


2-2019

# The Justice Thread: A Curriculum for Ghanaian Churches on Biblical Justice and Child Trafficking

Matthew K. Robbins  
matr1000@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin>

 Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [African Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), [Religious Education Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Robbins, Matthew K., "The Justice Thread: A Curriculum for Ghanaian Churches on Biblical Justice and Child Trafficking" (2019). *Doctor of Ministry Projects*. 378.  
<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/378>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Theology at Digital Commons @ Fuller. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Fuller. For more information, please contact [archives@fuller.edu](mailto:archives@fuller.edu).

Winter 2-15-2019

# The Justice Thread: A Curriculum for Ghanaian Churches on Biblical Justice and Child Trafficking

Matthew K. Robbins

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin>

Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [African Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), [Religious Education Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

# Training Manual Approval Sheet

This training manual paper entitled

THE JUSTICE THREAD:  
A CURRICULUM FOR GHANAIAN CHURCHES  
ON BIBLICAL JUSTICE AND CHILD TRAFFICKING

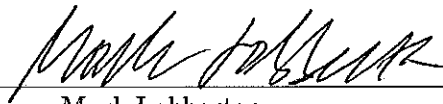
Written by

MATT ROBBINS

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

  
Mark Labberton

  
Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: February 15, 2019

THE JUSTICE THREAD:  
A CURRICULUM FOR GHANAIAN CHURCHES  
ON BIBLICAL JUSTICE AND CHILD TRAFFICKING

A TRAINING MANUAL PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MATT ROBBINS  
FEBRUARY 2019

Copyright© 2019 by Matt Robbins

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### **The Justice Thread**

Matt Robbins

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2019

The goal of this project is to support the work of International Justice Mission in Ghana to end child trafficking by developing a compelling curriculum on biblical justice. *The Justice Thread* is an eight-week Bible study tracing the theme of biblical justice as it unfolds throughout the Bible. The curriculum aims to be a practical and contextually appropriate tool for churches in Ghana, which currently lack resources, training, and emphasis on justice-related ministry. *The Justice Thread* seeks to introduce participants to the God of justice while also educating them about the injustice of child trafficking in their midst. Ultimately, participants are urged toward action on behalf of the oppressed in their community.

This study demonstrates the prominence and prevalence of the theme of justice throughout the various sections of the Bible. It is argued that justice in human affairs is of utmost importance to God and therefore to the Christian mission of the church. The exegetical study introduces concepts related to justice such as *shalom*, holistic ministry, the purpose of authority, the role of a prophet, and God's particular concern for the vulnerable. The study seeks to inspire greater familiarity with God's heart for justice, increased commitment to the oppressed, and growing courage to stand up to oppressors.

Recognizing the importance of contextualization, the study includes cultural exegesis and ministry context analysis drawn from the author's two years of experience in the field and input from Ghanaian scholars and International Justice Mission national staff. The curriculum was field tested with approximately two hundred pastors and church leaders from fishing villages along the shores of Lake Volta, an area with a high prevalence of child trafficking. The curriculum has been well received by churches from many different denominations making plans for implementation.

Content Reader: Mark Labberton, PhD

Words: 288

To my beloved bride Joy Robbins and my children Hannah, Peter, and Abigail:  
You left behind everything and everyone you knew and moved with me to Ghana so that  
children you would never know might be set free!

To my parents Ken and Jean Robbins for your abundant generosity and support  
throughout my studies. I stand on your shoulders.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you Joy Robbins for your patience, your courage, and your many incredible sacrifices during this project!

I want to thank my colleagues at International Justice Mission who work tirelessly every day to end child trafficking in Ghana. Thank you for welcoming me into your work and teaching me about your country and culture. I would like to especially thank Rev. Leo Ackon, beside whom I walked these two adventurous years. Thank you to Leo, Dorinda, Enoch, and Selorm for your help with field testing and improving the project. May it be a blessing to your mission!

Thank you to University Covenant Church for its generous financial support and study leave. Thank you to Mark Labberton for taking me on as an independent study student, which allowed me to continue my DMin and led to this project. Thank you to Gary Haugen for introducing me to the God of justice!



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	14
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	24
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	25
CHAPTER THREE: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	48
PART THREE: MINISTRY PRACTICE	71
CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT	72
APPENDIX ONE: <i>THE JUSTICE THREAD</i>	88
INTRODUCTION	94
LEADER’S GUIDE	100
BIBLE STUDIES	103
APPENDICES	141
APPENDIX TWO: JUSTICE THREAD CURRICULUM EVALUATIONS	149
BIBLIOGRAPHY	152

PART ONE  
MINISTRY CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

### **Seeking Justice in Ghana**

The public justice system in Ghana is not strong, and people are suffering because of it. Corruption is expected in virtually all public institutions with prosecutions and convictions of corrupt public officials being extremely rare. Bribery is the norm. In fact, bribery is so common that it seems the majority of traffic police do not know how to write traffic citations since all they do is take bribes when they stop vehicles. Police expect victims to pay them to investigate crimes. Without these payments, there will not even be a charade of law enforcement effort. Millions of impoverished Ghanaians have no hope of justice when crimes are committed against them, and thus, they live outside the protection of the law. This is especially true for the tens of thousands of children who have been bought and sold and forced to work for slave-masters in places like Lake Volta.

The United States State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report listed Ghana on the Tier 2 watch list for three consecutive years (2015-2017), expressing grave concerns about the high prevalence of child trafficking in Ghana with almost no effective government intervention on behalf of its thousands of victims. It is noted that government

efforts to address this calamitous human rights violation are limited to well-worded policy documents without funding or implementation.<sup>1</sup>

In 2014, International Justice Mission (IJM), the largest anti-slavery organization in the world, opened a field office in Ghana with the mission of ending child trafficking on Lake Volta and ultimately reforming the public justice system. IJM investigates cases of child trafficking, rescues and restores victims, works with the Ghana Police Service to arrest and prosecute offenders, and seeks to mobilize public opinion against child trafficking. By taking on particular cases of child trafficking and seeking to obtain justice in these cases, IJM uncovers systemic challenges that it can later address.

A particular challenge that IJM encounters while seeking to enforce child trafficking laws is a strong resistance from rural populations. In the remote rural areas in and around Lake Volta, where thousands of children are used as slaves on fishing boats, there is extreme reluctance to report crimes to authorities due to mistrust of police, fear of retaliation, and local perceptions of the issue. Community leaders often mobilize villagers to thwart rescue efforts and intimidate police and other rescue personnel. In 2018, a member of Parliament from a district in which IJM operates called on the public via radio address to attack people from non-government organizations (NGOs) like IJM that want to arrest boat masters and remove children from such situations. Informants and witnesses are intimidated and change their testimonies to protect themselves. Local officials and even police officers can tip off criminals about upcoming rescue/arrest operations.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report, 2015-2017*.

Law enforcement, even if it is well-funded, well-trained, and motivated (which in Ghana, it is not), cannot hope to end an engrained large-scale criminal enterprise which the local population works to protect. However, if the local populace was to change its mind and attitude regarding child trafficking and choose to demand its end, then even nominal efforts at law enforcement could yield dramatic reductions in prevalence. Tools, strategies, and programs are needed to win over the local populace to reject child trafficking and join the fight to end it. This is the task of IJM's Church and Community Mobilization Team, on which I have been privileged to serve since January 2017.

### **The Current State of the Church in Ghana**

The church in Ghana is large and powerful, but unfortunately it is mostly silent on the rampant injustices responsible for so much human suffering of its members and neighbors. Through the excessive actions of growing numbers of prosperity gospel preachers, the church is gaining a reputation of exploiting the poor rather than contending on their behalf and standing with them in solidarity. Many pastors lack the theological training they need to navigate and address the social injustices they encounter in their communities and congregations.

Pastoral leadership is needed in advocating with the government for human rights policies and interventions. Pastoral leadership is needed in achieving moral clarity in public opinion on social injustices such as the trafficking of impoverished children for labor, forced early marriage, witchcraft trials, mob justice, mishandling of funds, domestic violence, and many other justice issues that plague Ghanaian communities. Pastoral leadership is needed in establishing shelters for children rescued from

trafficking, procuring resources for vulnerable families, and providing protection for victims of violence. Pastoral leadership is needed in educating and inspiring the church to embrace justice as an important theme in the Bible and seeking justice as an important role of a Christian. Yet this sort of pastoral leadership is difficult to find in Ghana.

In the absence of strong pastoral leadership on justice issues, the church in Ghana has not lived into this part of its calling. In fact, most Christians seem unaware that justice and the Bible have anything to do with one another. While this is a regrettable situation in its own right, it is particularly distressing in an environment where the church is so strong but the justice system is so weak.

### **The Potential of the Church in Ghana to Seek Justice**

The church, as the Body of Christ, is the hope of the world. No other institution on earth has such potential to positively transform a society for good. The church is uniquely equipped with resources which governments and secular civic institutions do not possess and thus can fight injustice in a way that only the church can. The church has extreme potential to be a catalyst for societal transformation, if only it would wake up to its calling. In particular, the church is desperately needed for its compassion and its moral authority.

### **Solidarity with Victims and Compassionate Care**

The church has an incredible opportunity to stand in solidarity with victims of child trafficking. The church can recognize victims' inherent worth and dignity, their preciousness to God, their membership in the body of Christ, and their equality with free

people. Every lie told to these children about their worthlessness and low standing can be reversed by the long enduring loving embrace of the church. This will require countless hours of surrogate parenting of various kinds, counseling, and friendship. The transition of tens of thousands of children out of a life of forced child labor into freedom and education will require time, money, facilities, and love. The church of Ghana must be Christ's arms, which embrace these children.

Among IJM's greatest challenges is the limited capacity of shelters for victims of child trafficking. When a child is first rescued, they cannot be immediately returned to their families for several reasons. In some cases, the whereabouts and identity of the families are unknown. We have rescued children as young as five years old, far too young to describe where they are from or how to locate their families. In all cases, lengthy home studies<sup>2</sup> must be conducted to ascertain the risk of the children being re-trafficked by their families or suffering some other form of abuse or neglect. Children often need medical care, counseling, and time to rest in order to recover from the trauma of their experience. Thus, temporary housing and intensive care is needed during this period of rehabilitation, lasting from a few months to two years. Children can only be rescued when adequate rehabilitation services are available to care for them. Rescue operations are halted for months at a time until more space becomes available in these

---

<sup>2</sup>A home study is the process by which IJM and the Department of Social Welfare evaluate the suitability of a child's home and family situation. Once the biological family is found, an assessment is done, taking into account the family's desire for the child to return, the probability of the child being re-trafficked, and the family's ability to provide for the welfare of the child. The home assessment considers risk and protective factors within the family, the capacity of the family to support the best interests of the child and ensure their continued development, their safety from re-trafficking and other forms of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. If a home is deemed unsuitable for a child to return, another more suitable home must be found before a court order can release the child from the temporary shelter.

temporary shelters. There are also limited quality options for long-term placement for those children who cannot return to their communities for fear of further abuse.

The church can fill this void. Christian families can become licensed for foster care. Churches can build and support shelters and homes for children. Churches can provide resources for impoverished families which are vulnerable to trafficking.

Fulfilling the Christian mandate to care for widows and orphans (Dt 14:28-29; Ps 68:5; Is 1:17; 1 Tm 5:9-10) would prevent trafficking. As capacity to care for children grows, the frequency of rescue operations will increase, which increases the arrest of perpetrators and thus strengthens the deterrent to would-be traffickers.

