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THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

CRU/JUSTICE STUDY 1



LEADERS GUIDE

WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?

Though God created man to exercise dominion over the earth and reflect his divine justice, man sinned. Since then, the world has been rampant with injustice and oppression. Amidst the injustice, God tells us that he will remove those who oppress so that they may “terrify no more.”

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Though Christians believe that God is opposed to injustice, we often feel paralyzed because oppressors menace the weak with impunity. We doubt God's faithfulness, and we are unsure of what the biblical response to these issues is.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

God hates injustice. Just as He calls on the Church to execute his plan of salvation, God also calls on the Church to address injustice.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Gen 1:26-28: Men and women were made in God's

image to reflect His glory on the Earth. God gave them dominion over the Earth to subdue and rule the creatures within it. As God's dominion is righteous and just, so should man's exercise of power be righteous and just. However, when man disobeyed God, sin entered the world and affected every aspect of human existence. This brokenness is particularly salient in the corrupted way in which men use their power in dominion over others.

Exodus 1:8-15: This passage illustrates a classic example of God-given dominion gone awry. Although Joseph had a close relationship with the Pharaoh of Egypt, when he died, the new Pharaoh viewed the Jews differently. Pharaoh abused his power and enslaved the Israelites for 400 years.

Psalms 10:1-11: The psalmist asks God why He is so far when there is so much oppression in the world. The wicked, the psalmist says, are defiant because they believe that God will not act. He likens the wicked to a lion that awaits the helpless and ambushes them like prey. The helpless are overcome by the might of the wicked.

Psalms 10:12-18: The psalmist entreats God to act and not forget the afflicted. He asks God to hold the wicked accountable for their actions. This section teaches us important truths about God's disposition towards injustice: God sees, God hears, and God acts on behalf of the oppressed. God will incline his ear so that oppressors may “terrify no more.”

Isaiah 1:17: One day God will restore ultimate justice, but until then, God commands his people to pursue justice here on Earth.

BIBLE STUDY



LAUNCH QUESTIONS:

If doing this study with students who haven't thought much about social justice:

- Show the 2 minute "End It" movie (<http://www.enditmovement.com/>)
- What did you think of the movie?
- Why do think slavery still exists?

If doing this study with students already motivated to work for justice, ask:

- What is it about injustice that bothers you most?
- Are there times you feel discouraged in the fight for justice? Why?

EXPLORE QUESTIONS

Read *Genesis 1:26-28*

1. What responsibility does God give man at the beginning of creation?
2. How should this responsibility be carried out?
3. How does God exercise his power? Since man is made in God's image, what should it look like for man to exercise power and dominion in godly way?

Teaching Point: humanity was given the mandate by God to rule over the Earth. Just as God's rule is just, so should man's rule be just. Unfortunately, everything has broken since the fall. This brokenness is particularly salient in the way in which men use abuse their power; the Bible calls this act injustice.

Read *Exodus 1:8-15*.

4. How do we see the abuse of power in this passage?
5. What should godly dominion (the just use of power) have looked like in this passage?
6. What was God's response to the misery of His people in Exodus 2:7-10?

Read *Psalms 10*.

7. How is this passage similar to Exodus 1:8-15?
8. Have you ever felt like the psalmist? When?
9. What are the ways this Psalm describes our world today?
10. What does this passage teach about God's disposition towards the oppressed?

APPLY QUESTIONS

11. What do these passages teach about how God feels towards injustice?
12. What injustices are you passionate about? Why?
13. When you look at the world, is it hard for you to

believe that God hates injustice?

14. Read Isaiah 1:16-17, and think about the story of the Exodus. How does God bring about rescue for oppressed?

Teaching Point: Injustice is real, and God hates it. God hears the cries of the oppressed and He strengthens them. Moreover, God uses His people – from Moses to us – to bring about rescue. Amidst the injustice, Psalm 10:17-18 presents a message of hope: one day God will remove oppressors so that they may "terrify no more."

GOING DEEPER

Watch a Video

Consider watching a video on injustice at the beginning of Bible study. Go to www.ijm.org to pick one that interests you.

Cross Referencing: 2 Samuel 11:1-12:13

Look at the passage above for another biblical example of injustice.

- What are some of the similarities between how Pharaoh and David abuse their power (in Exodus and 2 Samuel, respectively)?
- How does God deal with these offenses? How does this shed light on God's view of injustice and oppression?

Cross Referencing: Romans 5:12-13, 3:9-18

Read these verses to better understand how the sin of Adam affected all of creation.

- What was the result of sin coming into the world?
- What type of picture does this passage paint of mankind in its broken state? How does this contribute to a biblical understanding of injustice?

Listen To A Sermon

Pick one from Tim Keller's Series on Mercy and Justice (Redeemer Presbyterian Church): <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/sermonlist/267>

Read a Book

"Good News About Injustice" by Gary Haugen
 "Generous Justice" by Tim Keller
 "When Helping Hurts" by Corbett & Fikkert

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THE HEART OF JUSTICE

CRU/JUSTICE STUDY 2



and seeking justice and love. Here, we focus on what it means to do justice.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PASSAGE?

