated into English as justice is “mishpat”. The term is often paired with “tsedeqa”, standardly translated as “righteousness”. Together they are often translated as “justice and righteousness” in the Old Testament and simply “righteousness” in the New Testament. My own sense is that, when the rhetorical context permits, “tsedeqa” is better rendered into present-day English as the right thing, going right, or doing right. The word righteous is almost never used any more in ordinary speech, and when it is, it suggests a person intensely preoccupied with his own moral character who has few sins to his debit. The connotation is self righteousness. **The pairing of “mishpat” and “tsedeqa” is better translated as primary justice or simply “justice” than as “justice and righteousness” or simply “righteousness.”**

Scripture teaches that what God wants for God’s human family is what the Old Testament writers called, in Hebrew, shalom. “Shalom” is

almost always translated as “peace” in our English Bibles. I think that is a very poor translation. Shalom is much more than peace. Shalom is flourishing. What God desires for us is that we flourish in all dimensions of our existence.

And now for the point relevant to our purposes here: when you read what the biblical writers say about shalom, it soon becomes clear that shalom requires justice. In the absence of justice, we are not truly flourishing; in the absence of justice, shalom is impaired. Shalom goes beyond justice; but always shalom includes justice. Justice is, you might say, the ground floor of shalom. So once again: why does God love justice? Because God loves shalom, and shalom includes justice.

When the kingdom of God has come in its fullness there will be no breaches of primary justice, hence no reactive justice; all justice will be primary justice. You and I are to imitate God by also having a heart for justice.

## Read Isaiah 61 Together

### The Year of the Lord's Favor

- 1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
- 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,
- 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion -  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the Lord  
for the display of his splendor.
- 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and restore the places long devastated;  
they will renew the ruined cities  
that have been devastated for generations.
- 5 Strangers will shepherd your flocks;  
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.
- 6 And you will be called priests of the Lord,  
you will be named ministers of our God.  
You will feed on the wealth of nations,  
and in their riches you will boast.
- 7 Instead of your shame  
you will receive a double portion,  
and instead of disgrace  
you will rejoice in your inheritance.  
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,  
and everlasting joy will be yours.

- 8 “For I, the Lord, love justice;  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.  
In my faithfulness I will reward my people  
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
- 9 Their descendants will be known among the nations  
and their offspring among the peoples.  
All who see them will acknowledge  
that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”
- 10 I delight greatly in the Lord;  
my soul rejoices in my God.  
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation  
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,  
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 11 For as the soil makes the sprout come up  
and a garden causes seeds to grow,  
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness  
and praise spring up before all nations.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What is God's definition of justice?
2. Why do you think Jesus quoted this passage in his first sermon (Luke 4:18)?
3. In the absence of the year of Jubilee, how do we ensure a "reset" to undo the structural and personal sin that perpetuates oppression?
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

How have you defined "justice" in the past? As a small group, create a practical and biblical definition of justice. Use the reflection in this chapter, your own experiences and ideas and the Bible. You'll use this definition for the rest of your time journeying together.

## Solo Work

Read Luke 4:16-21. With a knowledge of Jesus' work displayed in the Gospels, and the context of God's desire for justice detailed in Isaiah 61, explain Jesus' words, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

- How does Jesus' work on earth fulfill Isaiah 61?
- How is this session's message and discussion challenging you? Are you one who knows God, but has resisted justice? Are you much more comfortable with justice but have resisted God? Journal about this. Be vulnerable. Be open. This is between you and God.

## Prayer

Lord, you know my heart. If I have claimed to know you, but have resisted seeking justice, forgive me. If I have passionately sought justice, but have been detached from you, draw me near to you. Help me recognise your Spirit in me and respond to your call to seek justice.

# Session Two

## Our Mission in the World: Integral Mission

“If we ignore the world, we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.”

- From the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Read the entire Micah Declaration on Integral Mission on pg. 118.

“Integral mission is the church living out its faith in Jesus in every aspect of life. It’s recognising that people are more than their hunger or despair. They’re complex and precious, made in God’s image. And they’re loved. Integral mission is answering God’s call to love one another, completely.”

- Tearfund statement on Integral Mission

“The risen Jesus expects that his disciple-community, which is preaching the Good News among the nations, is also striving at Christian unity, is sharing its resources with the poor and needy, is engaged in costly initiatives of peacemaking, and hungering and thirsting after God’s justice.”

- Vinoth Ramachandra

## Definitions

**Integral Mission:** Integral mission is the church speaking of and living out its faith in Jesus Christ in every aspect of life. Integral mission is the work of the church in contributing to the positive physical, spiritual, economic, psychological and social transformation of people.

**Church:** The body of disciples called into formation by Jesus for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth through preaching the good news and making disciples.

**Kingdom of God:** The place where God's justice reigns and shalom is achieved. All things are made right. The kingdom is already here, but not in fullness. We only see glimpses and tastes of the kingdom until Christ's return.

## Disconnected Mission Vs. Integral Mission by Jason Fileta

When I was fourteen, I went on a missions trip to inner city Chicago. I should stress this wasn't an "integral" missions trip, but a "disjointed" missions trip. We went to preach the gospel to a hurting community. Now, there were a number of missteps along the way - we assumed they didn't have the gospel, we assumed the Spirit wasn't alive there already and we assumed that preaching the gospel simply meant winning souls through convincing or guiltting people enough to pray "the prayer." So, how did it go?

I remember "winning" a number of souls on that trip, and being proud of how God used me. The homeless man whose breath smelled of alcohol, who I successfully brought to tears over the guilt of his mistakes, and then restored through passionate prayer on our knees, on the sidewalk a block away from an impoverished urban complex.

In all of the good I remember doing, I also remember feeling like something was missing. Sure, he prayed the prayer, but was he sincere? Was he even sober? When Jesus forgave sins in scripture, he often physically healed the body - he brought integral wholeness to indi-

viduals, families and sometimes communities. Could I pull this off in sixty minutes on a street corner? I had convinced an intoxicated man to repeat after me, without offering any wholeness to the brokenness of his body - his hunger, his lack of affordable housing, his alcoholism, etc.

He was going to wake up the next day in the same brokenness as the day we prayed - wasn't there more to it? I was only fourteen, but I knew something was missing.

Unfortunately, it wasn't until I read the Bible nearly five years later, that I realised that, by proclaiming the good news without demonstration (in which authentic relationship is required), I'm not really preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm preaching a modified version, that has the aroma of the good news, but isn't THE Good News.

## **Integral Mission**

### **by René Padilla**

Although it has recently become fashionable to use the term integral mission, the approach to mission that it expresses is not new. The practice of integral mission goes back to Jesus himself and to the first century Christian church. Furthermore, a growing number of churches are putting this style of mission into practice without necessarily using this expression to refer to what they are doing; integral mission is not part of their vocabulary. It is clear that the practice of integral mission is much more important than the use of this new expression to refer to it.

The expression integral mission (*misión integral*) came into use principally within the Latin American Theological Fraternity (FTL) about twenty years ago. It was an attempt to highlight the importance of conceiving the mission of the church within a more biblical theological framework than the traditional one, which had been accepted in evangelical circles due to the influence of the modern missionary movement. What is this approach to mission? In what aspects does it differ from the traditional transcultural approach?

### **INTEGRAL MISSION, A NEW PARADIGM**

From the perspective of integral mission, traditional transcultural mission is far from exhausting the significance of the mission of the church. Mission may or may not include a crossing of geographical frontiers, but in every case it means primarily a crossing of the frontier between faith and no faith, whether in one's own country (at home) or in a foreign country (on the mission field), according to the testimony to Jesus Christ as Lord of the whole of life and of the whole creation.

Let's examine four key differences between Integral Mission and Traditional Transcultural Mission.

**Integral Mission****Traditional Transcultural Mission**

All churches send and all churches receive. The road of mission is not a one-way street. It does not go only from the Christian countries to the pagan countries; it is a two-way street

Some churches send, almost exclusively from Western Christianity, and some churches receive, almost exclusively from the Global South

The whole world is a mission field, and every human need is an opportunity for missionary service. The local church is called to demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God among the kingdoms of this world, not only by what it says, but also by what it is and by what it does in response to human needs on every side

Only the receiving country is viewed as a mission field. The missionaries "home" is usually somewhere in the Christian West, and their "mission field" is located in some pagan country. It is not surprising that the majority of career missionaries (sometimes with years of service) decide to retire in their home country

Every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ and to be committed to God's mission in the world. The benefits of salvation are inseparable from a missionary lifestyle, and this implies, among other things, the practice of the universal priesthood of believers in all spheres of human life, according to the gifts and ministries that the Spirit of God has freely bestowed on his people

Only some Christians are missionaries. There are missionaries, called by God to serve him, and then there are common ordinary Christians, who enjoy the benefits of salvation but are exempt from sharing in what God wants to do in the world

The Christian life in all its dimensions, on both the individual and the community levels, is the primary witness to the universal lordship of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Mission is much more than words; it is demonstrated in the life that recovers God's original purpose for the relationship of the human person with his Creator, with his neighbour, and with all of creation

The life of the church and the mission of the church could be separated. If, in order for a church to be a missionary church, it were sufficient to send and support a few of its members to serve in foreign missions, it is possible that such a church would have no significant influence or impact on its surrounding neighbourhood: The life of the church is local (at home), and mission takes place in another setting, preferably in a foreign country (the mission field).

When the church is committed to integral mission and to communicating the gospel through everything it is, does and says, it understands that its goal is not to become large numerically, nor to be rich materially, nor powerful politically. Its purpose is to incarnate the values of the kingdom of God and to witness to the love and the justice revealed in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, for the transformation of human life in all its dimensions, both on the individual level and on the community level.

The accomplishment of this purpose presupposes that all the members of the church, without exception, by the very fact of having become a part of the Body of Christ, receive gifts and ministries for the exercise of their priesthood, to which they have been ordained in their baptism. Mission is not the responsibility and privilege of a small group of the faithful who feel called to the mission field (usually in a foreign country), but of all members, since all are members of the royal priesthood and as such have been called by God that they may declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9) wherever they may be.

Understood in these terms, this new paradigm for mission is not so new; it is, rather, the recovery of the biblical concept of mission since, in effect, mission is faithful to the teaching of scripture to the extent that it is placed at the service of the kingdom of God and his justice.