### Moral Authority

An area in which the church is uniquely gifted to combat injustice is in the realm of achieving moral clarity on justice issues. One of the reasons that child trafficking is so rampant in Ghana is that it is not universally understood to be morally objectionable. Traffickers use traditional practices to camouflage their child abuse. Ghanaians are accustomed to seeing children working alongside their parents in various trades, from farming to fishing to selling produce in the markets. For centuries before universal primary education was mandated by the government, Ghanaian children worked alongside their parents, learning the family trade. Child traffickers muddy the moral waters by framing attacks on their behavior as attacks against the traditional rural way of life. Trafficked children are coached to call their boat masters “Daddy” to aid this ruse. This tactic creates enough doubt in the public mind to slow and sometimes halt action on behalf of trafficked children. IJM investigators and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit



(AHTU) of the Ghana Police Service have had many experiences of villagers mobilizing to attack, intimidate, or hamper intervention operations. Public opinion matters. Currently, public opinion in most fishing villages on the vast shores of Lake Volta accepts and vigorously defends child traffickers.

These communities so resistant to cooperation with law enforcement have majority Christian populations. Church attendance is high and church membership is a defining part of life and a vital community force. The majority of slave-master fishermen seem to attend churches and profess to be Christians.<sup>3</sup> Pastors are revered community leaders and afforded great respect in the communities, comparable at times to traditional leaders such as chiefs and queen mothers. Christian villagers in the rural fishing villages along the shores of Volta Lake and the coastal communities along the Atlantic coast look to their pastor as the primary moral authority in their life.

This means that pastors have an enormous opportunity to provide moral clarity on this issue. First, village pastors know their congregations far better than police or government officials or social workers coming in from larger cities; they know the real familial relationships from the false ones. Pastors, as mandated reporters of child-abuse, can choose to expose the truth about the origin of children in their communities. Pastors could thus unmask the pretense of the traffickers to a benevolent traditional family practice and reveal the dark truth of child abuse and crime that lies underneath.

---

<sup>3</sup> While no formal study on this has been undertaken, the author has been working in these communities for two years and interviewed several pastors from fishing villages on the subject matter. Further, the Ghana Statistical Service published the *Ghana Statistical Study* in 2003, revealing that 71% of the country of Ghana identifies as Christian. Further, Christianity is even stronger in the coastal tribes from which the fishermen hail, as opposed to the north of Ghana, which has a higher Muslim population.

Boat masters force their purchased children to work for them on the lake while their biological children attend school and play on the shore. In August of 2017, I took a group of American pastors out on the lake to witness child trafficking first-hand. Even as cultural outsiders, we could perceive the difference in treatment between boat masters' children and their victims. The boat masters' children were relaxed and smiling and interactive with us while the trafficked children labored in fear and constant deference to their masters. The boat masters' children were well-fed, well-bathed and groomed, and well-dressed. The trafficked children were malnourished, some to the point of their hair yellowing. Some wore tattered clothes while others were naked. In one case, I gave two candy bars to the two children on a fishing boat. The son of the boat master ate both while the trafficked child looked down without protest or surprise. It was like a modern re-enactment of the beginning of the Cinderella story in a Ghanaian fishing boat.

Pastors and churches in shoreline communities see these inequities every day. Unlike secular institutions, the church has the Word of God as a guide. For example, the church can look to scriptures that guide the treatment of foreigners living in their midst, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Lv 19:33-34).<sup>4</sup>

Scripture also offers guidance to the church on the treatment of widows and the fatherless. The vast majority of child trafficking victims in Ghana are those who have lost their fathers either to death or abandonment. They are the children of widows and abandoned women. Traffickers prey on their desperation. Churches can look to the

---

<sup>4</sup> All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

scriptures for guidance: “Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry” (Ex 22:22-23). Pastors can name God as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows (Ps 68:5).” The church has a mandate in the scriptures “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke (Is 58:6).” Thus, the church has access to a guiding moral authority in the scriptures from which they can derive moral clarity and moral imperative to action.

The church, led by its pastors, has unbounded potential to be a force for good on the issue of child trafficking on and around Lake Volta, if only the church would discover its calling and find its voice. Ghanaian churches can begin to teach and preach this message and conceptualize contending for the oppressed as a form of worship that God longs to receive. Churches can advocate powerfully with government officials on child-protection policies and funding. Churches can confront traffickers within their congregation and without, urging repentance and change. When this happens, it will completely reshape the environment in which the child-traffickers operate. Rather than villagers mobilizing to protect the traffickers against the police, they would mobilize to oppose the traffickers and defend the children they abuse. This will be the moment when child trafficking ends.

### **Thesis**

This project will provide the Ghana field office of International Justice Mission with a curriculum on biblical justice that will inspire and equip Ghanaian pastors and Christian leaders to train their congregations in biblical justice, preach on justice issues,

advocate for the oppressed, and lead ministries of compassion and justice to the marginalized in Ghanaian society.

### **The Need for Deep Theological Training on Biblical Justice**

The church Mobilization team of IJM Ghana has learned by experience that short and shallow engagements produce short and shallow results. Guest-preaching in a congregation exposes hundreds of Christians to a cause in an hour, but actions and life-change rarely flow out of such a brief encounter. Only deep foundations will lead to enduring action. Deep and sustained theological education is needed to change hearts and minds and shift attitudes. A curriculum is needed that will inspire and equip pastors to preach on justice issues, advocate for the oppressed, assist in their relief, and lead ministries of compassion and justice to the marginalized in Ghanaian society.

The curriculum will lay a biblical foundation by tracing the pervasive theme of justice through the major sections of the Bible: Torah, Prophets, Writings, and Gospels. The curriculum will seek to define biblical justice as it is developed in Scripture and reveal the high-priority that the Bible places on justice. Special emphasis will be placed on the prophetic vocation of “speaking truth to power” and Jesus’s holistic ministry treating physical, spiritual, and social ills. Based on the biblical exposition above, a vision will be cast for the holistic mission of the church. It is hoped that this curriculum will be a seed that grows into a wide-spread, deep, and lasting change in theological emphases and ministry priorities in the Ghanaian church. It is hoped that a justice-embracing church will lead the struggle in society for justice for the oppressed.

## Overview

Part One will describe the historical and theological backdrop of the church in Ghana, as well as the geographic, demographic, and cultural context of the churches around Lake Volta. Methods and patterns of child trafficking in Ghana will be outlined. IJM's strategy to end the practice will be explored, detailing how church mobilization fits into the overall effort.

Part Two will review works on the biblical theology of justice and those that give insight into justice issues in the African context. The pervasiveness of the biblical theme of justice will be traced through the major sections of the Bible: Torah, Prophets, Writings, and Gospels. Definitions and principles of biblical justice will be formed as they are developed in Scripture. The high priority that the Bible places on justice will be demonstrated. Based on the biblical exposition above, the holistic mission of the church and role of the pastor will be explored. Desmond Tutu will be examined as a Christian African clergy role model for church and pastor in seeking justice.

Part Three seeks to design a Bible study curriculum to teach the concepts of part two in a manner appropriate and effective in the setting described in part one. Goals, pedagogical principles, and roll-out strategies will be outlined. Implementation will be explained and a plan for evaluation will be set forth.

A curriculum will be developed that teaches biblical justice principles in a contextually appropriate manner to equip pastors for courageous leadership on justice issues, particularly with regard to child trafficking on Lake Volta. The curriculum will seek to be a self-contained unit, complete with leader training and guidance, Bible

studies, and application support resources, so that it can be mass distributed without the need of an outside trainer.

## CHAPTER ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT

### **Theological and Historical Context of the Church in Ghana**

The church of Ghana majors in prayer, worship, and evangelism. The church of the West could learn much from the Ghanaian church in these areas. The fervor and commitment and tenacity exhibited in Ghanaian churches in these worthy pursuits is to be admired and emulated.

Unfortunately, the theme of biblical justice is taught almost nowhere. Righteousness is primarily conceived in terms of as personal piety and church involvement (as with so many churches in the West) without emphasis on social justice issues. The encouraging examples described above are outliers, notable for their rarity. The church in Ghana is large and powerful, but it is mostly silent on the rampant injustices responsible for so much human suffering of its members and neighbors. All-night prayer sessions are routine and church activities fill personal calendars. Yet, in all this flurry of church activity, it is almost unheard of to hear anything about justice.

This reality is consistent with the strains of Western Christianity that have influenced Ghana over its history. Ghana was a major hub of the trans-Atlantic slave

trade,<sup>1</sup> exporting over a million slaves across the Atlantic from 1650 to 1800.<sup>2</sup> It remained a British colonial subject (the Gold Coast) until 1957, a one hundred and fifty years after the British slave trade was abolished in 1807. This was a period of great influence and missionary endeavor by mainline denominations. While Ghanaians universally decry the slave-trade history and the colonial domination they experienced, many look fondly on the contributions of mainline missionaries in this period. Not only did they bring the gospel to Ghana, but they contributed in many tangible ways to the well-being of Ghanaians. Most early schools and hospitals were built by these missionaries. The Bible was translated into dozens of local languages. Ghanaians bear witness to their lives being tangibly improved by these missionary efforts.

Yet, the witness of these well-intentioned missionary ventures is marred by its fundamental failure to confront the unjust domination of Ghanaian society by the European cultures from which they came. One must ask, “How could the Church of England, with the monarch of England at its head, ever faithfully represent a ‘God of justice’ to Ghana while England simultaneously plunders Ghana at the behest of that same monarch?” There are examples of faithful justice-embracing British Christians in this period, such as William Wilberforce’s decades-long battle against the slave trade or Basel Missionaries in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) sheltering runaway slaves in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, there are also early examples to the contrary. In 1772, for example, a Society for Propagation of the Gospel missionary to the Gold Coast named

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. Third Edition. (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press: 2012) 48-52,56-58

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 78

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 253



Thomas Thompson, published the pamphlet: *The African Trade for Negro Slaves Shown to be Consistent with the Principles of Humanity and with the Law of Revealed Religion.*<sup>4</sup>

The overall testimony to a God of justice was compromised from the beginning. Yet, this long experience of subjugation left within the hearts of Ghanaians such a strong longing for a different experience that the national motto became “Freedom and Justice.”

Tragically, they have not come to know the God of Christianity as one who also yearns for these things.

In more recent history, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements originating in the United States have taken hold in Ghana and experienced explosive growth. The emphasis on spiritual warfare and supernatural power finds a welcome reception in a culture already in tune with all things supernatural and that often lives in fear of evil spiritual powers. Black magic has long been a component of everyday life in the traditional Animist religion. Pentecostal and Charismatic theology offers Ghanaians power and methods to confront these evil powers and oppose the negative influence of *Juju* on their lives. Unfortunately, these movements have pulled popular Ghanaian theology further away from the theme of biblical justice. These movements are not known for the building of schools and hospitals. They have not been known to feed the hungry. They have been even less prone to speak about justice, as they have inherited from their fundamentalist forbearers a hostility to “the social gospel.” The old division in the American church during the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy and the subsequent rejection of compassion and justice ministry as “liberal” found its way to Ghana via this movement.

