

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Justice Devotional



IJM

Introduction

This 5-day devotional is designed to guide you as you dive a little deeper into what it may look like for you to follow God into his work of justice. You can use it alone or with a small group. You can do all five sessions consecutively, or take your time.

However you choose to use this tool, we pray that it is encouraging for you as you listen for the voice of a just God in an unjust world.

SESSION 1: Love God, love people

In Matthew 22:34–40, Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment? Never one to answer a question exactly as it is asked, Jesus responds with a two-part answer, which can be summed up in four simple words:

Love God, love people

It's important we don't neglect or forget either part of this command.

John had a typically blunt assessment in his first letter.

DISCUSS: Read 1 John 4:20. What does it say about the people who say they love God, but don't love each other? What does loving people, such as people suffering injustice, look like?

ACTIVITY: Read the following verses and discuss the action words that appear in each of them: Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 58:6–7; Jeremiah 21:12; Jeremiah 22:3; Amos 5:15; Matthew 25:35–36; James 1:27.

What does *loving people* look like for God? How could this apply to how we use our time, money and talents?

Injustice is when a person or group with more power uses that power to harm those with less power (Eccl 4:1). How can we love people suffering injustice? The first thing we can do is to *notice* them.

RESPOND: List as many people (groups or individuals) as you can think of who suffer injustice on a regular basis.

In our community:

In the world:

You now have a list of actions and a list of people. Begin asking God how *you* can use those actions to help those people, then be willing to *act* when and where he shows you.

How do we make a dent in injustice? Four simple words.

Love God, love people.

PRAY:

- Ask God to show you specific acts of love he may be calling you to.
- Pray for those suffering from injustice in your world and community – even in your church and neighbourhood.

SESSION 2: Let us touch

“Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work”.

- *Mother Teresa*

All throughout the Bible we see Jesus reaching out to serve and to fight for the needy, the afflicted, the outcast and oppressed. In John 5:1–9, Jesus purposely seeks out the ‘invalids’ at the Pool of Bethesda, where he restores a man’s ability to walk. In Matthew 25:34–36, we see Jesus bless those who gave food, drink, clothes, shelter, and compassion to the least of his people.

DISCUSS: Read Luke 5:12–16. What does Jesus do? Why do you think he acted this way toward someone who was socially despised and rejected?

It is evident through these examples and many others throughout Scripture that a large part of Jesus’ ministry on earth was directly serving those in need. Jesus’ mission is filled with action. He took upon himself the burdens, shame, disease and poverty of those around him. Jesus came to serve (Mark 10:45), he came to set loose the chains of the captive and he came to lift the hearts of the downtrodden. In short, he came not for himself, but to serve the world around him.

RESPOND: Read John 13:34–35. Based on these verses and the Scripture we just read, what should our lives look like? How have these verses challenged you to think and behave differently?

PRAY:

- Ask God to grant you a love of serving others.
- Pray for wisdom to hear from God as he leads you to the local and global neighbours he’s calling you to love.

SESSION 3: What this has to do with worship

Over the past two sessions, we considered some ways we can follow Christ's example of action to serve victims of injustice. Now it's time to consider a little more deeply what God's call to justice has to do with our worship of him.

DISCUSS:

- Who is called to do justice? Read Psalm 82:1-4, Micah 6:8, Proverbs 21:3 and Isaiah 58. Who is being asked to take action?
- Read Romans 12:1-2. What is worship according to the Bible? How might this definition impact how we think and act toward issues of injustice?

God identifies with, suffers with and cares for the afflicted. God gives us the opportunity to unselfishly and freely give to others: an echo of his great love for us.

RESPOND: Read James 1:27. God is just and he pursues justice for the vulnerable. How? By calling his followers to seek justice as an act of worship to him. With this in mind, consider how following God's call to justice might look for you individually or as a group.

PRAY:

- Ask God to open your heart to issues of injustice in your world.
- Pray that your worship of God will be pure and acceptable before him.

SESSION 4: Walking humbly

“And this is what he requires of you: to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.

- Micah 6:8

We have started to examine what it might look like to ‘act justly’. Now we want to look at what it means to ‘walk humbly’.

DISCUSS: What do you think walking humbly means?

In 2 Samuel, King David found himself caught deep in sin. After committing adultery with Bathsheba, King David had her husband, Uriah, killed. Only after the prophet Nathan confronted David did he turn to repentance.

RESPOND: Read Psalm 51: this is David’s psalm of repentance. Our sins might not look the same as David’s, but his reaction before God is an example to us of how we should respond when we see our own sin. Spend some time with God, praying the words of Psalm 51 or your own prayer of repentance, such as ways you may have neglected to seek justice.

King David not only repented, he praised God; he was a dancing-in-the-streets, shouting-for-joy, crying-in-ecstasy, leaping-in-laughter kind of worshipper. Your response might not look exactly like David’s, but God does want your full and undivided admiration and adoration.

God calls us to seek justice because he is just. He calls us to meet the needs of others because he is generous. Everything in us that wants to pursue justice is responding to the reality of these awesome attributes of our God! He deserves all the honour, glory, awe, admiration, praise and admiration.

PRAY:

- Ask God to make you ‘conscience-stricken’ like his servant David over issues of injustice he is calling you to respond to.
- Ask God to equip you as a humble intercessor for victims of injustice.
- Pray that God will grant you the joy in his spirit that he gave to David through worship.

SESSION 5: The battlefield of hope

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called - his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe Him.

- Ephesians 1:18-19

In *Good News About Injustice*, IJM president Gary Haugen writes:

“In the end, the battle for justice stands or falls on the battlefield of hope. No one knows this better than the oppressors. They know that they never have enough power, lies or loyalty to withstand even a fraction of the onslaught of power, truth and courage that humanity could at any minute amass against them. Therefore, they rely on, utterly depend on, the inaction of despair”

As those called to respond to injustice, where should our hope come from?

DISCUSS: Read Ephesians 6:10-12. Do these verses make you feel more or less hopeful about the battle against injustice? Why?

Read Ephesians 1:19-21. The one who is “far above any ruler or authority” (verse 21) is against injustice. To those who believe, he has given the incredible greatness of God’s power, the same power that raised Christ from death (verses 19–20)!

The church, Christ’s body, has the ability to address the physical and spiritual realities of the fight against injustice.

RESPOND: Share any new perspective you might have on injustice after reading these verses from Ephesians. Did your view of how we should fight injustice change? If so, how? Do you have hope? Why?

PRAY:

- Pray for your church and how it might respond to issues of injustice.
- Ask God for true hope that comes from the one who is “far above any ruler or authority”.



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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organisation that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors and strengthen justice systems.

Inspired by God's call to love all people and to seek justice for the oppressed, IJM protects the poor from violence, without regard to race, religion or any other factor, and seeks to work alongside all people of good will.

We are grateful to our friends at 121 Community Church in Texas for sharing the study format on which this guide is based.

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