Integral mission is the means designed by God to carry out, within history, his purpose of love and justice revealed in Jesus Christ, through the church and in the power of the Spirit.

## **Read Matthew 22:34-40 Together**

### **The Greatest Commandment**

- 34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.
- 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:
- 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
- 37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’
- 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.
- 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’
- 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

## **Read Matthew 28:16-20 Together**

### **The Great Commission**

- 16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
- 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
- 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

## Questions for Discussion

1. According to integral mission, any work of the church to usher in the kingdom of God is mission. Do you agree with this? What activities become “missions” that have not typically been identified as such?
2. Can we fulfill the great commission without seeking justice? Why or why not?
3. Has preaching/teaching on the great commission ever compelled you to pursue justice?
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

On a piece of paper make two columns with the headings “Integral Mission” and “Disconnected Mission”. Describe your own experiences with missions - church, university or school missions, short term missions trips, missions weeks, etc. - and write down your name and the experience under the column where your missions work would fall. Does your group have more experiences in one column or another? Discuss those activities which fell under the “disconnected missions”. List the ways you could reshape those activities to be more integral.

## Solo Work

Begin to work on a creative expression<sup>2</sup> of your understanding of justice and any story, issue or scripture that impacts your understanding of justice. This might include poetry, spoken word, visual art (painting, drawing, photography), short stories and anything else that makes your creativity come alive! You will continue to work on this creative expression each week and share with one another in Session 10 (if you feel comfortable).

## Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your kingdom. Help me to be missional even when it is uncomfortable. Help me to challenge the economic, political and social systems of our world that are in need of redemption. Help me to bravely proclaim the gospel to my neighbours, near and far, and may many come to know and follow you.

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2 If you have access to the internet, check out [livejust.ly/creative](http://livejust.ly/creative) for examples

# Session Three

## Justice: Combining Charity and Advocacy

“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”  
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Charity is no substitute for justice withheld.”  
- St. Augustine

## Definitions

**Relief:** Assistance, generally one-time or short-term, in the form of food, clothing or money offered to people in crisis.

**Charity:** A voluntary act or gift contributed to those in need, given out of compassion or love.

**Biblical Justice:** The condition and action required for the state of wholeness and flourishing due all of God's creation.

**Structural Injustice:** Sin that infects the systems that govern society such as economic and public policy.

## Ambulance Drivers or Tunnel Builders by Ron Sider

A group of devout Christians once lived in a small village at the foot of a mountain. A winding, slippery road with hairpin curves and steep precipices without guard rails wound its way up one side of the mountain and down the other. There were frequent fatal accidents. Deeply saddened by the injured people who were pulled from the wrecked cars, the Christians in the village's three churches decided to act. They pooled their resources and purchased an ambulance. Over the years, they saved many lives although some victims remained crippled for life.

Then one day a visitor came to town. Puzzled, he asked why they did not close the road over the mountain and build a tunnel instead. Startled at first, the ambulance volunteers quickly pointed out that this approach, although technically quite possible, was not realistic or advisable. After all, the narrow mountain road had been there for a long time. Besides, the mayor of the town would bitterly oppose the idea. He owned a large restaurant and service station halfway up the mountain.

The visitor was shocked that the mayor's economic interests mattered more to these Christians than the many human casualties. Somewhat hesitantly, he suggested that perhaps the churches ought to speak to the mayor. Perhaps they should even elect a different mayor if he

proved stubborn and unconcerned. Now the Christians were shocked. With rising indignation and righteous conviction they informed the young radical that the church dare not become involved in politics. The church is called to preach the gospel and give a cup of cold water, they said. Its mission is not to dabble in worldly things like social and political structures.

Perplexed and bitter, the visitor left. As he wandered out of the village, one question churned round and round in his muddled mind. Is it really more spiritual, he wondered, to operate the ambulances which pick up the bloody victims of destructive social structures than to try to change the social structures themselves?

## **The Circle of Justice** **by Jason Fileta**

A few years ago I spoke at a conference to inspire support for a piece of legislation we were working on at Micah Challenge USA, called the Jubilee Act. Essentially, there were sixty-seven nations who were servicing debts to the US government at the expense of being able to provide healthcare, education, and water to their people. The debts they were repaying, some of them decades old, were often lent irresponsibly to dictators at very high interest rates, and we were punishing the citizens of these nations by requiring the repayment of this debt. It was a justice issue.

It was a justice issue that could only be resolved with effective and prophetic advocacy. We could try to set up hospitals, schools and feeding programs in those sixty-seven nations, but the underlying cause of their inability to do it themselves would still be there: their debt. My role was to inspire the attendees of this conference to not just look upon the hungry with compassion and give them bread, but to cause them to ask why they were hungry - to take decisive action to fix an unjust policy.

After the conference was over myself and the other speakers went out for dinner. At dinner, I mentioned some of the things I had been struggling with at this conference and many other justice and advocacy conferences I had spoken at previously. I was struggling with the disconnectedness of our principles of justice and how we actually ran the conference. The voices of people living in poverty were often absent, food and other resources were often wasted and the opportunities for generosity and charitable acts were few or none. However, the opportunities for advocacy were many, but our advocacy alone seemed incomplete.

One of the other speakers essentially told me I needed to relax and remember why I do what I do. She explained that she lived in a huge house, in a comfortable, safe neighbourhood and indulged in a nice

glass of wine and fine food because that was what she deserved, or what was needed to keep her going in the fight for justice. She implied that she (or me for that matter) didn't need to be radically generous, or consume less for the sake of giving more directly to those living in poverty because she was dealing with the structural causes of injustice. We didn't need to be bothered with small acts of charity.

Something didn't feel right.

Here is the reality. Advocacy is not justice. Charity is not justice. The picture of justice we see in scripture is a prerequisite for shalom - a time when all brokenness is made right. When relationships between people are healed, relationships between people and God are healed, relationships between people and systems are healed, relationships between people and creation are healed, and one's own relationship with self is healed. Advocacy and charity are certainly essential components of justice, and therefore shalom, but neither is a synonym for justice.

For so long we've seen people hungry - no matter how much we feed them. This has led a movement of us to work for an end to hunger not by delivering more food but by delivering more justice through advocating to governments and corporations for more just policies and practices. Let me tell you something - it is fun to be an advocate. Sometimes, it is exhilarating. To know that your work helped create a level playing field is incredible. To stand in the halls of power and speak prophetically is euphoric (and scary!). I imagine it is similar (although on a much smaller scale) to the exhilaration Moses felt leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

In fact, a lot of advocates (myself included) use the story of Moses and the exodus to highlight the essential role of advocacy. God called Moses to go to Pharaoh, the political leader of the day, and release the Israelites from slavery. He didn't call Moses to go to the Israelites and comfort, feed and clothe them through setting up a charity, all the while not addressing the cause of their suffering. But does this mean God was not concerned about their immediate needs being met? Returning to the issue of hunger in our day, does this mean God is not

concerned about the hungry being fed while we dismantle unjust policies that cause hunger?

Absolutely not!

The whole of scripture points to a God who wants to see the “captives released, the hungry fed and the naked clothed”. Advocacy alone will not accomplish this. Neither will charity alone.

I am certain that though Moses’ calling as an advocate was unique, there were others, perhaps thousands, called to radical acts of charity and generosity to clothe, comfort and feed the Israelites while still in slavery. It is only consistent with our God that he called up compassionate people to be His presence among the Israelites. Both callings were necessary, both are worthy and both are part of the call to do justice.

Biblical justice is holistic in nature. It is a circle made up of many points. If we are tireless advocates, but at the expense of our personal relationships, then the circle is broken. If we are compassionate to the impoverished through charity and generosity, but fail to challenge unjust structures that cause their oppression then, too, the circle is broken.

To truly see justice done we must become competent and committed to a holistic lifestyle of justice including charity and advocacy. We must not choose one over the other, but rather recognise what our unique calling is while still embracing the other things God calls us to in a lifestyle of justice. Let the circle be unbroken!

## Read Exodus 3 Together

### Moses and the Burning Bush

- 1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
- 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.
- 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up?"
- 4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."
- 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
- 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.
- 7 The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.
- 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey - the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.
- 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.
- 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."
- 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
- 12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

- 13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"
- 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"
- 15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you.' "This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.
- 16 "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.
- 17 And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites - a land flowing with milk and honey.'
- 18 The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God.'
- 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.
- 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.
- 21 And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.
- 22 Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

## Questions for Discussion

1. If Moses was called to help those in slavery today, what do you think the church would think of his strategy?
2. Can you think of an example of well intentioned Christians trying to combat injustice through charity alone? Did it free people?
3. Consider the issue of hunger. In what ways can we respond to hunger, not just through providing food, but through loosening the chains of injustice?
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

As a group, choose one specific justice issue (eg hunger, human trafficking, HIV and AIDS). Brainstorm what engagement would look like if charity and advocacy united for justice.

Now consider your own engagement with a justice issue you are passionate about. Share which path you tend to gravitate toward: a response of charity, advocacy or a mixture of both? How are you feeling challenged to engage with the issue you are passionate about in a new way?

## Solo Work

Consider a justice issue facing your community. Identify the problem, and search for the root cause by continuing to ask, “Why?”

Now consider the existing responses to the problem. Are they treating the symptoms, the root or both?

Continue to work on your creative expression.

## Prayer

Lord, give me eyes to see the structures and systems that perpetuate injustice. Help me also to see the immediate needs of the oppressed, and may I never seek justice at the expense of being charitable. Give me a courageous voice to hold my leaders accountable to how their decisions affect the vulnerable.

# Session Four

## Justice and Prayer: Changing the World through Prayer

“Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God himself. Prayer begets faith, faith begets love, and love begets service on behalf of the poor.”

- Mother Teresa

“We are to change the world through prayer.”

- Richard J. Foster

## Definitions

**Cupbearer:** Nehemiah's role for King Artaxerxes. The position of cupbearer was one of the most trusted positions in the court, as the cupbearer was the one who tested and made sure that all of the king's food and drink weren't poisoned before he consumed them. As a result of this role, Nehemiah was in a place of great influence with the king.

**Intercessory Prayer:** The act of praying to God on behalf of others.

## In All Things Pray by Mari Williams

Prayer is at the core of the kingdom task of seeking justice. Prayer allows us to share our heart with God, but also to hear God's heart. He instructs us through prayer, and we become concerned with the things he is concerned with. The prayers of the communities Tearfund works with, its committed supporters and those of staff and partners underpin everything we do.