---

<sup>4</sup> Stiv Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother? British Missions and the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in West Africa and the West Indies 1786-1838*, (Upspsala, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1972). 67

Perhaps most damaging has been the recent rapid influx of the *prosperity gospel*. Whereas the charismatic movement found fertile ground in the spiritual climate of the culture, the prosperity gospel found it in Ghana's poverty. Poor Ghanaians, exposed to the material wealth of Westerners and Ghanaian elites, craved these riches for themselves. Huge mega-churches have formed around pastors with larger-than-life personalities who promise riches from God in exchange for tithes and offerings. Billboards and posters now adorn most street corners advertising church conferences for miraculous healings and financial breakthroughs. Seven-day church conferences with guests like T.D. Jakes and Benny Hinn attract massive audiences and rake in millions of dollars from impoverished people hoping to draw the attention of God and attract his "blessings." Sick congregants pay for a pastoral counseling appointment, then are told to buy holy oil for their anointing, then pay the pastor to pray for them. Through the excessive actions of these prosperity gospel preachers, the church is gaining a reputation of exploiting the poor rather than contending on their behalf and standing with them in solidarity.

Still, pastors are generally held in very high regard by their parishioners. In a culture that distrusts the police and many government agencies, the pastors are usually the first person that congregants reach out to when they encounter or experience injustice. This was made explicitly apparent at an IJM Justice Conference in the Volta region in which an officer of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police service asked pastors to call him on his personal cell phone with tips about trafficking. The regional director of the Department of Social welfare stepped in provided his number to call for those who do not trust the police. Then, the local pastors who organized the conference

offered a pastor's number to call for those conference attendees who do not trust either the police or the social welfare department! This finally satisfied conference participants.

The convergence of these trends has produced a situation in which pastors are inundated with knowledge of injustices in their communities. Congregants confide in them that they are victims, witnesses, or even perpetrators of violence, abuse, fraud, and other forms of injustice. Communities look to pastors for wisdom, guidance, and help. Yet, many pastors lack the theological training they need to address the social injustices they encounter. Victims of ongoing physical violence are generally counseled to read their Bibles, pray more, and have more faith and are then sent back into that violence. When a person has only one medicine, there is great temptation to prescribe it for all ills.

### **Organizational and Missional Context: IJM and Child-Trafficking on Lake Volta**

International Justice Mission is a Christian organization that protects the poor from violence in the developing world. In Ghana since 2014, IJM is working to end child trafficking on Lake Volta, the largest human-made lake in the world. There are an estimated 50,000 children laboring in Ghana's fishing industry, with tens of thousands of them working on Lake Volta alone.<sup>5</sup> All child labor on Lake Volta constitutes a crime, even if done with parents, because it is deemed hazardous labor for a child and because primary education is universal and compulsory in Ghana. Studies have shown, however, that over half children working on Lake Volta may be victims of the greater crime of

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ghana Statistical Study* (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2003).

child trafficking: sold by their guardians and transported to Lake Volta, essentially as child slaves.<sup>6</sup> According to Ghanaian law, child trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation and transfer of any person below the age of 18, with or without their consent for the purpose of exploitation or abuse of position of vulnerability.”<sup>7</sup> Most of the traffickers pay a very small sum (often less than \$70) to a child’s legal guardian in exchange for the child. They then isolate the children by moving them to distant location out of the guardian’s sight and beyond their ability to visit. The traffickers often lie to the child’s parents, promising to put them in school and treat them well, but the truth is quite different. The children suffer physical and sometimes sexual abuse. They are denied access to education, health-care, adequate nutrition, rest, and family visitation. They work long hours (12–18 hours a day, often 7 days a week) with little sleep in dangerous conditions. Many of these children have drowned in the lake.

In 2017, IJM Ghana worked with local authorities to rescue one hundred children from the lake and we have learned important lessons from the forensic interviews with the children in our intake process, as well as from our ongoing care for them. A revelation from a July 2017 rescue of 43 children was that traffickers dangle the false promise of a large elusive future payout to control the children and motivate them to work. In most cases, the children have been told that if they work for an undefined number of years, they will be given an outboard motor so they can own and operate their own fishing boats one day. As the years go on and on, the children become more invested in obtaining this future payout, not realizing it will never come. Thus, child traffickers

---

<sup>6</sup> Kirsten Singleton, Katrina B. Stone, and Julie Stricker, *Child Trafficking into Forced Labor on Lake Volta, Ghana: A Mixed Method Assessment* (Ghana: International Justice Mission, 2013), 3.

<sup>7</sup> *The Ghanaian Human Trafficking Act, 2005, Act 694* (Accra: Assembly Press, 2005).

use deception, coercion, and intimidation to enrich themselves by enslaving impoverished children.

IJM primarily combats such injustices through legal casework and justice system reform. Our investigators, social workers and attorneys support their counterparts in the Ghanaian government to rescue, rehabilitate, and reintegrate our “clients,” while also prosecuting the perpetrators of this crime. As we pursue justice in individual cases, weaknesses in the public justice system are revealed, which can then be systematically reformed until the entire justice system becomes a strong functional deterrent to crimes against the poor.

One of the great challenges to this theory of change is that its success requires strong and sustained political will from the government and general public. For significant and lasting change to take place, the local population must *demand* it. Fostering this movement of public demand for justice is the role of the IJM Church and Community Mobilization Team, of which the author is a part. We work with government officials, media, other NGOs, and the local church to increase awareness, concern, and advocacy about child trafficking.

Many IJM field offices operate in environments in which the church is quite small relative to the general population, which limits its influence on public affairs. In Ghana, however, quite the opposite is true. Christian faith is claimed by seventy-one percent of the population<sup>8</sup> and the church is considered the most dynamic and powerful force in society. The potential for the church in Ghana to be a force for justice is limitless.

---

<sup>8</sup> 2010 Population and Housing Census National Analytic Report (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2013), 63.

Child trafficking is but one of many large-scale injustices which plague Ghanaian society. Among the most prevalent are domestic violence, tribal discrimination, forced child-marriage, witchcraft tribunals, so-called mob justice,<sup>9</sup> fraudulent property transactions, and government corruption. A church that comes alive to God's heart for justice and the church's role in God's justice mission would be a powerful force in combating all of these injustices and establishing a more just society. These are all important issues and it is hoped that this project will inspire churches to address each of them, while also prioritizing education about the particular injustice of child trafficking.

---

<sup>9</sup> Mob justice, also locally called instant justice, is a vigilante response of the community to a public accusation of a crime, usually theft. The community quickly mobilizes, pursues and catches the accused, beats them and detains them, but occasionally kills them before authorities arrive. The author has witnessed this in person (non-fatal) and on video (fatal).

## **Geographic and Demographic Context: Destination and Source Communities**

The curriculum is intended to be useful to the whole Ghanaian context but with a particular view towards impact in locations strategic to the mission of IJM in Ghana. This mission is to end child trafficking in the fishing industry on Volta Lake. Naturally, this makes fishing villages on the shores of Volta Lake of vital importance to the work. The particular fishing villages known to use trafficked children (or child-slaves) are referred to as “destination communities” because they are the location to which the children are trafficked. IJM has noted a reduction in child trafficking along the southern half of the lake, where most IJM/Ghana Police Service rescue operations have taken place, though cases are still numerous along the Volta Region coast. Further north, Kete-Krachi and Yeji are the most infamous destination communities, as migrant fishermen set up temporary camps on remote islands and peninsulas all over these areas.

IJM has found that children tend to be purchased or otherwise obtained from impoverished fishing communities along the southern coast of Ghana, most notably of the Central Region and Eastern Greater Accra. We refer to these as “source communities” because they are the source of trafficked children. These coastal communities have a well-developed fishing culture which makes their children more familiar with basic fishing and boat-handling tasks and more likely to know how to swim than the average Ghanaian. This makes them more valuable to boat masters.

Volta Lake was formed by the construction of Akosombo Dam (1961–1965). Forest and farmland were thus converted into the largest human-made lake in the world. When fish were introduced and began to thrive in the lake, the local population primarily continued to pursue farming. It was ocean fishermen from southern coastal communities

that capitalized on this new opportunity by migrating north to the Lake. These boat-masters retain familial, linguistic, and cultural ties to the coastal villages, which further explains the transit patterns of trafficked children from the coast to the lake. In some of these coastal villages, I have heard testimony that 80% of boys in a particular school have spent at least some time fishing at Lake Volta.

All of the source and destination communities described above are rural and struggle with high unemployment, below-average literacy levels, a lack of infrastructure and industry, and high incidents of single motherhood. They all have majority Christian populations, though Islam and traditional religion have a strong presence as well, particularly in the north.

The primary tribal groups/languages of the trafficked children and boat masters alike are Ewe, Ga-Dangme, and Fante. The Ewe hail from the Volta Region. The Ga-Dangme come from Greater Accra. The Fante are primarily from the Central Region. Twi, originating from the Ashanti region, is a popular trade language, as is English (the official national language of Ghana). These fishermen often live in ethnic clusters in and among the communities traditional living in and farming these regions who speak Guan, Twi, Ewe, or a variety of Northern Languages.

The current project seeks to develop a Bible study curriculum that can be an effective tool to be used in source and destination community churches during the Sunday school hour or a similar church program. Pastors and other church leaders such as catechist and Sunday school teachers tend to be literate and are more likely to be proficient in English. They serve congregations that tend to have lower levels of literacy and English proficiency. The project's strategy is to train these pastors and church leaders



in the curriculum while simultaneously training them to be teachers and facilitators of the curriculum for their churches.

The curriculum was piloted in regional inter-denominational conferences for destination community village pastors (Kpando and Kete-Krachi). The final project will later be rolled out at similar conferences in both source (Winneba) and destination (Yeji) communities and eventually be published country-wide.

Figure 1: Church Mobilization Strategic Map of Ghana. <sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Ezilon.com, 2009.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The central aim of the project is to develop a tool for training Ghanaian pastors, particularly in rural contexts, in biblical justice and issues of child trafficking. The curriculum seeks to equip and inspire these pastors to train their congregations and then lead their congregations in joining anti-trafficking efforts and other pursuits of justice. Thus, several sources of literature must be drawn from. First, and most influentially, are sources on biblical justice, particularly those that are expository and concise. Second, literature which informs church leadership in justice ministry. These first two overlap and so will be analyzed together. The third stream of literature are those which give insight into justice and injustice in the West African context.

### **Biblical Justice and the Justice Mission of the Church**

The theme of justice in the Bible is both pervasive and difficult to define. There is such a great wealth of material for analysis, but it is so interwoven with other themes and spread throughout such a diverse cross-section of scripture that definition is elusive. Concise explanations are needed, as is broad ranging exposition.

*The Little Book of Biblical Justice* by Chris Marshall

Chris Marshall's concise volume *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible's Teachings on Justice* has been one of the most helpful for this project. Marshall advises that the definition of justice in the Bible can only be understood as it unfolds through the long narrative of the Bible and as it interweaves with a number of complex issues. Marshall traces a number of these interwoven themes such as *shalom*, covenant, Torah, sin, and atonement. Biblical justice is explored from many angles including as an attribute of God, an emulation of God, a call to action, a relational reality, a partiality for the disadvantaged, and a restorative activity. Marshall emphasizes that biblical justice is all about relationships and flows out of God's character and our emulation of God's character.<sup>1</sup>

Marshall is extremely helpful in disentangling biblical justice from modern Western conceptions. Justice is not a static ideal; it is not the maintenance of some steady state in society. The accent in biblical justice falls on positive action, the exercising of power to resist the oppressor and set the oppressed free. This is why Amos pictures justice as a thundering river rather than, as in the Western tradition, a neatly balanced set of scales (Am 5:21-24). There is more to biblical justice than the preservation of law and order, for laws can be unjust and order may depend on violence. Biblical justice requires an activist response to systemic evil, a radical intervention to "loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke" (Is 58:6).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Chris Marshall, *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible's Teaching on Justice* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 32-33.