Context: Micah, Amos, and Isaiah were prophets of God during tumultuous times in the history of Israel. They had major political troubles largely due to Israel drifting from God's will. God sends prophets to awaken Israel to its sins.

Amos 5:18-24: God makes it exceedingly clear: He is tired of the people's religious ceremonies – their offerings and even their worship songs – because they have neglected justice and righteousness.

Micah 6:6-8: Again, God explains that he does not desire religious ceremonialism from his people. Instead, He desires three simple things: for his people to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

Isaiah 58:1-7: The people complain that despite their fasting, God does not answer. God replies to their indictment by exposing their vanity of their fasts. They demonstrate an outward display of humility, bowing their hands, and spreading sackcloth and ashes. Yet, on the days that they fast, they oppress their workers, quarrel, and fight. God then describes what a real fast should produce: the removal of oppression and the sharing of one's possessions with the needy.

God's call to the people is comprehensive. The passage paints the picture of a total eradication of oppression. He uses the metaphor of an ox bound in yoke and driven into the ground to do labor. The actor here first loosens its bonds, undoes the yoke strap, and lets the animal go free. But, God says to go one step further

LEADERS GUIDE

WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?

God steps into a broken world of injustice by telling his redeemed people how to do justice. As Christians do justice, we foreshadow the return of godly justice that is to come.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

As Christians, we often get so caught up in the practice of obeying God's commandments that we forget why they exist. We create our own rules and standards by which we judge others and their faithfulness to the Gospel. We may pray, go to Bible study, attend the weekly meeting, and even go on trips with Campus Crusade, but all the while our hearts are judgmental and bitter.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

God's principal charge against the people of Israel is that though they have maintained religious practices, they have forsaken the truth of God's ways. God calls us to keep his commands but not neglect the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. A right relationship with God means keeping his commands



and destroy the yoke. This is a powerful metaphor for what God says a proper fast should inspire: loosening the bonds of oppression, undoing its yoke straps, freeing the oppressed, and eradicating the sources of oppression.

Isaiah 58:8-12: God says that only when the people of Israel pour themselves out for the hungry and the afflicted will He answer their prayers. God promises to guide them and make them strong, but he reiterates that they must first remove the yoke, stop pointing the finger, and stop speaking wickedness. Then, they will be preceded with righteousness and their “light shall break forth like the dawn.”

BIBLE STUDY

LAUNCH QUESTIONS

1. Go to Youtube and listen to “Instead Of A Show” by Jon Foreman and discuss your reactions.
2. Have you ever passed by people in need (homeless, poor, etc.) while you were on your way to do something “spiritual” (e.g. sharing the Gospel, going to CRU)? Why do we do that?

EXPLORE QUESTIONS

Background: These passages occur during tumultuous times in Israel’s political history, and these political troubles are largely due to Israel drifting from God’s will. God sends prophets to awaken Israel to its sins.

Read Amos 5:21-24.

3. How might you update these verses to contemporary language? What are today’s “burnt offerings”, “feasts”, “solemn assemblies”, and “songs and melody of your harps”?
4. Why would God say these things to the people of Israel?
5. Are we guilty of the same acts?

Read Micah 6:6-8

6. How is this passage similar to Amos 5:21-24?
7. Why is God trying so hard to drive this point home?
8. According to the passage, what does the Lord require of us?

Read Isaiah 58:1-12

9. What is going on in this section? Why do the people complain to God?
10. What is the contradiction between the people’s piety and their actions?

11. According to God, what is a godly fast?

12. In Isaiah 58:6, what does it mean to break a yoke?

APPLY QUESTIONS

13. Why is justice to the oppressed and compassion to the afflicted such a dominant theme in the Bible? Why would this issue be so near to God’s heart?

14. God says that the Jews are sincerely seeking God; yet they are clearly getting it wrong. When do you fall into that trap?

15. What does it look like to pour ourselves out for the oppressed? How can we do this as students?

Teaching Point: The OT prophecies are replete with calls for the people of God to do justice. God’s call is quite comprehensive. The passage paints the picture of a total eradication of oppression. The metaphor is that of an ox bound in yoke and driven into the ground to do labor. The actor here first loosens its bonds, undoes the yoke strap, and lets the animal go free. But, God says to go one step further: destroying the yoke. This is a powerful metaphor for what a proper fast should inspire: loosening the bonds of oppression, undoing its yoke straps, freeing the oppressed, and eradicating the sources of oppression.

Close with Isaiah 60:15-22.

Teaching Point: The world is fallen and full of injustice, yet in a broken world God calls his people to do justice. In this passage, He also hints that He will restore justice and godly dominion as it was intended to be. Overseers will be called peace, taskmasters righteous, and there will be no more violence.



JUSTICE AND THE GOSPEL

CRU/JUSTICE STUDY 3



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WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?

