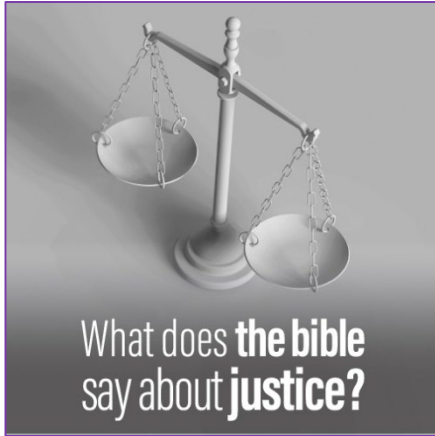


# Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.

February 22–March 26, 2023

## What Does the Bible Say About Justice?



Justice is a core characteristic of God's heart and central to our call to be God's holy people. Justice is integral to discipleship and Jesus calls us to seek justice proactively as God's people. Yet, within our world today, thousands of people live entrapped in a world of injustice. How will we respond?

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? – Micah 6:8*

**First Week: February 26, 2023**

**The Burden of Injustice**

**Habakkuk 1:1-4**

**Isaiah 10:1-4**

### Connect:

Describe a time when you were wronged by another person or betrayed by an organization. How did that make you feel? Have you forgiven them?

### Engage:

Read Habakkuk 1:1-4

1. The Prophet cries out to God against prolonged injustice. What types of injustice does he mention?
2. How long can a person or a group of people survive ongoing wrongdoing? If you were experiencing this kind of oppression, what would your reaction be? What would be your prayer to God?
3. What do you think the long-term impact of injustice is on an individual, a group of people, or a nation? How does this trauma get repeatedly replayed, even when the injustice stops?

Read Isaiah 10:1-4

4. Isaiah records that those who act in oppressive ways will eventually get their due. But will anything protect them from God's judgment?
5. What does this passage suggest about God's character? Is God just or unjust? How does mercy play a role in justice? What does "just mercy" look like?

### Apply

No one thinks they are an evil, unjust person. But all of us are quick to accuse others of doing wrong to us. Everywhere we look, evil seems to win. Is it possible that our unwillingness to see our complicity in injustice prevents God's plan for humanity from coming to fruition?

This week, how might you examine your life more thoroughly to see where some things you do or fail to do hurt others? And as you consider those other people, what burden do they carry because of your actions and attitudes?

### Pray

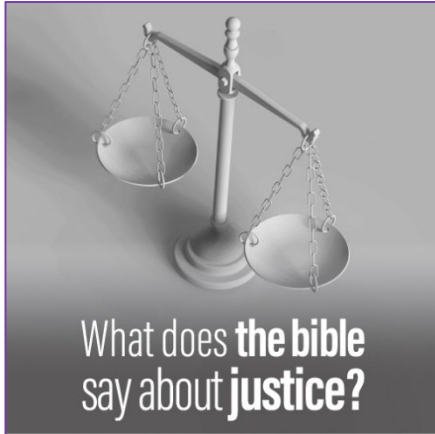
Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

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**February 22–March 26, 2023**

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**Second Week: March 5, 2023**

**God is a God of Justice**

**Isaiah 30:12-18**

**Luke 4:16-30**

### Connect:

Describe a time when you were held accountable for your actions and how being accountable positively changed you.

### Engage:

Read Isaiah 30:12-18

1. Isaiah gives us a brutal image of God's anger towards those who fail to heed his will and stand for justice. What surprises you about this image? Is there anything comforting about it?

Read Luke 4:16-30

2. Jesus paints a positive picture of God's kingdom looks. What does his plan include?
3. The audience mistakes Jesus' claim as an exclusive promise for the Jewish people. Yet, surprisingly, Jesus gives two examples of pagan Gentiles who were blessed abundantly by God. What does this say about the inclusive nature of justice?
4. How does God's compassion and inclusion impact your understanding of God's attitudes toward humanity? Is justice just a Judeo-Christian concept or something expected of all of humanity?
5. How do you see compassion and judgment play out in your understanding of justice?

### Apply

God's character is just and righteous, and God expects humanity to reflect that same character. Jesus, the promised Messiah, came to bring people out of oppression and to restore God's kingdom. Justice and mercy are hallmarks of this kingdom. But we can't have one without the other. Justice without mercy is cruel and mercy without justice perpetuates evil behavior.

As you think about your personality, do you lean more toward judgment or mercy? How can you bring them into balance?

### Pray

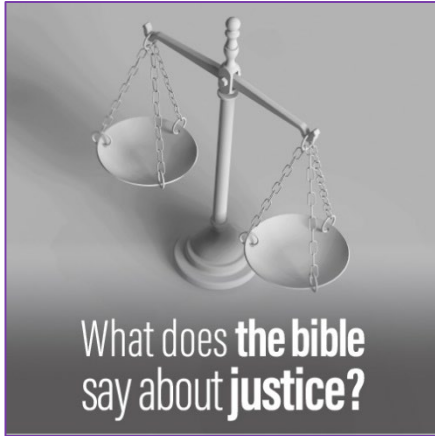
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**Third Week: March 12, 2023**

**The Purpose of Justice**

**1 Kings 17:7-16**

**John 10:10**

### Connect:

Describe a time when you experience unexpected compassion and generosity from another person.