In Western thinking, justice is often perceived in individualistic terms. Justice can be something that is possessed by an individual. One can be *just* in and of themselves, apart from relationships to others. In Western thinking, one might regard themselves as just because they have remained in their own solitary space without infringing in the space or rights of others. Justice is thus about abstract ideals such as balance, fairness and non-infringement.

In contrast, Marshall argues that “biblical justice is comprehensively relational...Justice means doing all that is necessary to create and sustain healthy, constant, and life-giving relationships between persons.”<sup>3</sup> Biblical justice is the degree to which people actively honor obligations to uphold each other’s dignities and rights as they live in mutual relationship. Marshall disputes the common conception in Western churches that there is a tension between mercy and justice. In the thinking of biblical writers, there is no such tension, but rather justice (which restores right relationship) sometimes demands punishment and sometimes demands mercy.

Modern Western standards of justice are predicated on impartiality and equity (consider the blindfold on Lady Justice in popular art). Marshall argues that in biblical justice, this is only sometimes true. We see impartiality advocated in criminal proceedings, which must be blind to social status. In contrast, biblical justice in social issues shows a heavy partiality for the disadvantaged. This is because these disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to injustice and suffer more from unjust distribution of wealth and resources. Marshall argues, “The existence of grinding poverty

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 35-36.

is an evil. It is not God's will that some should live in splendor and opulence while others starve and die."<sup>4</sup> This is quite a contrast to a western secular capitalistic conception of justice which might regard such disparate conditions as justice-neutral if no identifiable crime has been committed by the rich to make it so. Marshall contends that in biblical writings on justice, injustice can be identified by simply contrasting the present condition with the creator's intention: "The condition of the impoverished and the oppressed violates God's intentions for the world."<sup>5</sup> God's judgement is not conceived in terms of impartial scales (as in western thought), but rather in terms of God showing partiality for the marginalized to "even the scales."<sup>6</sup>

Marshall sees biblical justice as a restorative activity. Justice restores victims to wholeness. Justice restores an offender to right standing. Justice restores the community to be free of fear and the damage done by an injustice. Punishment's purpose is restoration and deterrence. Justice is satisfied through repentance, restoration, and renewal.<sup>7</sup>

This is quite a departure from the dominant approach to biblical justice in mainstream western protestant theology which conceives of justice as strictly demanding punishment in every case to uphold an objective principle or satisfy righteous anger. This thinking undergirds many formulations of the propitiatory substitutionary atonement in which the wrath of the Father is appeased by the suffering of the Son. Though Marshall does not go into this, his analysis of the restorative nature of biblical justice would be

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 45.

more hospitable to other conceptions of the atonement which regard the cross not as the satisfaction of an abstract principle, but a practical path toward restoration of right relationship.

Likewise, Marshall berates the popular depiction of Jesus as non-political. This notion, he argues, is founded on an approach to the text from a “modern western viewpoint of participatory democracy and a separation of church and state.” This western misconception sees Jesus as savior but not a political activist, preaching a spiritual kingdom, but not an earthly kingdom, saving souls rather than transforming society. The western view sees Jesus calling for personal holiness but not political change. If that were an accurate picture of Jesus, Marshall asks, then “why were the political rulers of the world threatened by Jesus?”<sup>8</sup> Rather, Marshall describes Jesus as denouncing society and announcing a new alternative society. This new society rejects social discrimination and materialism and embraces the poor and lowly. The new Kingdom does not trust institutional power, rejects violence, and embodies the Kingdom of God. Justice is at the heart of God’s Kingdom and the mission of God’s people. Marshall concludes, “For biblical justice is, finally, a joyful justice, not a grim justice. It is joyful because it restores, heals, and makes things right.”<sup>9</sup>

Marshall’s biblical and thematic analysis is extremely helpful. Perhaps most helpful is his work to set the reader free of modern western bias. This has helped steer me clear of inadvertently imposing those western secular views of justice onto a curriculum designed for non-western people. Ghanaians are far more communal-focused than the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 64.

author's American upbringing and in that way are closer to the ancient Israelites. The challenge remains of how to contextualize these insights into Ghanaian culture and thought patterns. A contrast has been made between biblical justice and modern western conceptions of justice. The contrast between biblical justice and modern Ghanaian conceptions of justice remains to be explored. Further, this work is rooted in the Mennonite peace church tradition, which is markedly absent in Ghana and quite distinct theologically from prevailing faith traditions.

*Good News about Injustice* by Gary Haugen

Gary Haugen is the founder and CEO of International Justice Mission, the organization I am serving and for whose mission the project is intended. Haugen's experience with IJM casework greatly informs and empowers his biblical exegesis, and vice versa. This book radically impacted my life many years ago and continues to shape me today. Its material can be very impactful in Ghana.

**Overview**

Haugen reveals how unprepared the Western church (not the Word) is in responding biblically and theologically to issues of injustice. It is a prominent theme in scripture, but conspicuously absent in sermons and Bible studies. Thus, when confronted with some of the truly atrocious injustices in the world, many faithful Christians are left with only vague platitudes and generalized prayer, and a sort of inactive despair. Haugen demonstrates how this need not be. There is a great wealth of biblical material ready to guide Christians, once we begin to explore it.



The book title *The Good News about Injustice* sets up the reader to ask the question, “What is that good news? What could it be?” The answer is simply given: God is against it. The almighty creator of the universe stands against the wrongs done to people in this life. The highest power rejects the unjust use of power. Further, this same God hears the cries of the oppressed, feels compassion for them, and then acts on their behalf against their oppressors, much as we see in the Exodus story.

### **God Sends His People**

It is not only God who stands against injustice, he also sends his people. Those who count themselves Christians are to actively seek justice in the world around them. Many inspirational stories are told of courageous Christians who have taken a stand against injustice in their day, which Haugen marshals for encouragement. These examples teach us two things, Haugen argues: 1) “That we can change things” and 2) “the biblical mandate to seek justice and rescue the oppressed is an integral and magnificent theme of the Christian heritage.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Definitions**

Justice is defined simply as “the right exercise of power.” Injustice is explained as “the abuse of power.” These simple definitions can be quite helpful. It is important to link these terms with power in the minds of the pastors I work with. Power comes with

---

<sup>10</sup> Gary Haugen, *Good News about Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 75-76.

responsibility, and those who have it will be judged by how they wield it. If this point can be made clear in the curriculum, it will be greatly helped.

### **Tools of the Oppressor**

Particularly helpful is the analysis of the tools of injustice. Oppressors use the tools of violence and deception to accomplish their crimes. Revealing these tools at work often reveals injustice. They can also reveal a path towards undoing that injustice.

*Violence* includes both brute force and the implied threat of violence which hangs like a specter over so many modern slaves and victims of various sorts of injustices. It can also include the power behind the oppressor and at times, even include a claim to legitimacy. Many times “police” or other government representatives help enforce the unjust status quo which confers upon it added credibility, power, and threat of force. What does one do when the police run the brothel?

*Deception* is often used to lure unsuspecting victims into vulnerable positions where they become easy prey. Would-be oppressors take advantage of naiveté and trick desperate people with false promises of jobs and faulty accounting of debts. In Ghana, we have had clients that worked for years unending in hopes of finally earning a long-term payout that never comes, in this case an outboard motor which would allow them to be their own fishermen. We had clients who give up on running away because they are falsely told their mother was dead. Victims of oppression are coached to run from police, being told the victims were suspected of crimes. Most of our clients in Ghana, young boys used for fishing, are coached to claim their slave-master is their father or that they are 18 years old (even when they are 12).

Against these two-fold tools of oppression, IJM seeks to wield truth and law. The deceptions must be investigated. The violence must be restrained by appropriate law enforcement agencies. Christians can and should have a role in ensuring these justice systems work properly.

## **Analysis**

*Good News about Injustice* is a book that I have given to dozens of pastors in Ghana. I believe it could be enormously helpful. The challenge is that I have yet to receive confirmation that any of them have actually read it. The two Ghanaians (lay people) who have read it have been radically impacted by the book and have actually left their previous jobs and joined IJM staff! Yet, it seems that the book does not grab the attention of those that are not already very interested in IJM as an organization. Perhaps it is the size of the book, the scope, or the fact that it was written with a western audience in mind. There is nothing Ghanaian about the book. The curriculum I will develop seeks to bridge this gap.

*Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*  
By Timothy Keller

*Generous Justice* has been an invaluable resource for this project. Foundational principles of biblical justice are outlined in a clear, logical, and expositional manner. Many of the principles and definitions put forth in the book have been used in the project, particularly in regards to Old Testament law. Particularly helpful relevant are the delineation of *Tzadeqah* and *Mishpat*.

*Tzadeqah* can be translated as “being just,” but is more often translated as “righteousness.” It is important to know that when reading the word “righteousness” in the Old Testament, one is reading about justice. “Tzadeqah refers to a life of right relationships. When most modern people see the word “righteousness” in the Bible, they tend to think of it in terms of private morality, such as sexual chastity or diligence in prayer and Bible study. But in the Bible, tzadeqah refers to day-to-day living in which a person conducts all relationships in family and society with fairness, generosity and equity.”<sup>11</sup> Tzadeqah means that a husband and wife are faithful to each other and do not have extra-marital affairs. Tzadeqah means that children respect and honor their parents. It means that parents nurture and provide for their children and always act in the child’s best interest. It means that neighbors are honest with each other and share with one another. It means that employers pay honest wages to their workers and workers do not cheat or steal from their employers. People treat each other with fairness, respect, honesty, generosity, and love.

Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world in which people sin and commit acts of injustice. Through greed and rebellion, by deception and violence people break these commands, shattering Shalom and abandoning tzadeqah and people get hurt. This is why God has also given us *mishpat*, or corrective justice. Mishpat calls upon societies and God-fearing people to correct injustices in the world. This is the word you most often see translated as *justice* in the Old Testament. Mishpat means punishing wrongdoers and caring for the victims of unjust treatment. Much of the Torah consists of laws with

---

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York New York: Penguin Group, 2010), 10.

punishments attached. Prophets, judges, and kings all have a role in enforcing these laws, correcting injustices and promoting justice in the land.

Another major contribution of Keller's book is the understanding that biblical justice includes generosity. In much of modern Western thinking, generosity is thought of as optional charity. It is praiseworthy, but not required. Keller counters this notion, arguing that generosity is to be understood as included in what justice demands of us. In terms of *tzadeqah*, or right relationships, it is considered rightly relating to the widow that members of the community help her financially. In terms of *Mishpat*, or corrective justice, helping that widow is putting to right a wrong which has occurred and protecting her from possible future injustices.

Throughout the biblical teachings on justice, four groups of people are quite frequently mentioned: Widows, Orphans/Fatherless, Foreigners, and the Poor. Together, they form "*The Quartet of the Vulnerable*."<sup>12</sup> In Israelite society, these four groups are identified as requiring special attention and care because of their unique vulnerability to injustice. Widows and Orphans have no man to protect them and provide for them. Foreigners are minority groups and may lack language skills and social connections to protect them. The poor have less resources to fall back on in times of trouble and cannot afford a lawyer if they need one. In today's world, we might add other groups to the list of those "most vulnerable" such as the mentally ill, the elderly, homeless, single parents, and refugees. God consistently reveals throughout the Bible that he has a special place in his heart for these vulnerable groups and that righteousness and justice demand that we all join him in extending an active interest in protecting and providing for these people.

---

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2009).