Sometimes this prayer can be very specific. A particular need arises, and prayer is mobilised. Like in Nigeria, when a group of young people, inspired after following the Live Justly course to do more to care for their environment, decided to create recycled shopping bags from used plastic banners found on the streets of their city. To move forward with this initiative, called 'Go Green Nigeria bags', permission was needed from a state agency. The young people submitted a request for permission, but it was denied. The officials were suspicious of the young people's intentions and were not sure of the benefits of supporting the initiative. Though frustrated and disappointed, the young people didn't give up. Instead, they turned to prayer, asking God to change the hearts of the state officials and grant them the permission needed. After several weeks of prayer, a second meeting was scheduled with the state officials. Permission was granted! God had answered prayers and touched the hearts of the state officials. 'Go Green Nigeria bags' could begin.

At other times our prayers for justice are more general and more global, such as prayers to end hunger. As part of a campaign to end hunger called 'Enough food for everyone IF', Tearfund mobilised thousands of people to pray in advance of the 2013 G8 Summit that was to be held in Northern Ireland. People were encouraged to set a reminder to pray at 1.08pm every day for the one in eight people going to bed hungry every night. Tim Magowan, Tearfund Director for Northern Ireland remembers the challenge: "What started as a simple idea from a pastor in Northern Ireland, grew to thousands of people around the UK and Ireland praying each day at 1.08pm for the end of hunger. Together, our voices raised in prayer, spoken out at events and channelled through campaign cards, played an important role in challenging the G8 leaders to bring help and hope to hungry people".

As a result of people's prayers, campaign actions and lobbying, governments pledged extra money to tackle hunger. And much more progress than we expected was made in the fight against the corporate tax dodging which causes so much poverty, injustice and hunger in our world.

Sometimes, prayers are answered quickly. At other times, we need to persevere for months, or years, as we cry out to God for change. But at all times, God hears our prayers and is faithful. And as we come before him in prayer, he uses those prayers to change us, and change the world.

## Passionate Prayer for Justice by Dr. Alita Ram

We live in a broken world. A world marred by pain and suffering. A world in which one human being can use his or her power to abuse another in the most terrible of ways.

In this broken world, we are called by God to be salt and light, to act and live in ways that bring about justice, and to **pray** for his kingdom to come.

There is no situation that is beyond the intervention of God. There are no hurts so deep that God cannot heal. There are no circumstances that are so dark and painful that God cannot break in and bring restoration. And for these things, **we must pray**.

I lead an organisation called ACT – the Association for Christian Thoughtfulness – in Mumbai, India. As part of our work we care for and counsel those who have suffered abuse. And we envision, train and empower churches in our city to do the same. Our church partners have identified and counselled numerous survivors of trauma and abuse, not only within the community outside the church, but also within the church. We, and our church partners, also carry out advocacy on behalf of victims of abuse.

Some of the women and girls we work with have been trafficked and sold into the sex trade. Others have been abused by people in their own families.

**Prayer is the bedrock of all we do.** At the beginning of each week our staff team comes together to ask for God's guidance, to pray for one another, and to pray for the women and girls we are serving. As we go into the dark and oppressive places to meet with the women and girls, we know we need the Holy Spirit's covering and protection, and so we have prayer partners praying for us at the exact time we are engaging in this work. Once a month we have a day of prayer and fasting as a staff team.

We pray for each of the women in our care. Our prayer is that they will be able to integrate safely back into supportive communities. We pray for their protection and healing – physical, mental and emotional. We pray they will understand God’s love for them, and that they come to know the Lord. And we pray that local churches will rise up and take responsibility to welcome these women and girls back into their communities, and to love and protect them.

We have seen God at work in the most powerful of ways, even in the darkest of circumstances. Shanthi’s story is one example. Shanthi was fifteen years old when her mother noticed her enlarged belly, and realised that she was around six months pregnant. A forty-year-old married man had manipulated Shanthi into a sexual relationship, with promises that he would marry her. Shanthi believed his promise. She had no idea that she was pregnant. Her mother got extremely angry when she discovered the pregnancy and in her anger told her daughter to leave the home. Shanthi then ran away.

Later that day, her mother began to worry about Shanthi, and called on one of ACT’s volunteers to help her. They visited the police station and reported Shanthi as missing. The police found Shanthi in her friend’s home and took her to a Government Shelter Home for children who are victims of abuse and violence. ACT provides counselling services there. During the counselling sessions, the full horror of Shanthi’s past emerged. Her alcoholic father had repeatedly raped her since she was thirteen years old. She had also been repeatedly raped by her elder brother. She had tried telling her mother, who did not believe her. Shanthi’s cries for help were silenced and the abuse continued until the day she was discovered to be six months pregnant.

But despite the darkness and suffering in Shanthi’s life, God has worked powerfully in her. The ACT team and their prayer partners began to pray for Shanthi, and she received counselling and care from ACT. The local church rallied around her, helping her to file a case against the forty-year-old man, with the help of ACT’s partner legal organization. This case is currently ongoing.

Shanthi has since given birth and has given the baby for adoption. She has completed her high school diploma and has hope for the future. Through prayer and counselling she has worked through the trauma and knows that there is a God, who heals and restores. Even in these desperate circumstances, God has intervened and answered prayers. God is the only one who can bring the complete healing and restoration that these women and girls need.

Prayer is central to what we do and who we are. We hear stories of abuse day after day. Women who have not only been abused by people in positions of power entrusted to care for them, but then also forced to stay quiet for fear of causing embarrassment. But **God is the God of justice, and he hears the prayers of his people for those suffering and abused.**

We pray so that we can experience God's grace and understand his purposes in our lives and in the lives of the people we serve. We pray so that he will intervene and bring healing and restoration to those in need, and so that we might become more like him.

We sometimes face huge discouragements. Women with whom we have been working for years return to a life of prostitution and abuse. When this happens, we get on our knees and pray. We ask God for strength, courage, endurance and grace to continue in the work.

Prayer also changes us. It is easy to become self-righteous. Spending time with God reminds us that we are what we are, only by his grace.

## Read Nehemiah 1 Together

### Nehemiah's Prayer

- 1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,
- 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.
- 3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."
- 4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.
- 5 Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments,
- 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you.
- 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.
- 8 Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,
- 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'
- 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.
- 11 Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

## Read Nehemiah 5 Together

### Nehemiah Helps the Poor

- 1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews.
- 2 Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”
- 3 Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”
- 4 Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards.
- 5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”
- 6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry.
- 7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them
- 8 and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.
- 9 So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?”
- 10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest!
- 11 Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them - one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.”

- 12 “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.
- 13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.
- 14 Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year - twelve years - neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor.
- 15 But the earlier governors - those preceding me - placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.
- 16 Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.
- 17 Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations.
- 18 Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.
- 19 Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Are there things you pray for daily?
2. Do you pray about “big” issues like hunger, slavery, extreme poverty? What do those prayers look like?
3. How does Nehemiah’s prayer life empower him to have confidence in pursuing justice for God’s people? How can we pray in the same way for our context?
4. Share a time when your prayers were clearly answered.
5. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

Print off, cut out from newspapers or draw pictures that represent strength, power and wealth: pictures of politicians, corporate logos, etc. Then do the same with pictures that represent the most vulnerable people and places in our world: children, widows, a map of a poor community, etc. As a group look at these pictures side by side. Pray that the vulnerable might influence the powerful and that the powerful will use their strength to seek justice for the vulnerable. Pray specifically for your leaders and the decisions they make that impact poor and vulnerable people in your country and around the world.

## Solo Work

Begin writing your long-term action plan. From this session onwards you will continue to add to your personal action plan. All of your action commitments should be measurable and time-bound. You'll eventually share this action plan with your group to help remind you of your commitments.

Begin with a prayer commitment. Challenge yourself to pray about an issue that seems too big or too overwhelming, and pray daily for a month. This will train you to come to God persistently and prayerfully in the face of injustice. Additionally, consider one way in which you will mobilise your community to be in prayer? Keep working on your creative expression.

## Prayer

Lord, give me the dedication of Nehemiah to see justice done even in the face of adversity. Draw me close to you, and your heart, and your concerns. Give me sensitive ears and eyes, to hear and see injustice, and the courage to respond.



# Session Five

## Justice and Advocacy: Using Your Voice to Campaign for Justice

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice you  
have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

- Desmond Tutu

“It is impossible to ignore the political implications  
of biblical justice.”

- Joel Edwards

## Definitions

**G8 (or Group of 8):** A forum for the governments of eight of the leading economies in the world, who periodically come together to discuss issues of global concern. The member states include: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

**Advocacy:** Influencing the decisions, policies and practices of powerful decision-makers, to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development. Advocacy never just raises awareness of an issue, problem or situation. It always seeks to change the policies, practices, systems, structures, decisions and attitudes that cause the issue, problem or situation so that they work in favour of people living in poverty and injustice.

## Campaigning Works by Ashley Walker

Elinata Kasanga lives in Nguluka Village, Zambia. Elinata remembers a time in her village's history when there was a lack of basic necessities. People couldn't afford health clinic fees or school fees. Most villagers survived on one meal a day and on water from contaminated local streams. The lack of basic necessities was made worse by the fact that the government of Zambia owed billions of dollars to governments of wealthier countries. Money spent servicing debt payments, but failing to keep pace as the interest grew, was money not going to help the impoverished.

People around the world began to take action, with Christians at the forefront, believing it was unreasonable to enforce debt payments at the expense of basic necessities of life. Thus the Jubilee 2000 campaign began, advocating for the cancellation of debts that impoverished nations could not afford to pay to richer countries in the Global North and to the World Bank, as a way to celebrate the Millennium in the year 2000. The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) was built upon the as-

sumption that left unchecked, the social, political, and economic order would tear communities apart because of greed and unjust practices. Jubilee was a chance to hit reset, and Jubilee 2000 was a chance to apply that biblical principle in modern times.

More than twenty-four million people signed the Jubilee 2000 petition. Signatures, including thumbprints and email petitions, were collected from more than 155 countries. The petition was delivered to the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. There were national organisations and campaigns in more than sixty countries, which lobbied, campaigned, protested and educated. Activities varied from grassroots letter writing campaigns targeting MPs, to national rallies with high-level celebrities, united by the symbol of human chains.