God brings an end to injustice by breaking into history in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus announces the arrival and coming of the dominion – the Kingdom – of God. While on Earth, Jesus brought rescue to the physically and spiritually oppressed. He also prepared the way for his final coming, which will bring all that is awry into order. Redeemed by Christ, it is the responsibility of the Church to seek justice until he returns.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Although we are often moved by images or stories about injustice, we lose the motivation to do justice, or we serve the oppressed for selfish reasons.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Freeing captives is at the very heart of our faith. Jesus humbly suffered oppression in order to free those bound in captivity, and he suffered injustice so that we might receive mercy. The only thing that can sustain our motivation to do justice humbly and selflessly is seeing the mercy we received in Christ with greater

and greater clarity. The more our hearts grasp Christ's selflessness and humility, the more we will humble ourselves to serve the oppressed.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PASSAGE?

Luke 4:16-21: Near the outset of Jesus' ministry, Jesus proclaims his purpose: to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the oppressed, and recovery of sight to the blind. This passage becomes the backdrop for Jesus' entire ministry, and Jesus fulfills this passage both physically and spiritually. As followers of Christ, we have the same calling: to proclaim the Gospel – in word and in deed – to the world.

Isaiah 53:4-9: This passage is an Old Testament prophecy that was spoken by Isaiah and fulfilled by Jesus. Jesus bore our sins and our guilt. Though he led a sinless life, men believed that he was cursed by God. He was beaten, wounded, and crucified for the sake of those who rejected him. In place of the love and acceptance that his perfect life merited, Jesus received punishment and wrath from God the Father. Though every human being has rejected God, but God the Father placed our sins upon Jesus. This is what made a right relationship with God available to sinful men.

Jesus was unjustly oppressed by men, illegally tried in court, falsely accused, but all the while he maintained the utmost humility. Though he had not committed a single sin in his entire life, he was condemned and crucified.

Isaiah 53:10-12: The entire crucifixion was the will of the God. Jesus obeyed God unto death and became sin so that sinful men might be counted righteous. It is only because of Christ's obedience to suffer injustice that we have an advocate before God and the



forgiveness purchased by his blood.

Luke 18:1-8: Jesus teaches his disciples to pray always and never lose heart. The parable revolves around the issue of justice, and the persistent widow serves as a model for both our prayer lives and our attempts to “seek justice.” Our attitude in seeking justice should be to approach God humbly, day and night, and to use the resources he makes available to us to “to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the oppressed.” God promises that he will bring justice to his children; therefore, we can pray with great faith and great hope.

Revelation 21:1-4: The ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to bring justice to his children is in his second coming. As Christians, we keep our eyes fixed on this day and allow the Cross to bear on our lives in the present. Swept away by Christ’s suffering for our sake and looking forward to his righteous return, we do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

BIBLE STUDY

LAUNCH QUESTIONS

- Do you ever have selfish reasons for serving the poor/oppressed?
- Have you ever lost steam in your efforts to seek justice?
- How can we as Christians sustain our motivation to tackle injustice?

EXPLORE AND APPLY

Read Luke 4:16-21

1. According to Jesus, what did the Spirit anoint Jesus to do?
2. Why would Jesus proclaim this passage at the beginning of his ministry and in his hometown?
3. How do the themes of oppression and justice appear in this passage?

Read Isaiah 53:4-12

4. How does this passage fulfill Jesus’ declaration in Luke 4:16-21?
5. Where does the theme of injustice surface in this passage?
6. How did Jesus suffer injustice? Why?
7. How is oppression and injustice central to the Gospel? What did the injustice that Jesus suffer produce?
8. Have you ever thought of the Gospel in terms of justice and injustice? How does seeing Jesus as the

victim of injustice for your sake impact your heart?

Teaching Point: Freeing captives is at the very heart of our faith. Jesus humbly suffered oppression in order to free those bound in captivity, and he suffered injustice so that we might receive mercy. The only thing that can sustain our motivation to do justice humbly and selflessly is seeing the mercy we received in Christ with greater and greater clarity. The more our hearts grasp Christ’s selflessness and humility, the more we will humble ourselves to serve the oppressed.

Read Luke 18:1-8

9. How does this passage give us hope for facing injustice today?
10. What was the reason that Jesus taught this parable?
11. How does the passage address the issue of losing heart when dealing with injustice?
12. How much you have incorporated prayer into your attempts to address injustice?

Teaching Point: The cross was God’s solution to injustice. In Christ we are new creations, and we are to live in a way that reflects God’s glory – that includes seeking justice. Scripture teaches that God will bless our attempts to seek justice. Ultimately, when Christ returns, God will eliminate all injustice in the world. As Christians, we hope in this return.

Close with Revelation 21:1-4.

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Sing A Hymn:

“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” reminds us that rescue is at the heart of the Gospel. Notice how the hymn writer phrases this idea of rescue: Jesus rescues us from danger, and his goodness becomes a chain binding our hearts to him. Pay attention to the bolded lyrics below and consider singing this song at the end of your Bible study as a reminder that we can only rescue the oppressed because Jesus first rescued us.

1. Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

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2. Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
**Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.**
3. O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
**Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.**
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

Listen To A Sermon

Tim Keller examines Isaiah 58, examining the concept of godly justice and its intersection with the Cross.

<http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/justice>