The mishpat, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity but a violation of justice, of mishpat. God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to “do justice.”<sup>13</sup>

The biblical teaching contained in *Generous Justice* is extremely helpful to the project. These principles, if understood and grasped by the target audience, could be very transformative. A challenge, however, is to make this material accessible to the target audience. Keller writes at a level which may seem out of reach to a majority of the pastors in rural Ghanaian villages. The material is certainly beyond the literacy level of many congregants in these rural churches. These rich insights and teachings need to be translated into a resource which the target audience will find accessible and engaging. Further, local application of these principles will need to be developed.

*The Dangerous Act of Worship* by Mark Labberton

Mark Labberton likens ministry that is not guided by biblical justice and disconnected from the great suffering and injustice in the world to sleeping or sleep-walking. He humbly yearns to be awake and to join with others in truly living awake. The swirl of programming in western churches is a sort of massive “investment in a more excellent sleep.”<sup>14</sup> Pastors’ busy ministry schedules are conducive to smallness, a myopic

---

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice*. 11-18

<sup>14</sup> Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God’s Call to Justice* (Downers Grove: Audible, 2007).

fixation on minute tasks which dull the imagination and perception of what truly matters to God.

In contrast, waking up is “the dangerous act of worship” because it retunes us to the reality of God and unmasks our disguised idolatry. Old Testament prophets reject worship which is consumption oriented and divorced from the values of God. Rather, God desires a worshipful life in which God’s values are lived out through acts of compassion and justice for the most vulnerable in society. Labberton cautions we must not believe the lie that “If we can’t do everything, we can’t do anything.”<sup>15</sup>

Particularly helpful is Labberton’s caution that in many churches quest for cultural relevance, they lose the particular “saltiness” that makes them transformative to the world. Lack of relevance or popularity is not the danger we should most fear. The secular world is not asking the church “Why do not you look more like us?” but rather, “Why do not you look more like Jesus?”<sup>16</sup> This is a piercingly insightful question that I hope is wrestled with more in Ghana (and everywhere else).

Worship needs to be less safe and much more dangerous. It should be an encounter with the power of the almighty which reshapes our priorities and perceptions, turning us upside down so that we might become people who confront the unjust use of power, turning the world upside down (or rather to finally set it right side up). Power is a great gift of God and therefore a prime target for misuse and corruption. True worship challenges us to evaluate and repair our use of power.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Our worship should lead us to greater mercy and costly acts of justice especially for the least seen and desired. Worship should redirect our endless consumerism to spend less and give more. As we draw near the heart of God in worship, our lives should show the heart of God. The measure of success in worship is “are people giving their lives away to the poor and oppressed in some tangible way?”<sup>17</sup> Labberton is conversant in IJM’s work around the world and asserts that “love for God ties us to love for Elizabeth (an IJM client)”<sup>18</sup> who had suffered great injustice. God so loved the world, which reminds us that God loves Elizabeth. God gave himself for the world reminds us that God wants us to give ourselves for Elizabeth.

For much of American theological history, the church has imagined itself to be a church of the Promised Land. America was a city on a hill, a bright beacon of truth and goodness and blessing that lights the way for the world, which is its God-given role in the universe. While it should be seriously questioned if any nation in any period should regard itself in such a way, today’s reality is certainly not that. Labberton proposes a new biblical metaphor for understanding the place of the church in the western world: exile. If the church understands itself thus, it might lift the burden from trying to control and influence through the political sphere, to be dominant and large and relevant. Rather, the church might focus on being an authentic witness to the truth and character of Christ, to be a tangible witness of his love and mercy and justice in a foreign land.

The target audience for this book seems to be Christians living in affluent Western contexts, surrounded by wealth and comfort in suburbia, cut off from the

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 32

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 34



realities of grinding poverty and systemic injustice. This is similar to the context from which I come, so I have gained much from the book. However, the context I am currently working in is very different.

Many of the book's principles are helpful to the project but need to be translated to the local context. In a similar way, it must be asked what wake-up call is needed for the churches in this context. My target audience for this project lives in impoverished communities that buy and sell the children of desperately poor and uneducated single mothers, forcing very young children to do life-threatening labor with no rest, food, nurture, school, or medical attention. Corruption is the universal norm in all companies and all government agencies. Police are some of the least trusted members of society. My target audience is also "asleep" but it is not to the realities of poverty and injustice. This they know. My target audience is asleep to the notion that God wills it to be different and that change is possible.

### **African and Ghanaian Context**

As noted above, much quality work has been done outlining principles of biblical justice and even applying them to modern injustice issues, yet these resources are not intended for the ministry context in which I operate. There is a great disconnect in terms of culture, education, and presentation format. The local injustice challenges are not addressed, local theological trends unexplored, and local wisdom remains untapped. Thus, a central challenge of this project is to bridge the gap between this work and the local context. The following works are helpful in understanding the local ministry context.

*A Continent for the Taking* by Howard W. French

*A Continent for the Taking* gives broad historical context and local insight into many of the great tragedies and injustices that have plagued the continent of Africa for many decades. It is written by a long-time Africa correspondent for the New York Times who found himself in the midst of coups and genocides, wars and famines.

One of the most helpful contributions of this book is the sobering and humbling reminder of the many ways that western developed countries have played a role in creating and continuing the atrocities in Africa. Trans-Atlantic slave trading robbed West Africa of millions of promising lives and funded tribal warfare. Colonial borders divide tribes and families. Colonial policies treated certain ethnic groups preferentially and thus fomented resentment towards them in neighboring ethnic groups. Natural resources were pillaged for pennies while infrastructure and industry went undeveloped. Police forces were used for brutal oppression and maintenance of control for the powerful, rather than as impartial agents of law enforcement. These policies and patterns which are not easily overcome when an African country wins independence from its colonial masters. Rather, they become the examples which future strongmen follow. They are a roadmap for oppression complete with tools and structures built to achieve the goal of oppression.

Recent policies of Western countries toward Africa have been disappointing. Genocides have been ignored. Corruption has been overlooked. Human rights abuses have taken a back seat in western countries policies toward African nations. Rather, the

cold war and other national security concerns have led Western democracies to send guns and ammunition and explosives to African dictators regarded as allies. Rebellions have been funded and fueled. Coups and assassinations have been directed by foreign powers.

As a white American living in West Africa advocating for justice for the oppressed and reform of public justice system, it is important for me to take seriously the dark side of my home culture's historical interaction with the culture of my hosts. Further, it is helpful to understand how deeply engrained the patterns are which my project hopes to address. Slavery, oppression, and police corruption were not invented yesterday and it will be a long effort to undo them.

*Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace* by John Allen

*Rabble-Rouser for Peace* was both inspirational and incredibly instructive, particularly for me as I live in the African context. It gave me insight into how a pastor (on any continent) can make a courageous meaningful stand for justice in our world. It gave particular insight into what a prophetic African voice would look like in an African context. This is the kind of life and impact I hope for both for myself and also for the Ghanaian pastors with whom I am working for this project.

### **An Alternative Vision: The Power of Symbolic Action**

This project faces a well-known conundrum: Insiders to a community have the most power to change their society, yet often fail to perceive injustices since they have come to know these as normal, constant, and ubiquitous. Outsiders perceive injustices and discern preferable alternatives, but often lack the community standing and expertise

to enact healthy change. One seemingly innocuous interaction between an outsider (a white clergyman) and an insider (a young Desmond Tutu) illustrates how this conundrum can be overcome and how small gestures make large impacts.

And it was while visiting his mother at Ezenzeleni that Desmond had a glimpse of how South African society might be differently ordered: This white man in a big black hat and a white flowing cassock swept past on the way to the residence of the Blaxalls. You could have knocked me down with a feather.... He doffed his hat to my mother. Now that seemed a perfectly normal thing I suppose for him, but for me, it was almost mindboggling, that a white man could doff his hat to my mother, a black woman, really a nonentity in South Africa's terms.<sup>19</sup>

In this one brief simple sign of respect for an African woman, a powerful alternative vision was cast about how life could be differently organized, how the community could relate to an evil in its midst, and how ordinary citizens might make a stand against it.

### **Disruptive Faith**

Desmond Tutu was often maligned by his fellow clergymen and by the laity for being “too political” and too disruptive. The criticism he received and the anger he provoked seemed to flow from a breaking of expectations people have for clergy. The expectation was for clergy to be calm, conciliatory, humble, and confined to “matters of faith.” When those expectations were broken, people became angry and acted toward him in a way quite the opposite of what they demanded of him. Desmond Tutu offered a helpful reflection on the expectations that we must have of ourselves as Christians and those who lead us:

We expect them to reflect the character of Jesus Christ. We expect Christians to be gentle, not always quarrelling and scratching. We expect Christians to be humble as Jesus was humble.... We expect Christians to be peace-loving and

---

<sup>19</sup> John Allen, *Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008), 25.

people who work for peace. We expect Christians to be loving.... We expect Christians to be people who forgive as Jesus forgave even those who were nailing him to the Cross. But we expect Christians also to be those who stand up for the truth, we expect Christians to be those who stand up for justice, we expect Christians to be those who stand on the side of the poor and the hungry and the homeless and the naked, and when that happens then Christians will be trustworthy, believable witnesses.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that a common accusation against Christians who seek to stand up for justice is that they are “disrupters against the peace”. This was often an allegation against Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as well, who often responded by seeking to enlarge peoples’ understanding of the concept of “peace” to include justice. The Old Testament idea of shalom was an expansive concept which included both. Those who would agitate for justice must seek to cast a vision of a deeper and truer peace than the unjust calm they oppose. Tutu explains, “The church’s calling was to work for the fulfillment of God’s vision of “a new heaven and a new earth,” in which “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the lamb.” But this would not be achieved without offending the powerful.”<sup>21</sup>

Ghanaian pastors working in villages that practice child trafficking express fear for more than their reputations if they confront traffickers, some of whom are their own church members. Pastors have expressed fears about losing large sections of their congregations because of family or business connections to the traffickers. Pastors express fear about losses in tithing so that they cannot support themselves. Pastors even express fear for their own lives if they were to inform authorities about child-traffickers in their midst. Suffering on such a road is to be expected, Tutu cautions. “When the

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 286.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 341.

church is obedient to Jesus, Tutu argued, it will always end up, like its master, on the cross.”<sup>22</sup>

### **A Prophetic Voice: Speaking Truth to Power**

For decades prior to Desmond Tutu serving the Mandela-led government in reconciling the country, he agitated against the apartheid era government as a prophetic voice.

You [the government] are mere mortals. You are not gods. Many like yourselves tried to take on the church in the past when they too thought they were unassailable. Nero thought so, Hitler thought so, Mussolini thought so, so did Idi Amin and Bokassa. Where are they today? They bit the dust quite comprehensively. You, like they if you do not repent and mend your ways, will end up as the flotsam and jetsam of history...but the Church of God will continue.<sup>23</sup>

Tutu had a message for unjust rulers:

You have already lost! Let us say to you nicely: You have already lost! We are inviting you to come and join the winning side! Your cause is unjust. You are defending what is fundamentally indefensible, because it is evil. It is evil without question. It is immoral. It is immoral without question. It is unchristian. Therefore, you will bite the dust! And you will bite the dust comprehensively.<sup>24</sup>

Something particularly striking about these statements is the way they redefine reality. The apartheid-upholding government, which has seemed unassailably powerful, is described not only as evil, but also as weak, fleeting, and sure to lose. Power is redefined. The power of the unjust state becomes a fleeting illusion in relation to the triumphant progress of a just church.

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 291.

