

Justice

A Sacred Summer

STORY

Did you know that there are between 130-143 verses in the Bible about justice? I remember the first time I heard anyone talk about justice and the Bible. A youth pastor at a large church in England held up a Bible. He had gone through and cut out any verse that had nothing to do with justice. The Bible was still almost whole!

Sadly, I wasn't a youth in this youth group. I was an adult visiting. In all my youth group years, not one of my leaders talked about how much God is a God of Justice. No one really spoke to me about how the Gospel is Good News, for the least, the lost and the lonely.

I remember the first time I taught through a gospel verse by verse and noticed all the things that Jesus actually did in his life and ministry. I remember thinking, "Am I really a Christian? Because I haven't really done the things Jesus does. I haven't been concerned about the poor, the widows, or the orphans in my town. I don't even know where the prison is in my city."

Jesus was about all the people on the margins who didn't have a voice in society. Thanks to 24-hour news and social media, we can be aware of justice issues anytime. But what do we do with that knowledge? How do matters of justice impact how I live my life for Jesus? How can we open the gift of justice this summer and learn about justice issues and act as followers of Jesus?

*Written by Lilly Lewin.

PRACTICES

Each day of the week, take time to do the 5 or the 15-minute practice.

Plan a time to do the Going Deeper practice sometime during the week.

- **5-minute Practice:** Look up where the closest jail and/or prison is in your community. Start praying for the people in prison to have hope. Pray for love and peace to fill their lives. Pray for justice, compassion and kindness to fill those buildings. Pray for chaplains who serve there. Pray for Christian leaders among the prisoners: that they may bring Christ's hope to their fellow inmates. Pray for those in prison every day this week.
- **15-minute Practice:** Take 15-minutes and look up social enterprises in your community. Choose three ways you can support them. Pray for them each day. If possible, go visit them and learn about what they do. Purchase their products or give to their organization. Examples: Thistle Farms: <https://thistlefarms.org/>, Cookie Cart: <https://cookiecart.org>, Homeboy Industries: <https://homeboyindustries.org>, or The Firehouse Community Arts Center: <https://thefcac.org/about/>
- **Going Deeper: Pray Around Your City:** Make a prayer pilgrimage around your city. Pray for places that need to experience the love, peace, and healing of Jesus. Places in need of justice. You can do this by looking at a city map. You can do a Prayer Pilgrimage by driving, walking or biking around your city, or by taking public transportation. Periodically, stop and take time to notice places where injustices are happening. Politely ask questions of those who work at the local shops, or are waiting for the bus, or tending their yards (understand that not everyone will be receptive to being asked questions). Pause and silently pray for that neighborhood. You are on a mission to learn about issues of injustice in your area, so see where God shows up for you on your pilgrimage.

SCRIPTURE

Micah 6:8, Isaiah 1:16-18, Amos 5:21-24, I John 3:17-18, Matthew 25:35-40

QUESTIONS for Journaling and Discussion

- When you hear the word JUSTICE, what comes to mind? What do you think about when you hear the phrase injustice? Is it positive or negative?
- What are the issues that make you want to step in and make things right? What things make you want to stand up for someone else?
- What does it mean to you to Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly in your everyday life?
- Think about your town, your city. What are the problem areas, the issues of injustice that come to mind? If you don't know, take time to search them out through your local news and newspaper, online, etc.
- How have you been a part of injustice in your area?
- Where are places or the people in need of justice in the area where you live? For example: poverty, homelessness, and affordable housing, immigration and refugees, racism and discrimination, human trafficking, violence against others, hunger and food insecurity.
- What are the issues that make you want to step in and make things right? In your journal, write those issues down, or draw something that symbolizes them. Then brainstorm ideas of what you can do. Ask Jesus to show you how he wants you to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly in these areas of injustice. Start with the easiest and then work towards something that will stretch you.

EXPERIENCES

Choose one or several to try.

- **Learn the History of Your Town/City:** Learn about the history of racism in your town/city. Were there certain laws about who could own property? What is the economic injustice in your area? If you live in the country, what are some examples of injustice in rural communities? How can you make a difference?
- **Research:** Find out about the problems of injustice in your area. Think about your town, your city. What are the issues of injustice that come to mind? If you don't know, take time to search them out through your local news and newspaper, online, etc. Choose 2-3 areas of injustice to pray for each day this week. Pray for wisdom for leaders in your town. Pray for ways you can help people who are suffering. Ask Jesus to give you eyes to see and ears to hear the cries of those on the margins in our world.
- **Build Relationships:** Make a friend with someone experiencing housing insecurity. You might see the same person on a corner asking for money or selling papers regularly. Do you know their name? Do you know their story? Take time to stop and ask. You can take them lunch, water, and coffee. Bring them a gift card to a local restaurant and/or grocery store. For those who spend much of their day on their feet, clean socks or sturdy shoes can be a real gift.
- **Ask Questions:** What are the injustices you know about in your town/city? Research areas of injustice online using your local newspaper app or Twitter. Search for prisons, schools, courts, crime, education, voting, homelessness. Interview a local leader working on an area of injustice in your community. Ask what kind of help they need.
- **For Families and Small Groups:**
 - Watch a Movie Together: Pick a movie to watch together on an issue of injustice. Take time to discuss what you observed, what you felt, what you might do in response. Some examples: "42," "Harriet," "Selma," or "John Lewis: Good Trouble". If you have older teens, "The Hate You Give" might be a good choice. *Note: You'll need to judge if these movies are appropriate for your context.*
 - Start an Intergenerational Book Club: Gather a group of youth, young adults, parents, and other adults and read something together. Suggestions include: **Tattoos on the Heart** by Father Greg Boyle, **Born a Crime** by Trevor Noah (young reader's edition available), **Locked Up for Freedom: Civil Rights Protesters at the Leesburg Stockade** by Heather Schwartz, **I'm Still Here** by Austin Channing Brown or **Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God** by Katilin B. Curtice. *Note: some of these books have language that may be offensive to certain readers. Use your judgement based on your context.*
 - Books about immigration for kids: <https://www.readbrightly.com/books-about-immigration-for-kids/>
 - The Justice Journey for Kids is a free curriculum produced by the Evangelical Covenant Church. It is designed for 7-11 year olds and has 24 sessions to choose from: <https://covchurch.org/justicejourney/>

- **Listen:**
 - The group, Porter's Gate, has an entire album called "Justice Songs." Listen to "Drive out the Darkness."
 - Listen to "Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly" by Pat Barrett
 - How does Jesus speak to you through these songs?

- **Read:** *Bread for the Resistance: 40 Devotions for Justice People* by Donna Barber

PRAYER:

Lord, let your justice roll down like mighty water
Give me your eyes to see the needs of those around me.
Give me your heart for those who suffer.
Help me daily to do justice
Not just think and pray about it.
In Jesus name. Amen