Jubilee 2000 succeeded in getting large amounts of debt cancelled for qualifying countries, but it didn't stop there. People around the world have continued to campaign, and since 1996, over \$130 billion of poor countries' debts have been cancelled.

Because of this, the public health centres in Elinata's community are now fully stocked with medicine and schools are free for grades 1 to 7. For the first time, Elinata and her community have access to clean water.

Beyond Nguluka Village, after debts were cancelled:<sup>3</sup>

- 1.5 million children returned to school in Uganda, after the government eliminated school fees
- 500,000 children in Mozambique received vaccinations
- Free health care was provided for millions living in rural areas in Zambia, many of whom had never had access to any form of modern health care before

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3 Statistics from [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org), [www.one.org](http://www.one.org) and [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

- 2,500 new primary schools were created and 28,000 extra teachers were trained, resulting in 98 per cent of Tanzanian children being able to enroll in primary education

Desmond Tutu once said, “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in”. Jubilee did just that, and continues to transform lives to date. Many people were changed by taking part in the campaign, seeing that a huge injustice can be a normal part of how the world works, and finding their voice to help overcome it.

## **Social Sin**

### **by Ronald J. Sider**

It is possible to make oppression legal. Legislators devise unjust laws, and bureaucrats implement the injustice. But God shouts a divine woe against rulers who use their official position to write unjust laws and unfair legal decisions. Legalised oppression is an abomination to our God. Therefore, God calls his people to oppose political structures that perpetuate injustice.

There is a long tradition of God's people challenging the political structures of the day, beginning with Moses going to Pharaoh, Esther to the Persian King, William Wilberforce to end the transatlantic slave trade, Dr. King and the US civil rights movement, all the way up to Christians of today speaking out against corruption and policies that perpetuate injustice.

However, neglect of the biblical teaching on structural injustice or institutionalised evil is one of the most deadly omissions in many parts of the church today. Christians frequently restrict ethics to a narrow class of "personal" sins such as drug abuse and sexual misconduct, but ignore the sins of institutionalised racism and unjust economic structures that destroy just as many people.

There is an important difference between consciously willed, individual acts (like lying to a friend or committing an act of adultery) and participation in evil social structures. Slavery is an example of the latter. So is the Victorian factory system that had ten-year-old children working twelve to sixteen hours a day. Both slavery and child labor were legal, but they destroyed millions of people. They were institutionalised, or structural, evils.

God hates evil economic structures and unjust legal systems because they destroy people by the hundreds and thousands and millions. We can be sure that the just Lord of the universe will destroy wicked rulers and unjust social institutions (see 1 Kings 21).

Another side to institutionalised evil makes it especially pernicious. Structural evil is so subtle that we become ensnared without fully realising it. God inspired the prophet Amos to utter some of the harshest words in scripture against the cultured upper-class women of his day: “hear this word you cows of Bashan...who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘bring, that we may drink!’ The Lord God has sworn by his holiness that, behold the days are coming when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks” (4:1-2).

The women involved may have had a little direct contact with the impoverished peasants. They may never have fully realised that their gorgeous cloth and spirited parties were possible partly because of the sweat and tears of the poor. In fact, they may have even been kind on occasion to individuals in oppression. But God called these privileged women “cows” because they participated in a structural evil - lives sustained by the oppression of others. Before God, they were personally and individually guilty.

If we are members of a privileged group that profits from structural evil, or whose lives are sustained by the oppression of others, and if we have at least some understanding of the evil yet fail to do what God wants us to do to change things, we stand guilty before God.

Unfair systems and oppressive structures are an abomination to God, and “social sin” is the correct phrase to categorise them. Furthermore, as we understand their evil, we have a moral obligation to do all God wants us to do to change them. If we do not, we sin. That is the clear implication of Amos’ harsh attack on the wealthy women of his day. It is also the clear implication of James 4:17, “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”.

In the New Testament, the Word *cosmos* (world) often conveys the idea of structural evil. In Greek thought, the word *cosmos* referred to the structures of civilised life, especially the patterns of the Greek city-state that were viewed as essentially good. But the biblical writers knew that sin had invaded and distorted the structures and values of society.

Frequently, therefore, the New Testament uses the word *cosmos* to refer, in C. H. Dodd's words, "to human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles". "When Paul spoke of 'the world' in a moral sense, he was thinking of the totality of people, social systems, values, and traditions in terms of its opposition to God and his redemptive purposes".

Pope John Paul II has rightly insisted that evil social structures are "rooted in personal sin". Social evil results from our rebellion against God and our consequent selfishness toward our neighbours. But the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins create "structures of sin" that are both oppressive and "difficult to remove". We will not see transformed systems simply by converting every CEO, employee of multinational corporations, and member of Congress. We will see transformation by preaching the gospel while dismantling unjust structures and systems through effective advocacy, passionate prayer and living justly.

## Read Esther 3:1-11, 4:13-14 and 8:3-8 Together

- 1 After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.
- 2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.
- 3 Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?"
- 4 Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.
- 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.
- 6 Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.
- 7 In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the *pur* (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.
- 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them.
- 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."
- 10 So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.
- 11 "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

## Esther 4:13-14

- 13 “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape.
- 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

## Esther 8:3-8

- 3 Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews.
- 4 Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.
- 5 “If it pleases the king,” she said, “and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces.
- 6 For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?”
- 7 King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up.
- 8 Now write another decree in the king’s name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king’s signet ring - for no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.”

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why is Esther hesitant to speak to the king at first?
2. What is the value of Mordecai influencing Esther to advocate for her people, and what are the implications for our understanding of political advocacy today?
3. Both Esther's advocacy, and the Jubilee 2000 movement, were inspired by the call of those in oppression for advocacy to challenge injustice. Can you think of examples of this in modern advocacy movements?
4. What are the risks if those who are experiencing injustice have no voice in our advocacy?
5. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## **Together<sup>4</sup>**

Act out a drama of a scenario where you advocate for your community to a factory owner and his staff regarding the impact of the chemical factory on your community. Choose two to three people to play the factory owner and staff, and the rest of you will be the community.

### **THE FACTS:**

- The factory is 1km upstream from your community
- The factory has been operating for four years and during the past three months the community has been experiencing problems
- Large areas of land have been fenced off, blocking the main route to take cattle to other pastures further up the valley
- When clothes are washed in the river they get stained and there is more illness due to water pollution from the factory

### **THE CONTEXT:**

- You've already discussed the issues as a community and decided the right thing to do is talk to the owner, whom you have not seen since he first told the community about the chemical factory five years ago

### **TO CONSIDER:**

- What are you trying to achieve in this meeting?
- What is your core message?
- How do you approach the meeting? What is your tone toward the owner?

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from the Tearfund (2015) Advocacy Toolkit (ROOTS 1&2)

## Solo Work

What is one way you can promote justice or speak out and be a voice for justice to your leaders? Commit to something specific - maybe it's a promise to organize an advocacy training for your church or a commitment to write one letter a month to your government on a justice related issue. Add this commitment to your action plan.

## Prayer

Lord, give me courage to take risks the way Esther did, and to challenge injustice. Even if it is at great cost to me. Help me to steward my voice and advocate for justice with my elected officials. Be with our government and leaders who make major decisions that impact people all over the world. Give them wisdom, tenderness, and sensitivity to the cries of those living in poverty.

# Session Six

## Justice and Consumption: Possessions Are Not Power

“The witness to simplicity is profoundly rooted in the biblical tradition, and most perfectly exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.”

- Richard J. Foster

“When we recognize that the people who make our stuff have hopes, dreams, and personalities, we can’t help but care about whether their job pays them a living wage and allows them to reach those dreams.”

- Kelsey Timmerman

## Definitions

**Fair trade:** A system of selling and buying goods that ensures greater justice and fairness in trade. Farmers and workers get better prices and wages, decent working conditions and fairer terms of trade.

**Cooperative:** A farm, business or other organization which is owned and run jointly by its members, who share the profits or benefits. Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

**Simplicity:** Cultivating a lifestyle of modesty in consumption. When we choose to live simply, we consume less, which in turn aids in the decreased demand for goods produced cheaply and often unjustly.

## The Value of Cotton by Rachel Dixon

Makandianfing Keita<sup>5</sup> is a cotton farmer from Mali. Before joining a cooperative his family struggled to survive because cotton prices were going down and down until they were below the cost of production. Because of this, the community struggled:

- Children had to walk 10km to go to school, which made school unattainable for many
- Pregnant women had no access to healthcare. Many died in childbirth and there were high rates of infant mortality
- The environment was often degraded through the use of dangerous pesticides, burning and soil erosion

In 2005 the village farmers joined a cotton cooperative. This means that their cotton would now be bought at fair trade prices that were significantly higher than the artificially low market rates, and that the farmers would together decide how to invest their income. After join-

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5 This story is based on an interview by Rachel Dixon and used by permission. Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd, 2016

ing the cooperative, they were able to make immense progress. Within the first three years:

- They built a school in the community. At first it had two classrooms. When they had more money and wanted to expand, they challenged the government to match their investment. Now there are five classrooms in total, and every child in the village can go to school
- They built a maternity centre
- They installed a pump for drinking water
- They built a new road, enabling farmers to travel further than 5km outside of the village without difficulty

The commitment and demand of consumers to buy cotton at a fairly traded price coupled with Makandianfing and his community's commitment to justice and flourishing in their community made these developments possible.

The cost of cotton was literally killing Makandianfing's community, but after changes by him, his community and consumers, the value of cotton helped his community flourish.

Every time we consume goods we can perpetuate either the suffering or the flourishing of others.

## **Possessions Are Not Power** **by José Marcos da Silva**

We live in a world where our attitudes and actions are strongly influenced by cultural models. Often without us realising it. One such cultural model is consumerism, which carries with it the illusion that “possessions are power”. We are led to believe that people are only the sum of what they possess. Clothes, accessories, buildings, cars, electronics, restaurants, hotels: these define who we are. Our buying power and consumption define our identity.

We are encouraged to have as many things as possible, to consume as much as we can and to throw away anything we no longer want. As a result, our lifestyles are now largely unsustainable and require urgent and radical change. With this in mind, let’s pause to ask ourselves: What guidance can the Bible give us on how to approach consumption? What is the relationship between what we own and consume, and our Christian beliefs?