The rich tradition of the Old Testament prophets speaking truth to power is seldom understood and embraced in evangelicalism in the U.S. or in Ghana. This poses a serious challenge to my advocacy work with International Justice Mission. Prophecy here is thought to be a prediction of the future, given to an individual, usually in exchange for a fee. The recapturing of this Old Testament prophetic tradition may be one of the great keys to a breakthrough in our work here. Desmond Tutu is held in high regard throughout Africa, though it is unclear to me how much the average pastor knows about his life and guiding principles. Exposing pastors to Desmond Tutu as a role model and exploring his life and witness with them seems to have great potential for empowering their prophetic voices.

*Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana*  
by Abamfo Ofori Atiemo

Reverend Abamfo Atiemo is an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and a professor of religious studies at the University of Ghana. This work is a masterpiece of cultural analysis and historical perspective of Ghana. Atiemo is a creative and hopeful bridge-builder between secular western human rights thinking and Ghanaian spirituality in all its forms.

**What Is Ghanaian Culture?**

The nation state of Ghana is a relatively recent historical development. A wide array of distinct ethnic tribes and language groups were brought together in part by the outside influence of British colonialism. The Akan, Ewe, Ga-Dangme and many other tribes each have their own language, traditions, histories, loyalties, royalties, and cultural

emphases. Atiemo explores the emergence of a trans-ethnic national consciousness and efforts made to discern what constitutes “Ghanaian” identity and culture. Some common Ghanaian culture markers emerge including a preoccupation with self-respect and honor; age being required for wisdom and spontaneous expression; the importance of kinship and group life; unquestioning submission to authority; kindness to strangers; and belief in witchcraft, fetishes and powers.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ghanaian Spirituality**

Ghanaians are said to be inherently and incurably religious. Religious affiliation is extremely high. A division between secular and religious spheres are not as stark as in Western democracies. There is a strong and pervasive belief in unseen spiritual forces, both good and evil, affecting every aspect of human life. Effective restraint of evil spirits and encouraging the free flow of positive spirits is considered vital to maintenance of physical health and achievement of financial success. Certain individuals are thought to have power (in varying degrees) to affect the spiritual realm, thus impacting the well-being in the physical realm. Thus, the practice in traditional animist religion of hiring spiritual specialists for interventions has found its way into Christian and Muslim practice as well. The hiring of these spiritual interventionists does not require the individual to join that specialists’ religious group or take on their belief system; the relationship ends after service is rendered. Many Ghanaians are known to cross religious lines and reach

---

<sup>25</sup> Abamfo Atiemo, *On Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 65-68.



out to a “healer” of a different faith tradition if they have a reputation of spiritual potency.

Atiemo highlights some strong spiritual beliefs (which cross religious traditions) that form bridges for speaking of human rights (or biblical justice). One example is contained in “the Akan maxim, ‘All persons are the children of God; no one is a child of the earth.’”<sup>26</sup> This belief in God’s universal fatherhood of humanity gives weight to the sanctity of human life.

### **Analysis**

This analysis and bridge-building for secular human rights principles is extremely helpful in this project’s efforts to build bridges for biblical justice concepts into the same cultural milieu. What is missing from this work for the projects’ purposes is biblical exegesis. While Christianity and popular spirituality is addressed, no biblical teaching is included as this is a book intended for a secular audience. Further, this is a highly academic text book far above the reach of most rural pastors in the project area and intended more to persuade an academic audience to see religion in Ghana as an opportunity rather than an obstacle to teaching human rights. Professor Atiemo is following this project and eager to utilize it in the future with a foundation he is forming.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 30.

## CHAPTER THREE: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### **Justice in Genesis**

The book of Genesis' creation narratives provide an important narrative backdrop for discussions of biblical justice. In the creation narratives, the intention of God for creation is revealed. Two foundational concepts are discerned: the *Imago Dei* and *Shalom*. The creation narratives are followed by several accounts of how far humanity falls away from the intention of God and follows a path of unfaithfulness and injustice. Finally, corrective justice is introduced through the actions of God.

### Imago Dei

God created humanity, men and women, in His image (Gn 1:26-27). The Imago Dei, or image of God, is foundational to biblical justice because it imputes great value and significance to every human life. No human is merely a human, but rather all humans are image-bearers of the divine. This is a grace common to all people regardless of ability, power, or social station. It is also a grace which humans do not share with any other creature in all of creation. The creation narrative sets humans apart from, and

above, everything else in creation as uniquely made in God's image. This quality both unites and elevates humanity.

God tells Noah that no person should be murdered because each person bears the image of God (Gn 9:6). To destroy or harm a human is to attack the likeness of that human's creator, and thus a sin. Thus, the Imago Dei is invoked as a rationale for just behavior and a caution against injustice. This is an early example in scripture of a theme which will be shown to be common: God identifying with victims of injustice and treating an offense against a person as an offense against God.

### Shalom in the Garden

In the beginning, God created a world with perfect shalom. Before humanity's fall into sin, the Garden of Eden was a place of perfect health, righteousness, and peace. Shalom is the Hebrew word we translate into English as peace. It is a word rich with meaning that the English word "peace" does not fully convey. In English, we might think of peace as the absence of war, but the Hebrew word Shalom implies a certain quality of relationships between people, tranquility, safety, well-being, and holistic health (physical and relational). Shalom in the Garden of Eden includes the right relationship of all things to each other: God, people, animals, and plants. It was a place of health, justice, and peace. Thus, Shalom is not merely the absence of violence, but also the presence of wholeness and justice.

## The Fall and God's Corrective Action

We often think of “the fall” as the moment when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit (Gn 3:6), but that was only the beginning. Humanity kept falling. Cain killing his brother Abel was the next chapter of the fall (Gn 4:8). This introduced violent injustice into our world, which continues to grow through the chapters of the Bible.

In Genesis 4:10, God tells Cain, “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!” The Imago Dei in Abel has been attacked. Something precious to God (a human life which God created and loved) has been destroyed. Shalom has been greatly disturbed. God responds with anger and intervention, treating an offense against a person as an offense against God. It is revealed that one cannot have shalom with God while refusing to live in peace and justice with others.

Cain is punished for the attack on his brother though, mercifully, his life is spared. He is put under a curse and made to wander the earth. This punishment is significant for our discussion of biblical justice. A correction is made when an injustice occurs. Punishment is introduced to deter violent injustice and to restore and shape human behavior toward God’s vision of shalom. This action is a precursor to the justice systems that are later setup and administered in subsequent books of the Torah.

Genesis provides another account of violent injustice in the ongoing saga of the fall when Joseph’s brothers sell him into slavery. Because of their jealousy and rivalry (which has been growing in the family for generations), Joseph’s brothers use violence (Gn 37:23-24) to sell their brother into slavery and deception (Gn 37:31-32) to cover up their crime. This is a close parallel to the injustice of child trafficking which International Justice is fighting in Ghana. The rest of the book of Genesis traces how God intervenes

on behalf of Joseph: preserving his life, raising him to prominence, and reuniting the brothers with a reversed power dynamic. Through a long arc, God restores justice and shalom in the family of patriarchs.

## **JUSTICE IN EXODUS**

In the opening chapter of Exodus, the entire people of Israel fall victim to the violent oppression of slavery (Ex 1:6-14). One of the most dramatic and pivotal moments in the Old Testament is when God rescues the people of Israel from this slavery in Egypt. It is an event that is referred to throughout the Old Testament and came to define God's relationship with His people. It also tells us a great deal about God's character and priorities. The so-called "gods" of the ancient world did not tend to care about the poor, the oppressed, and the enslaved. In contrast, the Exodus story reveals that the one true God cares deeply about victims of injustice.

From the burning bush, Moses hears the voice of the Lord saying, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering (Ex 3:7)." The God of Israel is described as one who is fully cognizant of the suffering of the oppressed and whose heart is troubled by what God sees and hears. Not only is God concerned, but God also takes action to rescue the slaves from their distress.

Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.'" (Ex 6:5-7)

The Exodus rescue operation comes to define the relationship between God and Israel. Just as God is known to the Israelites as “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” God also comes to be known as “the God who rescued Israel out of Egypt.” The Ten Commandments begin with the preamble, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Dt 5:6). This phrase is repeated throughout the Torah and Prophets, invoked as foundation to the God-Israel relationship and as rationale for trust and obedience in God.

The Exodus narrative also reveals that God uses people as instruments of doing justice. God reveals that he will use an ordinary person to stand up to the King of Egypt and rescue his people from slavery. Moses is chosen as an instrument of God’s corrective justice.

So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.  
(Ex 3:8-10)

The Exodus story demonstrates that God works for justice by his power, but through his people. The people of God continue to have a role in God’s work to bring freedom to the oppressed.

### **Justice in the Torah**

In the Old Testament there are two important Hebrew words for justice that appear together frequently throughout the pages of the Bible: Tzadeqah and Mishpat. The Torah develops both terms extensively, systematizing the justice imperative revealed in

Genesis and Exodus. In addition, the Torah reveals a particular concern in the heart of god, and thus the laws of God, for the most vulnerable in society.

### Tzadeqah

Tzadeqah can be translated as “being just”, but is more often translated as *righteousness*, a term closely linked with justice. In *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller writes, “Tzadeqah refers to a life of right relationships. When most modern people see the word “righteousness” in the Bible, they tend to think of it in terms of private morality, such as sexual chastity or diligence in prayer and Bible study. But in the Bible, tzadeqah refers to day-to-day living in which a person conducts all relationships in family and society with fairness, generosity and equity.”<sup>1</sup> Tzadeqah means that children respect and honors their parents. It means that parents nurture and provide for their children and always act in the child’s best interest. It means that neighbors are honest with each other and share with one another. Tzadeqah means that a husband and wife are faithful to each other and do not have extra-marital affairs. It means that employers pay honest wages to their workers and workers do not cheat or steal from their employers. Tzadeqah means people are treating each other with fairness, respect, honesty, generosity and love.

Tzadeqah can be understood well by examining the Ten Commandments. Commandments one through four can be understood as governing the relationship of people with God. These commands require exclusive loyalty to God and reverence for his name. Commandments four through ten govern the relationship of people with other people. Parental relationships require honor marital relationships require faithfulness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Keller, *Generous Justice*, 10

Neighbor relationships require honesty, peacefulness, and respect for property. The fourth commandment (Sabbath) command is included in both categories as Sabbath is commanded to honor God, but is also a required holiday for all one's workers, children, and animals. Significantly, the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy invokes the Exodus as rationale for giving Sabbath to all those under one's power. Having been rescued from slavery, one best not repeat the injustice by depriving others of rest from their labor.

Unlike many other commands in the Torah, the Ten Commandments place little emphasis on accompanying punishments for violations. Rather, the Ten Commandments are a description of the righteous, or just, ideal. They are examples of Tzadeqah, what it means to be a just person who lives in right relationships with God and others.

### Mishpat

The Ten Commandments reflect Tzadeqah, a vision of righteousness that, if all people followed, would result in peace and justice. If all people lived according to these rules, there would be no need for police, jails, courts or even locks. Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world in which people sin and commit acts of injustice. Through greed and rebellion, by deception and violence, people break these commands, shattering shalom and abandoning Tzadeqah. Other people get hurt.

This is why God has also given us mishpat, or corrective justice. Mishpat calls upon societies and God-fearing people to correct injustices in the world. This is the word you most often see translated as *justice* in the Old Testament. Mishpat means punishing wrongdoers, caring for victims of injustice, and protecting the vulnerable from potential



injustice.<sup>2</sup> When God punished Pharaoh and rescued the Israelites, it was an act of Mishpat (justice) founded on the Tzadeqah (righteousness) of God's character.