### Engage:

This story is set when King Ahab's political and spiritual failure was complete. Elijah pronounces famine and drought as God's judgment against Ahab's reign. During this time of judgment, Elijah was sent to a pagan woman to tend to her needs and she to him. Remember, Elijah and this widow are not from the same tribe or religion. Elijah had social status as a prophet while this widow would have been among the poorest and most socially outcast in her society, having no extended family to help her.

Read 1 Kings 17:7-16

1. Imagine the ethnic, religious, and social divide between Elijah and this widow. What do you imagine each of them had to overcome to trust and help each other?
2. How does she serve as an alternative to Ahab's disobedience? What point is God trying to make?
3. Jesus references this story in Luke 4:16-30. Why does Jesus hold this story up as a model of God's compassion?

Read John 10:10

4. Jesus speaks of abundant life. Is that life offered to all or only those who believe? Why or why not?

### Apply

The purpose of justice is not punishment but restoration to the quality of life that God intended from the beginning. Therefore, justice can be as simple as facilitating wholeness for another in terms of their physical, spiritual, social, economic, and psychological needs. Ultimately, God desires to bring abundant life!

How can you be more kind and open-hearted this week?

### Pray

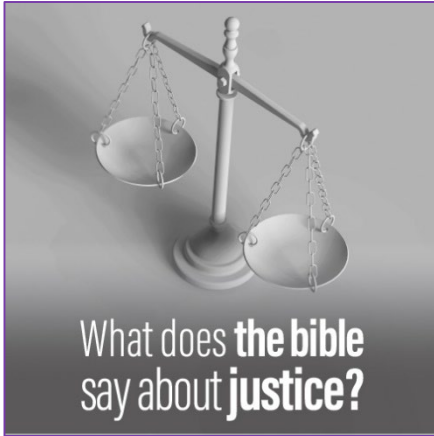
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**Fourth Week: March 19, 2023**

**Systemic Justice is Important**

**Romans 13:1-5**

**James 3:13-18**

### Connect:

How would you assess the character of most politicians? Without naming specific politicians or political parties, what disappoints you the most? Conversely, what encourages you the most?

### Engage:

Read Romans 13:1-5

1. Paul describes human authority as coming from God's sovereignty. As such, he believes human leaders should act in the best interest of humanity. From Paul's perspective, what are some of the responsibilities of those in power?

Read James 3:13-18

2. James speaks of the challenges of leadership. What happens when God's wisdom is ignored? What characterizes authentic Christian leadership?
3. Do you think the ends justify the means? What do you think should happen when human authority is corrupt?
4. How should Christians advocate for change or hold corruptible leaders accountable? What kinds of attitudes and actions are expected of us? How do we keep from becoming corrupted ourselves?

### Apply

What does it mean for governing authorities to rule well? Is the only purpose of the law to deter crime, or is there something deeper here? The gospel expects us to do what is good for all – not just what is good for me! The noble peacemaker confronts injustice in all forms with humble compassion, not arrogant self-righteousness.

Ponder how your politics may lead you to overlook your party's corruption while holding the opposition to a higher standard.

### Pray

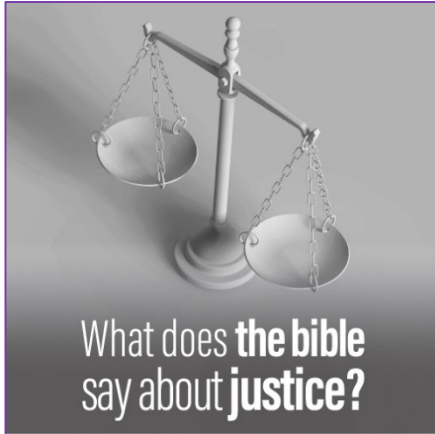
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**Fifth Week: March 26, 2023**

**Justice for Perpetrators too?**

**Luke 19:1-10**

**Titus 3:3-7**

### Connect:

Describe a time when someone offered you undeserved mercy or forgiveness. What impact did that have on you?

### Engage:

Luke 19:1-10

1. Imagine why people hated tax collectors in Jesus' day. Do you think their judgment of them was justified?
2. The crowd is not simply surprised by Jesus' invitation to Zacchaeus, they are disgusted by it. What would be a modern-day equivalent that our society would villainize like a tax collector? Reimagine and tell your version of this story in our setting.

Titus 3:3-7

3. Titus reminds us that we were all like Zacchaeus. In God's eyes, any corruption or sin warrants judgment. So how does God's mercy transform and save us?
4. By God's grace, we are no longer enslaved to behaviors that oppress others. So, how does God's grace to us impact our response to perpetrators? What do mercy and accountability look like for perpetrators?

### Apply

The scandal of Christ's compassion is that it doesn't just extend to the victim but also to the perpetrator. Mercy is tied to repentance and restoration. The message of the gospel is that every person is redeemable.

So, how can we confront those who engage in injustice and violence in this world? How can we heal the injustice and violence in our own hearts? We cannot do this alone but instead must ask the Holy Spirit to help us respond with the words of Jesus: "Father, forgive them."

How can you extend grace to someone who has wronged you? How critical is it for them to acknowledge their attitudes and behaviors before you forgive them?

### Pray

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