At the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, God gave us a mandate to steward the earth. However people often want the maximum results from the minimum effort, and this leads to exploitation. This has been particularly obvious in our relationship with God’s creation. We were not made to exploit God’s creation until it no longer exists; we were called to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). We have a spiritual responsibility for God’s creation. Instead of squandering its resources, we must use them carefully and sustainably. This begs some key questions: What can we do to reduce our consumption? Do we really need everything we possess? How can we consume in a way that is more ethical and sustainable?

Another theological concept that must inform our consumption is abundant life or full life. The Greek word that some versions of the Bible translate as “abundant” (an abundant life), is also translated as “full” (a full life). There is a big difference between abundance and fullness: abundance implies more than is necessary, and fullness suggests

harmony. Our lives can only be full when they are in harmony, and this also includes our relationship with what we own and consume.

The ideology that promotes the concept of “the more we own, the more blessed we are by God” has grown in recent times. It has led vast numbers of believers to wanting more and more. **This idea is more closely linked to that of abundance, but actually, the life that Christ means us to have is a “full life”, where we have just enough in order to live in peace (shalom) with God.** How does this work in practice? We may not have an expensive mattress, but we are still able to sleep soundly; we may not live in a mansion, but we still have safe shelter. Jesus reminds us that we should look to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:26-34), so we can comprehend God’s love and desire to bless us. However, without us sharing what we have there are many who aren’t seeing their material needs met, and it is our privilege to work as a channel of blessing to others.

Jesus’ teaching on God vs Mammon (Matthew 6:24) would be a direct challenge to the consumerism of today. Mammon is the Gentile God of riches attained through greed and covetousness. For the love of money, many wander from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10). Throughout the Bible as a whole, there is a tension between the love of money and the love of God. We cannot love both, as they both compete to reign over us, and no man can serve two masters without displeasing one. Accumulating possessions is the widely accepted capitalist culture. It is now so extreme, that only one per cent of the richest people in the world own the same amount as the rest of the population. This is completely unjust! Despite this, it is still considered normal to want as much as possible for ourselves. We focus most of our attention and energy on accumulating and earning more, without realising that this path takes us further from God’s plan, and that the false abundance will only lead to misery.

Another impact of the unrestrained quest for profit at any cost can be seen in the exploitation of workers, driven by the demand from consumers. In much of the business world where the priority is to

make ever-greater profit, there is a toxic tendency to ignore ethical and human principles. The exploitation of labour is a form of slavery. This means that not only is it important for us to consume only what is necessary, but that it is also important for us to think about the origins of what we buy.

What are the practical implications of these scriptural values for us here today?

If we want to be disciples of Christ, we must try to imitate him. Jesus was a humble servant. He was holy and lived a radically simple life. These three characteristics are profoundly entwined, and they should underlie our discipleship.

Someone once said that “wisdom is learning to love people and use things”. The opposite is destructive. If we love things and use people, we cause pain and destruction. The things we have should be at the service of our neighbours, and never the contrary.

Our priority should not be to accumulate things, as this can destroy both us and God’s creation. Possessions are not power. Giving is power! Generosity is essential. This Christian model is one that in many places the world has forgotten, and if we can embrace it in our own attitudes, we will honour Christ.

If we can consider the relationship between buying and consuming in the light of these values, everything else will follow naturally. We will take care of nature because that is our role, and its restoration is part of the plan of salvation (Romans 8:19-25); we will consume fewer things more responsibly; we will not rush off in search of wealth, because the love of riches distances us from God. We will lead simple lives, as we seek to follow and imitate Jesus.

## Read Jeremiah 22:13-17 Together

- 13 “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness,  
his upper rooms by injustice,  
making his own people work for nothing,  
not paying them for their labor.
- 14 He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace  
with spacious upper rooms.’  
So he makes large windows in it,  
panels it with cedar  
and decorates it in red.
- 15 Does it make you a king  
to have more and more cedar?  
Did not your father have food and drink?  
He did what was right and just,  
so all went well with him.
- 16 He defended the cause of the poor and needy,  
and so all went well.  
Is that not what it means to know me?”  
declares the Lord.
- 17 “But your eyes and your heart  
are set only on dishonest gain,  
on shedding innocent blood  
and on oppression and extortion.”

## Questions for Discussion

1. What specific acts or situations of injustice are found in this passage?
2. Contrast the two kinds mentioned in the Jeremiah passage. What was the problem with the son's wealth?
3. Do you know who/what sustains your lifestyle? Share with the group about one way you try to seek justice with your consumption.
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

One way we can ensure our consumption is not contributing to the suffering of others is by: **reducing** the amount of goods we buy, **reusing** those goods we can through repair and repurposing and **recycling** goods that we cannot reuse. By doing so we reduce waste, lower the demand for cheap, unjustly produced goods and also resist the prevailing culture that puts too much value on material things as a source of satisfaction. Some of us live this way by choice, and others of us do this out of economic necessity. Now is your chance to share with your group your clever ideas! What is one way you and your family have reused or recycled items and, in turn, reduced consumption?

## Solo Work

Research one product that you buy often. Find out how the company that produces it treats its employees. Try to research the supply chain: how are those who made or grew the product treated?

- Does this influence your desire to continue buying goods from this company? How can you buy from more justice oriented companies? Come prepared to share your findings with the group
- Add a “consumption” piece to your action plan. Make it specific. How can you live more simply? How can you buy more ethically? Maybe commit to buy from a local company that you know treats its employees well. Maybe commit to only buy fair trade coffee or used clothing. Pick one thing you can make actionable and embrace it for the long haul!
- Continue work on your creative expression and find one person to share your thoughts, ideas and even your project with, to get feedback and to help you create coherently

## Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the times I consume goods selfishly or unwisely, without regard for my impact on others. Help me to be aware of how I consume on a daily basis and how I can promote the flourishing of others through my choices. Help me to live justly in the area of consumption. Not as a pharisee seeking to keep the “justice” laws, but rather as an act of worship towards you.



# Session Seven

## Justice and Generosity: Justice Will Cost You Something

“If our giving does not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say it is too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot because our commitment to giving excludes them.”

- C.S. Lewis

“It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”

- Mother Teresa

## Definitions

**Sacrificial Giving:** Intentionally giving something that is precious or costly to you as an act of worship or devotion. Giving from our substance rather than abundance. Sacrificial giving is a choice to give up something that might bring you comfort or joy in order to give to others who are in need.

## The Generosity of Heart to See Everyone by Daniel Solano Maldonado

One Sunday morning, some years ago, a few student friends and I decided to serve breakfast to homeless people in one of the most dangerous parts of the city. The police advised people to stay away from the area, but we felt directed by the Holy Spirit to go.

What we found shocked us. We saw people hungry, dirty and drunk. We found children drugged and unable to move. In the midst of the smell and chaos was a newborn baby. It was heartbreaking. A man came up to us. Initially, I was filled with fear and prejudice because he smelled of alcohol, was high on drugs and had wounds all over his body. We started talking, and I saw past what I saw on the surface. He began to tell me some of his story. He hadn't always been on the streets. He had once been part of a church; he had even been baptised. But a series of bad decisions and difficult circumstances had left living on the streets as his only option. We talked to other people, and they shared their pasts. We heard stories of rape, abuse and addiction.

It can sometimes be hard to see beyond the dirty hair and faces, beyond the smell, beyond the drunkenness. But every person living on the streets has a story. And each person is wonderfully and fearfully made in God's image and is loved by God.

This one encounter inspired me to do more than just give them money. The project grew into a team of up to eighteen people, taking breakfast at least once a month to people living on the streets, spending time with them and organising days out for them in the countryside.

When I see babies, children, young people and adults on the streets, I often think of myself, my brothers and sisters, my nieces and nephews. It could be one of us there, lying hungry, without hope. I think how merciful God has been to me, giving me shelter, food and a loving family. I want to be part God's work, and obedient to his call to reach out to the poor and broken. I want to help because God is worth every last penny of my money, and every last second of my time.

## Combating Greed with Generosity

### by Gaston Slanwa

In such an unequal world, the need for justice and generosity is greater than ever before. Generosity is also a clear biblical command.

A dictionary may define generosity as the quality of being kind and generous, but it is important to also understand that biblical generosity is the result of a transformed heart. We give because God loved us first and because we long to love, live and give as he did. We want to grab hold of 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), of which giving is an important part. We are told by Jesus himself that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). By giving we are also able to help release the hold that money can create on our hearts. "Command those who are rich in this present world...to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share...so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). We are told that our heart can't serve two masters, and by being generous with what God has given us we're able to release its hold on our lives and truly serve Him. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

In talking about justice and generosity, we need to think of the divide between rich and poor, and between the strong and the weak/vulnerable. We also need to think about greed. Today our world is extremely polarised by wealth and poverty. The rich/poor divide is not just one between nations but also within every nation and every community. Poverty from a biblical perspective is broken relationships: with God, with ourselves, with others, with our communities and with our environment. In seeking to be part of God's kingdom work, restoring these relationships - an outworking of justice and generosity has to play a central role.

The Bible is clear that God is against greed. While wealth is sometimes considered a blessing, there is also a clear responsibility to share

wealth with others. “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18). And we should not lose sight of the spiritual danger that money poses, as Jesus taught, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:24; see also Matthew 6:24, 1 Timothy 6:10 and Hebrews 13:5).

God is on the side of the poor. The writings of the prophets about how poor people should be treated, the ministry and teachings of Jesus regarding those who are poor and the attitude of the early church towards those in need, show how much God wants us to care and never turn our back on those who are poor and vulnerable. In his book “Generous Justice”, Timothy Keller expresses this in the following way:

*While clearly Jesus was preaching the good news to all, he showed throughout his ministry the particular interest in the poor and the downtrodden that God has always had. Jesus, in his incarnation, “moved in” with the poor. He lived with, ate with, and associated with the socially ostracized (Matt 9:13).*

And now, unlike any time in history, those who seek to follow Jesus need to be aware of the magnitude of the suffering and injustice in the world and to be real and effective instruments of justice in an unjust world.

Scripture shows that God hears the cries of those who are poor; delivers justice on their behalf; defends and protects them; is angry with those who abuse and oppress them; and identifies with them. God sets himself against those who practise injustice and are not generous toward those in need.

We have a clear call to give generously, following the pattern of our Master and Lord Jesus Christ, who gave everything in order that we can be saved and blessed. The opposite of the love of money is generosity. Instead of looking to take, we are invited to give, for there is always more joy in giving than receiving.

