Part Three: How do we seek Justice?

Read Isaiah 58:5-7, James 1:27, and Micah 6:8.

What do these verses teach us about ‘justice’?

What does it mean to ‘seek justice’ for somebody?

The word ‘justice’ often brings up the image of a court room in our minds. In the courts, we like to think that a person is judged fairly regardless of who they are and, if found guilty, are punished for their wrongdoing. This is sometimes called ‘rectifying justice’ – an action that is taken in response to a wrong that has been committed.

A common interpretation of justice is giving people their ‘rights’ or what is ‘fair’. We may sometimes talk about ‘social justice’ – taking up the cause of someone or a group of people who are being treated unfairly, and trying to ensure that they receive what they are due.

In the Bible, the concept of justice is often used in the context of looking after those people that are vulnerable – orphans, widows, immigrants, and the poor. Indeed, Scripture makes it clear that concern for these groups of people is very much part of God’s character. Psalm 146:7-9 reads: “He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien, and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked”.

Injustice is the reverse of justice. People that do not have the resources to defend themselves are more likely to suffer injustices. Yet God commands us to “speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Proverbs 31:8). If God’s character reflects such a concern for justice, what should God’s people be like? When we understand the depth of the grace God has shown to us, does that not compel us to show justice to others?

Seeking justice is about taking a stand. Isaiah 1:17 says: “Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow”. Seek. Encourage. Defend. Plead. These are strong commands that call us to speak out and take firm action!

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 says that obedience to God’s commands gets noticed by the world around us. It also honours God. Conversely, any indifference on our part to matters of justice or injustice both dishonours and offends God. As Proverbs 14:31 says: “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God”.

Justice is about right relationships. If each person was in a right relationship with everyone else, there would be no injustice! And man’s fundamental relationship is the one we have with God. A healthy, right relationship with God will result in a ‘righteous’ life that impacts our relationship with those around us. It will cause us to seek the best for others and walk with them. This is not just
giving ‘handouts’ to others while keeping them at arm’s length! True justice is different from what is commonly referred to as ‘charity’. To us, as Christians, justice is not an option – it should be a part of our daily walk with God!

Discuss

Consider the various New Testament instances of people that Jesus readily identified with. How did Jesus show justice to others?

What groups of people are there in your community that cannot or do not speak up for themselves? How could you respond?

How might you unwittingly oppress the poor and so fail to ‘do justice’?

Are there groups of people that you think have (or should have) no or limited ‘rights’? Why do you think that? What would God’s view be?

Identify areas of your life where you are indifferent to matters of justice. What measures are you prepared to take to obey God’s call to act justly?

Justice is caring for the Vulnerable

Mary - Zambia

Mary was orphaned at the age of just 11 months, her parents both victims of AIDS. Left with only an ageing and infirm grandmother to care for her, Mary quickly became sick herself. At the age of 14 months she was discovered by Kids Alive Zambia staff. At that time she weighed just 4kg and was severely malnourished. Doctors told us that there was little chance that she would survive.

However, thanks to the dedication and love of Kids Alive Zambia’s staff, Mary did survive. Her frail body gradually became stronger. Her eyes, dull when she first came to us, became alive and filled with joy. The day she took her very first steps was a very precious one! Hearing her first words brought tears to the eyes of her House Parents. Mary is now a healthy five year old. She is lively, is doing well in school, and has friends to play with. She loves listening to Bible stories and having the opportunity to pray. What an amazing change we have seen in her life!
**Maria - Guatemala**
Maria’s mother forced her to sell candy on the streets from the time she could carry a cardboard box of gum. At the age of 11 years, while on the streets, she was raped. Soon afterwards the police picked her up and she was sent to the Oasis, Kids Alive Guatemala’s Home for abused and abandoned girls. There, for the first time, Maria received love and the healing process began. As well as being cared for she was supported by Kids Alive staff who worked through the Guatemalan legal system to ensure that the man who assaulted her paid for his crime. Today, the man who attacked Maria is in jail. And Maria is a healthy teenage girl who plays in the Oasis worship band and who plans to attend university to become an accountant.

**Jane - Kenya**
Jane’s husband walked out on his family five years ago. She lives with her mentally ill brother and seven children in a small collection of dilapidated shacks in the countryside. Four of the children are her own and two nephews and a niece live with them following the death of her remaining brother and his wife from AIDS. Every day has been a desperate struggle to survive.

But there is hope. Jane is now part of Kids Alive’s ‘Families Together’ programme. One of her children goes to a Kids Alive school and the others are able to attend government schools now that Kids Alive helps the family with school fees. Four bunk beds have been donated; this is the first time the children have had a bed to sleep in. A goat that will yield milk – and kids – has also been provided. The milk can be sold to generate a modest income for the family. In helping Jane open a bank savings account, develop an income, and plan for her children’s future educational needs, Kids Alive is helping to provide security, dignity and hope. Christ’s love in action.

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**Pray**

**Ask God to help you understand more of His character** – and His heart for justice for the poor, the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. Pray that His character would be reflected more in your life.

**Pray for people in your community that cannot or do not speak up for themselves.** Ask God to show you how you can respond. How can you encourage them, defend their rights, and plead on their behalf?

**Pray for Hope for Kids International, and for other organisations that seek justice for people like Jane and Mary.** Pray for godly leadership, capable staff, the necessary resources – and for transformation to be seen in the lives of individuals and communities. Ask God how He wants you to respond.