Much of the Torah consists of laws with punishments attached. Prophets, judges, and kings all have a role in enforcing these laws, correcting injustices and promoting justice in the land. In a fallen world, the strong prey on the vulnerable (Joseph attacked by older brothers, Israelites enslaved by Egyptians). To correct this, God sets up rulers, governments, and judges to advocate for justice.

Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Dt 16:18-20)

#### The Quartet of the Vulnerable

Throughout the biblical teachings on justice, there are four groups of people who are quite frequently mentioned: widows, orphans (or fatherless), foreigners, and the poor. Theologians sometimes refer to these four groups as "The Quartet of the Vulnerable." In Israelite society, these four groups are identified as requiring special attention and care because of their unique vulnerability to injustice.<sup>3</sup> Widows and orphans have no man to protect them and provide for them. Foreigners may lack language skills and social connections to protect them. The poor have less resources to fall back on in times of trouble and cannot afford to hire and advocate if they need one. The Old Testament consistently reveals God's particular concern for these vulnerable groups. Further, it is

---

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*. 3-5

<sup>3</sup> In today's world, one might add other groups to the list of those "most vulnerable" such as the mentally ill, the elderly, the homeless, single parents, and refugees.

expected that righteous people and those in authority will take an active interest in protecting and providing for these people.

The mishpat, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity but a violation of justice, of mishpat. God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to do justice.<sup>4</sup>

Examples are many in Torah law of this special concern for the vulnerable. A farming law in Deuteronomy illustrates the trend:

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this. (Dt 24:19-22)

This prohibition against thorough harvesting likely seems unusual and perhaps even unjust to the modern reader. Indeed, it may have struck the original recipients of the law in a similar way. In modern Western jurisprudence, the landowner would no such obligation, but the entire harvest (outside of any contractual obligations with workers or creditors) would be at his or her disposal by right of ownership. In Deuteronomic law, only the first pass of harvest belongs to the landowner. The gleanings, or leftovers after the first round of harvest, belong to the foreigner, fatherless, and widow.

It is noteworthy that this is systemized in the imperative. Landowners are not encouraged to adopt this practice as an admirable but optional charitable donation, but

---

<sup>4</sup> Keller, *Generous Justice*, 4-5

rather the law *requires* it. Biblical justice includes that which modern Western culture would deem generosity.<sup>5</sup> As stated above, Tzad<sup>c</sup>qah means right relationships. Relating rightly to the vulnerable means structuring ones business dealings in a way that provides for those without other forms of income.

Finally, the rationale for this gleaning law is the same as the Sabbath command. One's historical roots as a slave and God's miraculous rescue from that station are invoked to illicit compassion for those who suffer, generosity toward their plight, and cooperation with systematic codified provisions for them.

The tithing law is another significant legal structure to accomplish this same goal.

At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Dt 14:28-29)

The Levites were not allotted land, but rather assigned religious duties. The tithe provides for their sustenance so they can focus on this divinely appointed task. What is less commonly understood in the modern church (both Western and African), is that the foreigners, fatherless, and widows are also listed as recipients of the tithe. Here the tithe is described as a regular systematic redistribution of wealth to those without income. The tithe aims at feeding and satisfying each of these groups and comes with an accompanying blessing to the tither. The prosperity gospel, which has become so prevalent in the Ghanaian context, puts great emphasis on the correlation of tithing and receiving God's blessing. Unfortunately, the corresponding allocation of the tithe to the poor and vulnerable is neglected.

---

<sup>5</sup> Keller, *Generous Justice*, 15.

## **The Prophetic Critique of Injustice**

In the early periods of Israel's history, the Old Testament depicts God as working primarily through the established leadership of the nation. Judges and then Kings are appointed to administer the law and provide justice. Paralleling the fall of humanity in Genesis, is a continual moral fall of leadership and government. 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles records human kings failing in their justice mission. At times, the leaders themselves abuse their power and use it for injustice and personal gain. When the kings and rulers turn to evil and injustice, God raises up prophets to speak truth to power.

## **The Prophetic Critique of Government**

Prophets are God's voice for justice against an unjust ruler. This is the original and truest mission of a prophet of God. David does more than commit adultery. As king, the power differential with Bathsheba is so great that the affair constitutes a significant crime against her as well. Further, David abuses his office as commander in chief of the armed forces to murder one of his own men. He used the power given to him to protect and defend the people to perpetrate crimes against them for his own personal pleasure. God raises up the prophet Nathan (2 Sm 12:1-13) to verbally confront David regarding his sin and to announce God's punishment. The exchange demonstrates that no one is above the laws of justice; even kings will be held accountable in God's economy.

Such examples abound in the Old Testament books of history and prophecy. King Ahab and Jezebel abuse their power to slander and kill one of their own people (Naboth)

in order to steal his vineyard. God raises up the prophet Elijah to confront them and announce God's displeasure and judgment (1 Kgs 21).

Malachi confronts Jewish leaders over rampant injustice, announcing the coming of divine judgment. This judgment reveals compassion for victims of injustice and an accompanying indignation at injustice (wrath):

“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty... Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. (Mal 3:5, 7)

### The Prophetic Critique of Religious Institutions

Prophetic critique was not limited to correction of government. Rather, prophets (as well as Jesus) often reserved some of their harshest words for religious leaders. There are many instances in scripture of the worshiping community losing sight of the priorities of God (namely justice), while continuing to perform religious rituals. God sent prophets to announce divine displeasure, reject this errant worship, and correct behavior.

I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.  
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them.  
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.  
Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.  
But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!  
(Am 5:21-24)

Isaiah reveals that God wants his people to worship him *by* doing justice:

Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Is 58: 3-4,6-10)

In a similar prophetic clash, Micah declares the priorities of God, which feature compassion and justice prominently:

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Mi 6:6-8)

### **The Justice Cry: Prayers and Songs of the Old Testament**

The Psalms reflect an enculturation of the justice priorities of God in the worship life of Israel. The LORD's reputation is intertwined with justice (Ps 9:16). The Lord loves *tzadeqah* and *mishpat* (Ps 33:5). The LORD's own *tzadeqah* and *mishpat* are described in grand scale (Ps 36:6) and identified as the foundation of the divine throne (Ps 89:14). The LORD is envisioned as a warrior majestically riding forth into battle with sword and bow fighting battles on behalf of "truth, humility, and justice" (Ps 43:3-5).

The Psalms respond to the justice of God with heartfelt worship: “I will sing of your love and justice” (Ps 101:1). God is praised as a “father to the fatherless and defender of widows” (Ps 68:4-5) and a worker of justice for the oppressed (Ps 103:6) and poor and needy (Ps 140:12).

### Psalm Seven

In the seventh Psalm, God is beseeched for help from adversaries. The appeal is made on the basis of justice and God’s character. The psalmist assumes no favoritism but appeals to God’s knowledge of truth and fairness.

Lord my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands—  
if I have repaid my ally with evil or without cause have robbed my foe—  
then let my enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground  
and make me sleep in the dust. (Ps 7:3-5)

The Psalm invokes the wrath of God, or rightful indignation and anger at injustice and appeals for miraculous intervention to establish justice:

Arise, Lord, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies.  
Awake, my God; decree justice.  
Let the assembled peoples gather around you, while you sit enthroned over them  
on high.  
Let the Lord judge the peoples. Vindicate me, Lord, according to my  
righteousness,  
according to my integrity, O Most High.  
Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure—  
you, the righteous God who probes minds and hearts. (Ps 7:6-9)

The Psalmist describes the active judgement of God as grounds for faith and worship:

My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.  
God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day.  
... will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness;  
I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High. (Ps 7:10,17)

## Psalm Seventy-Two

The seventy-second psalm is an enthronement psalm to be sung at the coronation of a new king. The primary focus of this psalm is pleading with God to make the new king a champion of justice. The king is to judge cases, pursue justice, protect the vulnerable, and crush the oppressor.

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor. (Ps 72:1-4)

The psalmist prays that the powerful king would use that power to protect vulnerable people from unjust use of power and violence.

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. (Ps 72:12-14)

### **Justice in Wisdom Literature**

Many of the proverbs extol the virtues and importance of justice. A just king gives the nation stability (Prv 29:4). Corrupt officials who take bribes pervert justice (Prv 17:23). “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern (Prv 29:7).” Wisdom’s monologue in the opening includes, “I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice (Prv 8:20).” The righteous “care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern (Prv 29:7).

The LORD’s particular solidarity with the poor appears in Proverbs as well. Kindness to the poor is considered a loan to the LORD, who will repay the lender (Prv



19:17). On the other hand, “whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker (Prv 17:5).” In fact, God reverses the power dynamic by mocking the mockers and showing favor to the humble and oppressed (Prv 3:34). Echoing the prophets (Is 58, Am 5), prayers of those who ignore compassion and justice for those who suffer, will not be heeded by the LORD: “Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered (Prv 21:13).” Kings are warned against the dangers of alcohol, “lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights (Prv 31:5).”

### **Justice in the Ministry of Jesus**

#### Reorientation of Divine Favor and Wealth

Traditional wisdom interprets riches as a sign of God’s blessing; poverty and misfortune are signs of God’s wrath. Thus, traditional wisdom justifies social inequality as a divine mandate. Traditional wisdom reinforces the status quo. Jesus challenges this way of thinking.

In the Sermon on the Plain in Luke, as with the similar Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus pronounces a set of blessings and woes. These blessings and woes are surprising because of whom Jesus pronounces as “blessed” (also translated as “happy”) and to whom Jesus issues “woes.”

Jesus proclaims God’s blessing on the poor, hungry, weeping, despised, rejected, excluded and insulted (Lk 6: 20-22). God’s blessings are said to come to such people in the form of the kingdom of God, satisfaction of hunger, laughter or comfort, rejoicing, joy, and association with the prophets (Lk 6:20-22). God is shown to be on the side of the suffering.

In contrast, woe is proclaimed upon those accustomed to being regarded as blessed: the rich, the comfortable, the well-fed, those who laugh now, and those who receive popular praise (Lk 6:20-26). Woe is pronounced because they have already received their comfort (Lk 6:24); hunger and weeping are coming (Lk 6:25). This group is associated with false prophets (Lk 6:26).

Jesus rejects traditional wisdom by reversing the attribution of blessing and woe. This subversive teaching undercuts all claims of divinely mandated legitimacy for socio-economic disparity. With just a few simple statements, Jesus turns the world upside down, reversing everything the world thinks it knows about power, prestige, wealth and divine favor.

This reversal is also revealed in the daily events of Jesus' life. Jesus embraces those whom society rejects. Jesus dines with tax-collectors and sinners (Mt 9:9-11). Jesus welcomes lowly children when his disciples' instinct is to shew them away (Mt 18:5-7). Jesus speaks well of despised Samaritans (Lk 10:25-37, Lk 17:17-19) and breaks social norms by crossing racial, cultural, and gender barriers in his ministry (Jn 4:9). In contrast, Jesus follows the prophetic tradition in that he is often in pointed conflict with the established leadership, particularly religious leadership.

Jesus teaches his disciples not to store up "treasures on earth", which is temporary and fleeting (Mt 6:19). Rather, the prudent disciple should pursue treasures in heaven, which are imperishable (Mt 6:20). Jesus describes wealth, not as the just reward for a virtuous life, but as an idol leading people away from God (Mt 6:24) and entrapping their hearts (Mt 6:21).