The need for justice and generosity in our world is immense. Christians will make a significant difference if we wake up to the understanding of the generous lives God wants us to live. We may not be directly responsible for all the evils and misery seen in the world, but our lack of commitment to do something about them does not make us less responsible. Justice and generosity will surely bring healing to our world. God is a just and generous God. Those who profess to be his children must seek to resemble him.

## Read Isaiah 58:4-10 together

- 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists.  
You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
- 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,  
only a day for people to humble themselves?  
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed  
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?
- 6 Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?
- 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
- 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.  
If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
- 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.

## Questions for Discussion

1. It is clear in Isaiah 58 that God wants us to “spend” ourselves; this means giving of ourselves. How do you define giving sacrificially?
2. What does the passage describe as the benefits of living generously?
3. Fasting is often considered a form of worship that shows great devotion. What does Isaiah 58 teach us about acts of justice as worship?
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

Generosity begins in our hearts. When we realize how God has been generous with us, it allows us to be generous towards others. As a group, make a list of the ways you have experienced God’s generosity. Examine the list and give thanks that we serve a generous, loving God.

Now, with that fresh on your minds practice generosity together. Here are two ideas, and we suggest you choose the one that best fits your community:

- Split off into pairs and take turns spending five minutes speaking words of love, affirmation and kindness to each other. Five minutes forces the “giver” in this exercise to really dwell on the qualities and character of their partner, and allows the “receiver” to experience the warmth and blessing of someone else’s generous heart. It may be culturally appropriate for women to be paired with women, and men with men
- Think of a project in your community you could give to collectively. We suggest you keep individual amounts given anonymous, and just report the collective amount

## Solo Work

Examine your heart. What is holding you back from giving generously and sacrificially? Take a moment to pray and listen. It could be a trust issue, it could be a sense of ownership over your money and time, it could be a selfish desire to have more, etc. Write down the barriers you have to giving. How can you sacrificially and creatively give of yourself moving forward? Come up with one to three promises or ideas for your action plan related to giving more of yourself: your money, your time, and/or your energy. Continue to work on your creative expression.

## Prayer

Lord, challenge me to be as generous as you are, to give freely of what I have, because everything I have has been given to me by you.



Session Eight  
Justice and  
Relationships:  
Authentic  
Relationships Are  
the Heart of Justice

“When people begin moving beyond charity and toward justice and solidarity with the poor and oppressed, as Jesus did, they get in trouble. Once we are actually friends with the folks in struggle, we start to ask why people are poor, which is never as popular as giving to charity.”

- Shane Claiborne

“You can’t lead the people if you don’t love the people. You can’t save the people if you don’t serve the people.”

- Dr. Cornel West

## Sacrificed on the Altar of Justice by Jason Fileta

Picture the scene: me, a young idealistic organizer for Micah Challenge USA in New York City for the United Nations. I was sitting around the dinner table with the men I someday hoped to become. These were my living heroes, men who led internationally known and respected justice organizations. Here at the UN to give testimony, speak at rallies and urge global leaders to keep their promises to the impoverished.

They challenged me to have authentic relationships with the impoverished, to stand with the oppressed rather than simply for the oppressed. They were some of the few voices in New York that week lifting up the voices of the oppressed, telling their stories and bringing their concerns to halls of power most people in extreme poverty would never have the chance to speak into.

I read their books, had paid money to hear them speak on several occasions and prayed that one day I might become like them...that is until we reached dessert.

One leader asked another about his son. His response was something along the lines of:

“He’s OK, out of treatment now, but still not sure who he is or what he is doing”.

One by one they all shared the deeper struggles of their families. Broken relationships with children, estranged children, drug abuse, alcoholism, suicide attempts, depression, and the list goes on. My heart hurt for them, but I also wondered how could men who bring so much healing to the world have so much brokenness in their own homes?

After the sharing was complete one of them raised his glass, “Well, what we do isn’t easy on the family, is it?”

And to that we clinked our glasses and drank. I decided at that moment that there had to be a better way. That my calling to seek justice did not have to come at the expense of my calling as a husband or father. If it did, then whose justice was I seeking? Certainly not God’s

I thought. Little did I know it would take years for me to truly learn this lesson.

So often when we think of relationships and justice we think of how those in positions of power must be in genuine, dignified, authentic relationships with those in oppression. This is an important conversation, but we must also consider our personal relationships with those God has called us to walk through life with; our families and loved ones.

Don't get me wrong, justice will always cost us something, but the currency of our families and loved ones is far too precious to be sacrificed on the altar of justice.

## **Relationship: the Foundation of Justice** **by Sunia Gibbs**

Where I live and work I can't walk very far without seeing or passing someone who is homeless. When I first moved into the city, there were mornings I would walk out my front door, and I would find one or two individuals taking shelter on the porch to avoid the rain or sleeping off a hard night. In the beginning I wanted to give and share with every single person. I handed out sleeping pads and blankets, shared food, prayed and offered advice. But the longer I lived in the city, the more I gave, and the more frequently I heard a knock on my door, the more I became tired and numb. The need was never ending but my compassion was not. I felt used. I worried about how much I could give without compromising my children or our home, and I didn't really know if anything I was doing even mattered. I was disillusioned and disappointed.

To endure in the work of justice we must determinedly walk through the wastelands produced by greed, lust and loss and not run away when overwhelmed with disparity. The anecdote for quitting or disillusionment is not simply greater zeal, but increased love and compassion that comes from the Spirit of God living in each of us.

Every relationship, from our immediate family to the stranger we care for ought to be founded, directed and empowered by love. In 1 Corinthians 13:3 Paul tells to us that if we give everything to the poor, or even become martyrs, but do not have love, there is no benefit.

This is an important reminder for those who dedicate their lives to the work of justice. The just life we are called to live cannot ignore the needs of our spouses or children or closest friends. At the same time, the just life we are called to live cannot ignore the needs of our brothers and sisters on the street or around the world because their burden is ours. Jesus demonstrated the solidarity we ought to have in Matthew 25:40 when he said, "Whatever was done to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me". These words brought

encouragement to the disciples who were being sent into the world. They would remember that whatever was being done to them was felt and known by Jesus, their brother, Saviour and friend. As the body of Christ, are we aware of the pain in other parts of the body? How can we act/speak in solidarity with one another just like Christ does for each of us?

Love for God and love for neighbour empower and eradicate the distance between every human being. When we begin to truly comprehend that the Word became flesh and walked with us (John 1:14), we will have a deeper understanding of humility and self-sacrificing love. Think of it: the one who is divine and holy put on frail humanity and made his home with us. Emmanuel – God with us.

Who are we with? If we ignore or avoid the vulnerable around us, how can we be motivated to act with them for deliverance? If our eyes only see people exactly like us, if we just work really hard in order to purchase shiny new objects, or if all our energy is spent striving for higher positions of power or fame, we have given into the values of the world around us instead of becoming more and more responsive to the Spirit of God, who reminds us of our abundance and compels us to go deeper and generously into our communities.

Jesus lived with the poor. He saw them and was moved with compassion and met their needs. Are we empowered and free to do the same? 1 John 3:16-18 encourages us in this way, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

We demonstrate love through our relationships with one another. And this love must be more than the words we speak, but also the actions we take to relieve one another’s burdens. It is the only way our love can be sincere. It is the way in which we prove we know God’s

love. It's not in how many verses we've memorised or in keeping our religious rituals, but in how we love one another.

May our relationships with one another radiate and demonstrate the abundant and generous love of God. May we have the courage and empowerment to live justly with and towards one another.

## Read Matthew 25:31-46 together

### The Sheep and the Goats

- 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.
- 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
- 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
- 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.
- 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,
- 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’
- 37 Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?
- 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?
- 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’
- 40 The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’
- 41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
- 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,
- 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

- 44 They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
- 45 He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'
- 46 Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

## Questions for Discussion

1. Jesus says that what we do for the “least of these” we do for him. Is there a difference between doing it “for” him versus doing it “to” him?
2. In today’s world we often don’t see those in need face to face in our everyday lives. Does that make it easier to “refuse” to help to them? Are we less obligated to help those outside our communities?
3. Who are the “least of these” in our world today? How would your encounters with them look if you treated them as you would treat Jesus?
4. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

Humility and vulnerability should be at the core of all of our relationships. In the context of seeking justice this is true both with those we are seeking to help and with our loved ones. This next exercise is a practice in both!

Start praying together as a group. Pray that you will form authentic relationships with one another, for opportunities to be in relationship with people in oppression and for strong relationships with your loved ones. Pray as the Holy Spirit leads you.

As you are praying have one person begin by washing the feet of the person on their left. Afterwards, that person washes the feet of the person their left, and so on until all of you (who wish to) have participated.

## Solo Work

Reflect on your own relationships. Make a list of the ten people you engage with most regularly. What does the list tell you? Are all the people on the list the same ethnicity as you? Are they all the same socioeconomic status as you? The list could indicate that you are very family oriented, or very connected to your church community or your neighbourhood. Who is missing from this list that you wish was on it?

Think of three ways you can stretch yourself in relationships this year. Perhaps make a commitment to get to know a new family in your neighbourhood, village or town, to befriend a family from a different ethnic group in your church or simply to reach out to a family member you've become distant from. Put this commitment into your action plan.

## Prayer

Lord, help me to remember that your heart is for the people, not just the cause. Give me a tender heart toward those experiencing injustice; keep me from apathy. As I passionately seek justice, help me to not do so at the expense of my family and friends, but may my pursuit of justice bring my entire community closer to you.

# Session Nine

## Justice and Creation Care: A Vision for All Creation to Flourish!

“Tackling the issue of climate change presents us with an inflection point in human history - a climate justice revolution that separates development from fossil fuels, supports people in the most vulnerable situations to adapt, allows all people to take part, and, most importantly, realise their full potential.”

- Mary Robinson

“Mom is crying!  
Our mother Earth is dying!  
She is really burning!  
Lord have mercy on us  
and lead us and help us,  
to save our beautiful mom,  
our Earth, our globe.”  
- Belaynesh Bekele

“In the words of St. Theresa of Avila, we are God’s  
hands and feet on earth, now is the time for us,  
rooted in prayer, to step up and take action on the  
climate crisis.”

