



Connection Group Justice Curriculum

Week 1: Overview of Social Justice

Read:

Isaiah 61
Isaiah 58:6-11

Engage:

- Bryan Stevenson "[We need to talk about injustice](#)" - Watch 11:35-17:07

Conversation:

- What did you see or hear in the clip? How did it make you feel?
- How do you think that Bryan Stevenson's main points (we are fully human when we pay attention, we will be judged by how we treat our poor, hope is an orientation of the spirit) is supported (or refuted) by the Christian narrative or Christian beliefs?
 - What do you think God would say about the TED talk? What does the Bible say about Social Justice?
 - Why should Christians care?

Practice:

Tonight: Close in prayer asking God to open your eyes to injustice around you.

This Week:

- Notice when you are uncomfortable, lean into it, be curious
- Notice where you are seeing injustice in your lives, in the news
- "Do you want to listen"- The question from the clip. Helpful practice when beginning to engage in these complex issues.



Week 2: Who is God? And Who are We in God?

Read:

Isaiah 61
Romans 5:6-11

Engage:

- Video: [The Story of God in Culture and Song: Ferguson](#)
- Video: [Am I not human? A call for criminal justice reform](#)

“When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate. When we oppress others, we end up oppressing ourselves. All of our humanity is dependent upon recognizing the humanity in others.”— Desmond Tutu

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.” - Pema Chödrön

Conversation:

- What motivates you to want to “help” or to be “good”? In what ways do you suffer from a superiority complex, savior-mentality...that you are well positioned to determine what is best for others? If you have this problem, what specific steps can you take to change this?
- What is the goal of social justice/activism according to Michelle Higgins’ in the video? How is this similar to or different from your understanding of the goal of social justice?
- What keeps you from recognizing the humanity in all people, even your enemy? Jesus saw the humanity of his enemies and loved them but it cost him his life. What might it cost you to join Jesus in this way?



Practice:

Tonight: Consider how you have refused to see yourself and others as fully human and God's beloved. Spend a moment in silence confessing this to God. After your confession, remember that you are forgiven and read together:

"Immense in mercy and with an incredible love, God embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. – Ephesians 2:4-6

This Week: One day this week take 10 minutes to really see those around you. What does God want for the people you see? How might you join them in moving towards what God has?

Week 3: What Does God Love?

Read:

Isaiah 61
Matt. 11:2-5

Engage:

- A story of restoration in progress:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5eADDS2Asc>,
- Details of restoration:
<http://www.homeboyindustries.org/site/infographic>

Conversation:

- Is.61 speaks a promise of future restoration for the people of God. Where in your life and in the world do you see the need for things like, "binding the brokenhearted, liberty for captives, comfort for the mourning?" Who most needs this message today?
- After watching the short video and looking at the data linked above. What connections do you see with Is. 61? Where else do you see restoration taking place in our world?



- How is this type of restoration related to the gospel of Jesus? What does Jesus have to do with Is. 61?

Practice:

Tonight: End tonight with prayers of gratitude for the restoration God is already accomplishing in our world. Pray also in hope for people in need of restoration.

This week: Sometime this week write down your hope for Isaiah 61 type of restoration for someone else. Be specific!

Week 4: The Fall & Injustices in our world today

Read:

Isaiah 61
Psalm 44

Engage:

- [Brene Brown on Empathy](#)
- ["White Ally Guidelines"](#)

Conversation:

- What do you think is the best way to ease someone's pain and suffering?
- What do we learn from the fact that Psalms of lament are part of the Bible?
- Why is it important to confront our own fragilities before creating a true empathetic connection with one who is suffering?
- What risks or actions can we take in our day-to-day lives to take a stand against injustices?

Practice:

Tonight: End by praying through Psalm 44, a Psalm of lament. Notice how the psalmist recites a list of God's saving acts (victories for Jacob, etc) which creates a sense of trust in the reliability and saving grace of God.

This week: Follow the psalmists example. First, make a list of ways you have seen God be trustworthy and faithful. Next to it, make a list of situations that call for lament.



Week 5: Who Does God Call us to Be?

Topic One: The inner tools for action: prayer, contemplation, and grace

Key points:

- Fight injustice with an intent to heal: from a place of love and forgiveness rather than anger and retribution. We are all broken, but God's grace makes us whole.
- It is difficult to hold both grace and a need for action together, simultaneously. This is where contemplative prayer is helpful.

Read

John 12:32
Isaiah 61

Engage

- A Hidden Wholeness: <https://cac.org/a-hidden-wholeness-2017-07-04/>
(copy and paste link)

"This family has no outsiders. Everyone is an insider. When Jesus said, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw ..." Did he say, "I will draw some"? "I will draw some, and tough luck for the others"? He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all." All! All! All! — Black, white, yellow; rich, poor; clever, not so clever; beautiful, not so beautiful. All! All! It is radical. All! Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Bush — all! All! All are to be held in this incredible embrace. Gay, lesbian, so-called "straight," all! All! All are to be held in the incredible embrace of the love that won't let us go."

-Desmond Tutu, from a sermon given in Pasadena, CA in 2011

Conversation

- Has there been a time when you were able to let go of a deep hurt or forgive someone for a terrible wrong? What enabled you to do this? What impact did this forgiveness have--on yourself or the relationship?
- What happens to our fight against injustice if we are too "reactive" and don't do it from a place of grace and forgiveness? Can you think of an



example? Conversely, can one be too forgiving? What kind of grace and forgiveness is God expecting of us?

Topic Two: Pivoting to Action

Key Points:

- Let's strive to go from empathy to action.
- We should be allies with those who need our help, not providers of "charity." This can be an issue when providing assistance to low-income areas. When we are partners, we enter into the relationship as equals: we can better understand their needs and more effectively help, or better yet, empower.
- Ideas for action!

Read:

Isaiah 61
Galatians 6:2

Engage:

- [Empathy is Not Enough](#)

Conversation:

- What are the barriers to moving from empathy to "allyship"? How do we lower those barriers?
- How is "carrying each other's burdens" different from charity? How do you think it changes the dynamic and impact?
- What are some different ways that we can be allies in injustice? (Can be domestic, international, etc.)

Practice:

Tonight: Spend time in silent prayer paying attention to the anxieties, uncertainties and objections you hold in regards to acting against injustice. Notice them without judgment and simply offer them to God.

This week: One time this week spend time praying through these questions:

- How is God inviting you to be an ally over the next month?
- How will you address barriers to allyship you experience over the next month?