- The Archbishop of Cape Town and Primate of  
Southern Africa, the Most Revd Dr. Thabo Makgoba

“It is not possible to love an unseen God while  
mistreating God’s visible creation.”  
- John Woolman

## Definitions

**Creation Care:** Active concern for the environment and work to restore it, both for positive impact on the natural world, and positive impact on humanity.

**Climate Change:** Long term changes to the earth's climate including rising temperatures, more floods, more droughts and less reliable rainfall, mainly caused by human activity.

**Restorative Economy:** A vision for life-giving economic and social structures, where all of society is engaged in living within the planet's resources, keeping inequality within reasonable levels and where everybody has their basic needs met.

## Pedro, the Face of a Changing Climate by Kim Hunt

It's easy to understand why Brazilian farmer Pedro Santana Oliveira has struggled to feed his family when you try and get to his smallholding.

The track to his place in the north eastern state of Pernambuco is so sandy that the tyres of any vehicle have difficulty getting traction, and that same sand permeates the soil around his home, making crop growing extremely hard work.

Access to water in this arid area is a problem. There was a reservoir but the changing climate and environmental degradation means it has dried up, leaving Pedro and his neighbours facing seven mile round trips using donkeys to fetch water from the nearest source.

It's little wonder that many local people are giving up working the land in favour of migrating to Brazil's cities, but many encounter further hardship as they discover their agricultural skills are insufficient to find an urban livelihood.

Due to help from one of Tearfund's partners in his area, Pedro and his neighbours are able to remain on their ancestral grounds as farmers.

Pedro has had help to install a rainwater harvesting tank to capture whatever falls when the heavens do open, and they have also implemented an irrigation system which uses solar panels to power a pump that moves the water around to serve twenty families!

Pedro has now started growing crops again for his family's consumption and hopes to be able to sell them in the market soon.

It's estimated that some 300,000 people are dying each year due to changes within our climate. As Christians, God has entrusted us with caring for his creation and all those living within it. We can and should take steps to allow creation to flourish.

## A Restorative Economy: For the Love of All Creation by Naomi Foxwood

From the beginning, God's intention for peace in creation (shalom) meant much more than just the absence of violence. Central to a Christian understanding of God's intention for his creation is the idea that life is inherently about intertwined relationships and relatedness. Millennia before the emergence of modern ideas of symbiosis, ecology or complex adaptive systems, the creation account of the Bible centres on wholeness, the fundamental unity of all of God's creation. As theologian Margaret Barker writes:

*The biblical world view is a vision of the unity of all things, and how the visible material world relates to another dimension of existence that unites all things into one divinely ordained system known as the eternal covenant, the creation covenant.*<sup>6</sup>

This is a worldview that stands in marked contrast to the materialist approach to creation that is one of the defining hallmarks of modernity. Far from a prevailing cultural practice of dominating the earth for material gain, the **Christian worldview on creation starts from a universe that is radically alive and precious. In this universe, humans have a unique role that encompasses, but also goes far beyond, 'stewardship'.**

God's intention for creation includes a powerful emphasis on humans' role **to show steadfast love for God and each other, and care for God's creation as part of an interconnected set of shalom relationships.**

When our relationship with creation is broken, it has devastating impact for all of our relationships. We're living at a time when the strain on creation is greater than ever before. This is a result of unsustainable development, unbridled consumption and environmental

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6 Barker M (2010) "Creation: a biblical vision for the environment", T&T Clark, London

degradation. This is a violation of God's intention for creation, but it's also taking a toll on people, particularly the most vulnerable among us. It's a special challenge for our generation. In the last 25 years more people have escaped poverty than at any other time in history, because the world economy has grown - but the way we've done it is unsustainable. We've changed the climate and damaged the environment, and if nothing changes, this will push millions of people back into poverty.

Scientists tell us that if average global temperature rises by more than 1.5 degrees, compared with pre-industrial levels, the consequences could be disastrous. The rise in temperature may not sound very large, but it has a huge impact on **lower income countries, who already face huge development challenges**. Some of the current and future impacts of climate change include:

- Unpredictable rainfall: many regions are experiencing huge variations in rainfall, leading to droughts, floods and crop failures
- Extreme weather events: heatwaves, floods and droughts are increasing in intensity and frequency, leading to an increased number of disasters
- Sea-level rise: as the oceans warm, water expands, leading to rises in the sea level. There is also the threat of polar ice caps melting, leading to an even more dramatic sea-level rise. This threatens low-lying islands and coastal zones
- Other impacts include increased migration to urban areas, conflicts over food and water and increases in diseases like malaria. Climate change will also have a huge impact on plant and animal biodiversity

We need an economy that restores and safeguards God's covenant of peace; a restorative economy rather than destructive economy. In Leviticus we find the biblical concept of Jubilee: a story that provides

us with hope and inspiration for how God's people can live in right relationship with him, each other and with the land:

Firstly, Jubilee speaks of environmental restoration. In practice this would mean us living within environmental limits, ensuring that our economy works with, rather than against, the creation that God has given us. In keeping with Psalm 24, the abundance of the earth belongs to all of us, and ultimately to God. That comes with responsibilities both to steward it carefully, but also to share the proceeds of that natural wealth fairly, just as jubilees reset land ownership on an equal per capita basis.

Secondly, Jubilee speaks of rest for those living in poverty. A restorative economy would ensure that everyone was able to meet their basic needs, providing an enabling environment and basic floor of economic security and protection to each and every one of the world's seven billion people. It would offer a foundation for human flourishing and all people being able to realise their potential.

Finally, Jubilee proclaims the need for fair allocation of wealth. A restorative economy would keep inequality within reasonable limits. This does not just include income inequality, but also unequal benefit from the natural wealth of the land which is our shared inheritance.

Many of the changes needed to respond to our environmental crisis and related humanitarian crises involve sacrifice – but also, paradoxically, offer us the chance to live more fully. They require us to reject conformity with the lifestyle patterns around us and blaze a new trail.

If we do things differently, everyone could have enough to flourish, and we could be a lot less unequal too. The church is called to lead by living simply, thinking differently and speaking out, and when enough ordinary people do that, governments will make the big changes we need them to. If we leave it to the next generation, it'll be too late.

## Read Genesis 1 Together

### The Beginning

- 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
- 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
- 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.
- 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day.
- 6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water."
- 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.
- 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning - the second day.
- 9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.
- 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.
- 11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.
- 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.
- 13 And there was evening, and there was morning - the third day.
- 14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years,

- 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.”  
And it was so.
- 16 God made two great lights - the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.
- 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,  
18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.  
And God saw that it was good.
- 19 And there was evening, and there was morning - the fourth day.
- 20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.”
- 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
- 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”
- 23 And there was evening, and there was morning - the fifth day.
- 24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.
- 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.
- 26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”
- 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
- 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.
- 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground - everything that has the breath of life in it - I give every green plant for food." And it was so.
- 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day.

## Read Genesis 2:1-15 Together

- 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.
- 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.
- 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

### Adam and Eve

- 4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.
- 5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,
- 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.
- 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
- 8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.
- 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- 10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.
- 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.
- 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)
- 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.

- 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.
- 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What is the clearest connection you see between brokenness in the environment and brokenness in humanity?
2. What is your theology of creation care? Do you have one?
3. What are some of the ways you try to care for God's creation in your daily life?
4. Why do you think the church historically has been largely silent on care of creation? Do you think this is changing?
5. What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

## Together

Take a moment and write down three justice issues you are most passionate about. There is no “right” answer here, create a list of what’s on your heart, whether that be refugees, conflict, education, hunger, human trafficking, extreme poverty, climate change. Share your list with each other, and write down the three issues that get mentioned the most. Now, as a group discuss how creation care (or the lack of creation care) impacts those issues. This will help show the relationship between the environment and what we typically think of as humanitarian issues.

Let’s take human trafficking for example:

- Areas impacted by disasters are often the perfect environment for traffickers to thrive
- People displaced because of famine, lack of water, or disaster are vulnerable to being trafficked

Begin learning together how care for creation and care for people are intertwined.

## Solo Work

Examine the actions you take in a week that may impact the environment. Look at your lifestyle and the decisions you make that depend on God's creation: consumption of resources, food, waste etc. Add a "creation care" piece to your action plan. Come up with three things you can begin to change about your regular habits that will have a positive impact on creation.

## Prayer

Lord, forgive me for actions I have taken that harm your creation. Please guide me to be more aware of protecting the world you have made. Help me see how the actions I take affect your creation and my brothers and sisters around the world. Guide my decisions to live in shalom with all of creation.

# Session Ten

## How Then Shall We Live? A Lifestyle of Justice

“Jesus came to bring complete transformation in us – transformation of our lives ... to bring justice into this world.”  
- Kuki Rokhum

“Doing justice is more than just an action a year, it is a lifestyle.”  
- Jason Fileta

## Eleanor<sup>7</sup> by Eugene Cho

This is a story about a lady named Dr. Eleanor Sutherland, a family physician in Federal Way, Washington, USA. She died in 2012, after living a life of simplicity. In doing so, it allowed her the flexibility in her time and finances to be extraordinarily generous. Her closest cohorts in serving others were her sister Kathleen and friend Beatrice.

She could not afford medical school in the US, so Eleanor elected to attend medical school in Germany, as it was more affordable and was more actively enrolling women. A friend of Eleanor's and the trustee of her estate, Paul Birkey, said that Eleanor cared about helping people access health care. Her version of health care reform was simple: she charged a fraction of the going rate, and did not turn anyone away because they couldn't pay.

Paul wrote in an obituary:

*Nothing was wasted—if a patient needed a wheelchair, walker or cane, she would round one up, probably a well-used one. She wheeled pharmaceutical reps for samples she could give away. Perhaps most importantly, each and every patient was listened to carefully and treated in the context of their lives, as a whole person. Her sense of humor was not the ordinary kind; it was an insightful, eloquent, smart-alecky kind—always kind and always present...*

*Eleanor's boundless passion for medicine, as with her boundless passion for everything, was fueled by and undergirded with her passion to serve God and Jesus Christ. In every way, she led life as a mission with Christ's teachings as her template and guide. Her medical practice, her travels abroad, her everyday life and her supreme self-confidence all were guided by her all encompassing faith.*

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7 Excerpts from "Overrated" by Eugene Cho, David C. Cook 2014

Paul says that if you knew Eleanor, you had probably been chided for not being sufficiently thrifty. She saved wrapping paper, sat in the dark to save candles, and wore used clothing. She wanted to put herself last so that she would be able to give as Christ taught us to give: generously and unconditionally.

Eleanor died at home, as she wanted, in early 2012. She was 85, leaving a small fortune to charities as a result of her lifestyle - and a legacy of compassion to her friends and clients.

## Live Justly<sup>8</sup> by Eugene Cho

Everyone loves the idea of justice until there is a cost. Ironically, justice is never convenient, and there is always a cost. This is why we often like “doing justice” or following Jesus up to the point at which it provokes an act of sacrifice forcing us to change the way we live or change the way we think.

God challenges us to live more simply. He challenges us to give up some of the excess in our lives.

The example of Pope Francis has been refreshing. He took a vow of poverty early in his ministry and has never gone back. Since he has been elevated to the papacy, the former Jorge Mario Bergoglio has elected to live in the papal guesthouse, not the four-star accommodations where previous popes lived. He wants people to know that he is with them, not above them. He likes the idea of being in community and close to others, rather than on his own, living in luxury.

As the leader of the Catholic Church, every pope should act like this. His actions are consistent with what we read about in the Bible. It shouldn't be earth-shattering or surprising and yet the new pope's behaviour is entirely counter cultural. His story - early on - washing feet and welcoming dialogue with lay people, shows his heart - and most importantly, reflects the heart of Christ. The pope is living a life of love and justice.

Jesus loves justice. And justice, by its very nature, involves people. I've learned that people often struggle with Jesus' commitment for justice because he rarely, if ever, spelled out the importance of justice in a three point sermon.

Instead, Jesus lived justly.

Justice was in Jesus.

He reflected justice in how he lived, how he loved and how he welcomed the stranger, the marginalized, the leper, the widow, the prosti-

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8 Excerpts from “Overrated” by Eugene Cho, David C. Cook 2014

tute and the sick. Jesus reflected justice in how he approached the powers and systems of his age, how he confronted religious leaders, how he embraced, welcomed and empowered women, and how he confronted ethnic biases and prejudices.

Yes, Jesus loved justice but more so, he lived justly. And here's the kicker: He called us to follow him.

Justice is not just a thing that is good. Justice is not merely doing good. Justice is not something that's moral, or right, or fair. Justice is not, in itself, a set of ethics. Justice is not just an aggregation of the many justice-themed verses throughout the scriptures. Justice is not trendy, glamorous, cool, or sexy. Justice isn't a movement. Justice is so much more and the understanding of this fullness is central to the work that we do in pursuing justice.

God invites and commands his people to not just be aware of injustice but to pursue justice. Not just to pursue justice but to live justly. These two acts are not the same but they are inseparable. To be a follower of Jesus requires us to both pursue justice and live justly at the same time. This is a truth that ought to inform both our theology of justice and our praxis of justice, and we seek to live this way because ultimately, justice reflects the character of God. We do justice because justice is rooted in the character of God and thus must be reflected in the character of his followers.

In seeking to do justice, we have to be open to the reality that God will challenge us, change us and transform us. In doing justice and in doing things that matter to God, we actually grow more in his likeness. We will begin to reflect more of the character of God. We grow more intimate with the heart of God.

We will do things because they embody the Kingdom of God. And it is right in the eyes of God. But in doing these things, there is something equally beautiful, in that we become more in tune with the heart of God.

Oftentimes, we go about our concept of justice or compassion or generosity when it is about us and our power and privilege to do some-

thing for others, without entertaining the possibility that maybe God wants to change us.

We have much to learn from our neighbours that do not look like us, think like us, or act like us. We may even have much to learn from our enemies. There is a level of humility that justice exacts inside us.

The inescapable truth about justice is that there is something wrong in the world that needs to be set right. Sometimes the things that need to be set right are not just in the lives of those we seek to serve. The things that need to be set right may also be in our own lives.

We need to pursue justice not just because the world is broken, but because we're broken, too. Pursuing justice and living a just life every day helps us put our own lives in order. Perhaps this is what God intended - that in doing his work serving others, we discover more of his character, and are changed ourselves.

## Reading

During this session, your final session together, you'll be reading your own words. Continue to the "together" exercise.

## Together

Present your action plans to each other. Offer feedback and come up with ways to hold each other accountable (eg accountability partners, sending text messages or emails at the beginning of each month or setting aside time once a month to check on each other's progress, etc). Finally, spend time in prayer together over your action plans.

Share your creative expressions with one another if you feel so led!

## Solo Work

Edit your plans based upon the feedback you received from your group. If you have access to the internet, you can log on to [LiveJust.ly](http://LiveJust.ly) and load your plan to the site. Here you'll be able to set reminders via email or text, and we'll be able to track the ways Live Justly is impacting readers! Finalize your creative expression and prepare to share it with your small group.

## Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the times I forsake your mission in the world for my own comfort. Guide me as I put this plan of daily justice into action. Help it not to be a checklist I seek to complete each day, but let it come from an attitude of worship. Give me the endurance, desire and will to allow justice to truly encompass my actions. Help me to be a person who lives justly. Help me to be more like Jesus.



The Micah  
Declaration on  
Integral Mission

## The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission

The Micah Network (now Micah Global) is a coalition of evangelical churches and agencies from around the world that are committed to integral mission. In 2001, 140 Christians from 50 countries gathered in Oxford to discuss integral mission and their work in impoverished communities.

Some of the language is dated or not up to our current communication standards, but we left it as is because it is a historical document from a time and place. It is inspiring and inspired!

This declaration has been foundational to all we do at Micah Challenge. Enjoy!

### Integral Mission

Integral mission, or holistic transformation, is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other, rather, in integral mission, our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. Our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

If we ignore the world, we betray the word of God, which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change all belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing, and saying are at the heart of our integral task.

We call one another back to the centrality of Jesus Christ. His life of sacrificial service is the pattern for Christian discipleship. In his life and through his death, Jesus modeled identification with the poor and inclusion of the other. On the cross, God shows us how seriously he takes justice, reconciling both rich and poor to himself as he meets the demands of his justice. We serve by the power of the risen Lord

through the Spirit as we journey with the poor, finding our hope in the subjection of all things under Christ and the final defeat of evil. We confess that all too often we have failed to live a life worthy of this gospel.

The grace of God is the heartbeat of integral mission. As recipients of undeserved love we are to show grace, generosity and inclusiveness. Grace redefines justice as, not merely honouring a contract, but helping the disadvantaged.

## **Integral Mission with the Poor and Marginalized**

The poor, like everyone else, bear the image of the Creator. They have knowledge, abilities and resources. Treating the poor with respect means enabling the poor to be the architects of change in their communities, rather than imposing solutions upon them. Working with the poor involves building relationships that lead to mutual change.

We welcome welfare activities as important in serving with the poor. Welfare activities, however, must be extended to include movement toward value transformation, the empowerment of communities, and cooperation in wider issues of justice. Because of its presence among the poor, the Church is in a unique position to restore their God-given dignity by enabling them to produce their own resources and to create solidarity networks.

We object to any use of the word “development” that implies some countries are civilised and developed, while others are uncivilised and under-developed. This imposes a narrow and linear economic model of development, and fails to recognise the need for transformation in so-called “developed” countries. While we recognise the value of planning, organisation, evaluation and other such tools, we believe they must be subservient to the process of building relationships, changing values, and empowering the poor.

Work with the poor involves setbacks, opposition, and suffering. But we have also been inspired and encouraged by stories of change. In the midst of hopelessness we have hope.

## **Integral Mission and the Church**

God by his grace has given local churches the task of integral mission. The future of integral mission is in planting and enabling local churches to transform the communities of which they are part. Churches, as caring and inclusive communities, are at the heart of what it means to do integral mission. People are often attracted to the Christian community before they are attracted to the Christian message.

Our experience of walking with poor communities challenges our concept of what it means to be a church. The Church is not merely an institution or organization, but a community of Jesus that embodies the values of the Kingdom. The involvement of the poor in the life of the church is forcing us to find new ways of being church within the context of our cultures instead of being mere reflections of the values of one dominant culture or sub-culture. Our message has credibility to the extent that we adopt an incarnational approach. We confess that too often the church has pursued wealth, success, status, and influence. But the kingdom of God has been given to the community that Jesus Christ called his little flock.

We do not want our church traditions to hinder working together for the sake of the Kingdom. We need one another. The church can best address poverty by working with the poor and other stakeholders like civil society, government, and the private sector. In these relationships, mutual respect, and a recognition of the distinctive role of each partner must be observed.

We offer the Micah Network as one opportunity for collaboration for the sake of the poor and the Gospel.

## **Integral Mission and Advocacy**

We confess that, in a world of conflict and ethnic tension, we have often failed to build bridges. We are called to work for reconciliation between ethnically divided communities, between rich and poor, and between the oppressors and the oppressed.

We acknowledge the command to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute in a world that has given “money rights” greater priority than human rights. We recognise the need for advocacy both to address structural injustice and to rescue needy neighbours.

Globalisation is often, in reality, the dominance of cultures that have the power to project their goods, technologies, and images far beyond their borders. In the face of this, the Church in its rich diversity has a unique role as a truly global community. We exhort Christians to network and cooperate to face together the challenges of globalisation. The Church needs a unified global voice to respond to the damage caused by it to both human beings and the environment. Our hope for the Micah Network is that it will foster a movement of resistance to a global system of exploitation.

We affirm that the struggle against injustice is spiritual. We commit ourselves to prayer, advocating on behalf of the poor, not only before the rulers of this world, but also before the Judge of all nations.

## **Integral Mission and Lifestyle**

Integral mission is the concern of every Christian. We want to see the poor through the eyes of Jesus, who, as he looked on the crowds, had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

There is a need for integral discipleship involving the responsible and sustainable use of the resources of God’s creation, and the transformation of the moral, intellectual, economic, cultural and political dimensions of our lives. For many of us, this includes reviving a biblical sense of stewardship. The concept of Sabbath reminds us that there should be limits to our consumption.

Wealthy Christians, both in the West and in the Two-Thirds World, must use their wealth in the service of others. We are committed to the liberation of the rich from slavery to money and power. The hope of treasure in heaven releases us from the tyranny of mammon.

Our prayer is that, in our day and in our different contexts, we may be able to do what the Lord requires of us: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

27 September 2001

END

[www.livejust.ly](http://www.livejust.ly)