## Reorientation of Power

The reordering of power is fundamental to the work of justice. Injustice is the abuse of power. Injustice disorders power for the benefit of the powerful over the less powerful. Justice reorders power to establish fairness and equity.

Jesus introduces a radical re-ordering of power in which one willingly chooses to relinquish power and status and uses one's strength in service of others rather than self. When Jesus sees selfish ambition creep up within his own disciples, he counsels against the misuse of power, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them (Mt 20:25)." In contrast, the disciples are taught an alternative approach to authority and leadership: servant-leadership.

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mt 20:26-27)

Jesus moves beyond advocating for servant-leadership by demonstrating it in his life. In the gospel of John, Jesus strips off his outer clothing, wraps a towel around his waist and proceeds to do the humble and lowly duty of washing his disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17). Paul cites both the incarnation and the crucifixion as examples of Christ's servant-leadership which Christians should emulate:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil 2:6-8)

## Mission Statement for the Ministry of Jesus

In the gospel of Luke, the baptism of Jesus is immediately followed by a visit to the synagogue of Nazareth for Jesus' first public teaching. Jesus is handed the scroll of Isaiah, searches for a certain text (Is 61:1-2), and reads:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk 4:16-21)

This Old Testament scripture passage serves as a sort of mission statement to define all that follows in the ministry of Jesus. The healings, teachings, exorcisms, prophetic rebukes, and symbolic action all aim at setting people free and announcing the Lord's favor.

## Three-Fold Holistic Healings

The freedom which Jesus pursues throughout his ministry takes on three dimensions: physical, spiritual and social. An illustrative example is the healing of the Leper in Luke 5.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him. (Lk 5:12-13)

In this story, the physical implications are immediately apparent. The man is set free from a horribly debilitating skin condition. It could reasonably be inferred from this

and similar healing stories in Jesus's ministry that this encounter had a positive spiritual impact on the man as well. It is also significant to consider the social implications of the actions of Jesus. By virtue of his leprous condition and the fear of contagion, the man was a social outcast. He was deemed untouchable, forbidden to live among others, and regarded as unclean. The emotional toll of such social isolation is difficult to fathom. Yet, Jesus touches the man. Significantly, Jesus touches the leper *before* he heals him. This symbolic act shatters social conventions. The man is included into human society and contact while in his diseased station. Then he is healed. Jesus then orders the man to present himself to the priest and offer the needed sacrifices, so that the entire community will embrace him once again (Lk 5:15).

The gospel of John records a healing of man born blind, which also illustrates this three-fold holistic healing in Jesus's ministry. Jesus heals the man, bringing physical relief. Spiritual growth is demonstrated when the man boldly declares the miracle and speaks well of Jesus to a hostile Pharisaic inquiry (Jn 9:13-33).

In addition to the physical and spiritual impact, there are social implications of Jesus' miracle. The story begins with the identifying mark of social isolation: "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind (Jn 9:1)?" The man's physical misery is exacerbated by an accompanying social stigma. The conventional community wisdom assigns sinfulness and divine displeasure to the bearer of a physical disability. This social stigma is made explicit at the end of the Pharisee's inquiry, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us (Jn 9:34)!"

Jesus works against this social stigma. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him (Jn 9:3).” Jesus redefines the man to his community. The man is no longer to be regarded as an object of wrath, but of reflected glory. The man is not condemned by God, but rather is chosen as a special instrument in God’s hands for reveling the Glory of God.

### Divine Judgment and the Least of These

Jesus reveals that the Son of Man will return in glory, sit on a throne as a king, and pronounce judgment: separating people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Mt 25:31-33). The surprise of the periscope is the criteria to be used in this judgment.

Traditional religious behaviors are conspicuously absent in Jesus’s rubric; tithing, Bible knowledge, creedal fidelity, and church attendance records are not mentioned. Rather, each person will be judged by a very different standard: their conduct toward those who suffer.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25:34-40)

In contrast, those whom have not fed the hungry, quenched the thirsty, hosted the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited the prisoner hear the words,

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41).” Jesus reveals such active succor for those who suffer as a divine mandate not to be ignored.

A further surprise is the radical identification and solidarity Jesus expresses with “the least of these (Mt 25:40, 45).” Jesus throws his lot in with the smallest, most insignificant, least powerful people on earth; he calls them his brothers and sisters. Echoing Genesis, Exodus, the Old Testament prophets and Proverbs (discussed above), Jesus considers an offense (even an omission) against people as an offense against himself. Similarly, kindness to the least is kindness to the king.

### **Justice and the Mission of the Church**

The mission of the church is to continue the mission of Christ. The church is described in the epistles as “the body of Christ,” disparate parts which together form one synergistic whole designed to fulfill the purpose of Christ (Rm 12, 1 Cor 12, Eph 4). Perceiving this, the apostles’ ministry continued the emphases of Jesus on holistic ministry and concern for the poor. From its earliest days, the fledgling church in Jerusalem developed a system of support for widows, which matures with the appointing of a special committee to oversee the system (Acts 6:1-7). This is continuous with the Old Testament emphasis on the provision for the *quartet of the vulnerable* and Jesus’s own concern for the *least of these*.

When Paul consults with the apostles in Jerusalem, after a thorough evaluation of his beliefs and ministry, the one direction they urge him toward is care for the poor:

James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed

that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along. (Gal 2:9-10)

Paul and his companions make good on this promise as they take up collections to alleviate those living in famine-struck land (2 Cor 8:1-3), mobilizing churches they work with to become sources of financial support for their destitute brethren. James continues to emphasize this in his own epistle, “religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (Jas 1:27).

The early church continues the work of Jesus in breaking down racial barriers as it incorporates gentiles (Acts 9:15) and those of various socio-economic status (1 Cor 11:21). The early church espoused radical equality, a sharp contrast with the stratified society surrounding it: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The entire epistle of Philemon is an exhortation, using every conceivable motivational strategy, to obtain the release of a slave.

It is imperative that the contemporary church, the body of Christ in today’s world, continue the work of justice which is so thoroughly emphasized in the scriptures and rooted in its history. A church blind to the injustices around it and unconcerned about the suffering will not be reflective of its savior, nor a compelling witness to its community. This holds as true for the church in Ghana as for anywhere in the world. The church of Ghana must rediscover the importance of biblical justice as a theme in scripture and mandate for ministry.



PART THREE

MINISTRY PRACTICE

## CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT

The ultimate goal of the Justice Thread curriculum is to provide a practical and culturally appropriate tool for the training of Ghanaian churches in biblical justice, with particular emphasis on the crime of child trafficking. Further, we aim for this curriculum to be embraced across the theological spectrum in Ghana and utilized widely in churches. We hope that a wide-spread study of this material will mobilize churches in Ghana to advocate for justice in their communities and turn the tide in Ghana against human trafficking. In order for this to take place, the curriculum will need to be effective at impacting minds (cognitive), hearts (affective), and hands (behavioral).

### **Cognitive Curriculum Goals**

Justice is not a common theme of study or discussion in Ghanaian churches. It is not thought to be an important theme in scripture or mandate for Christian life and ministry. Further, the particular injustice that IJM seeks to end, child trafficking, is not well understood. The curriculum aims to change this by changing minds.

Participants will learn to discern the high importance and prevalence of the theme of justice in the Bible and understand concepts such as justice and injustice, shalom, holistic ministry, and God's particular concern for the vulnerable. Participants should

perceive contending for the oppressed as an essential function of the church and its leadership. Finally, participants will be made aware of the problem of child trafficking in Ghana and the relevant laws against it.

### **Affective Curriculum Goals**

An act of injustice is, by its very nature, an emotional event. An unjust misuse of power always has a victim, someone who is harmed and whose rights are violated. In addition to the tangible harm suffered, victims of injustice must bear the additional weight of a feeling of powerlessness and vulnerability. The community around the victim, including loved ones and neighbors, also bear the weight of this unjust action in the form of grief, fear, and outrage. Ideally, these heightened feelings in the community lead to appropriate corrective action. Unfortunately, when this act of injustice becomes the norm and is rarely or never punished or corrected by proper authorities, these feelings in the community can fade to numbness, despair and resignation. Sadly, this is the case with many significant crimes in Ghana.

In order to affect change, this curriculum must restore to participants, their God-given outrage at injustice while also providing hope that the God of justice can and will bring positive change. Only then can they dare to envision themselves as taking part in this change. Participants will feel a heightened sense of outrage at injustices in their communities (such as child trafficking) and the abuse of power which perpetuates them. Participants feel inspired by God's heart for justice and commitment to the oppressed. Participants will grow in courage and determination to stand up to oppressors. Finally, participants feel personally equipped for a life of justice-embracing pastoral leadership.

### **Behavioral Curriculum Goals**

Thoughts and feelings alone will not rescue slaves. Nor will they stop the abusive hands of their oppressors or transform a community. The curriculum must drive toward action. The curriculum aims not just to transform the hearts of the participants but to mobilize them as catalysts in their communities to build a movement. It will urge them to take courageous stands for justice and become agents of change.

The curriculum will aim for participants to share what they've learned about biblical justice with others. It is hoped that church leaders lead the *Justice Thread* curriculum in their churches and incorporate biblical justice themes into their preaching. Participants will be encouraged to take an active role in opposing injustices in their communities through advocacy and reporting of criminal cases to the authorities or to IJM. Lastly, participants will begin to confront injustices they encounter through moral authority, rooted in the scriptures.

### **Ecclesiastical Curriculum Goals**

An unused curriculum is useless. For this project to be truly successful, it needs to be utilized by more than the International Justice Mission team in Ghana. It needs to be embraced by various denominations and church networks in Ghana and taught. Therefore, implementation must include developing a sense of ownership and buy-in from prominent church leaders.

The curriculum's implementation has already benefited from prominent Ghanaian church leaders and scholars officially endorsing and promoting the curriculum at its official launch. This helped establish local credibility. It is hoped that pastors, denominations, and church networks will commit to teaching the curriculum on a large scale. Pastors' conferences around IJM's project area (Lake Volta) will continue to be arranged to study the curriculum.

### **Pedagogical Strategies**

While the theme of biblical justice is not well understood in Ghana, the authority of the Bible is paramount. Biblical literacy is high. Christians revere the Bible as the Word of God and the authoritative rule for faith and practice. If justice is to become an emphasis of the church of Ghana in the future, the case must be made that justice is a major theme and imperative of the Bible. Thus, the curriculum will thoroughly ground all discussions of justice in the Bible.

The curriculum takes the form of an eight-week interactive Bible study discussion. Each lesson is designed to be used in the traditional church Sunday school hour, which is usually led by the pastor preceding the worship service. The lessons can be equally effective in a small home group setting, but these are less common in Ghana. Participation is maximized by utilizing a discussion format. A group leader training section is provided at the beginning of the material, as well as leader's notes throughout the lessons. All training necessary for group leadership is contained within the curriculum.

There is a long and infamous history of foreign missionary efforts and development organizations failing in their efforts because they fail to study the culture and contextualize their message. When a resource is clearly culturally illiterate, it loses credibility. When a resource feels “foreign,” it might be a sort of intellectual curiosity, but it loses power for life transformation and application. Foreign teaching reveals “how foreigners live,” in contrast to “how we Ghanaians do things here in our culture.” One of the most detrimental accusations leveled against IJM Ghana in a public forum was when a member of parliament criticized a rescue operation and arrest of traffickers (by the police) as the work of “a foreign NGO with no understanding of our local culture and traditions.” One adjustment IJM has made in response is to avoid using any non-Ghanaians in rescue operations. The rescue must look and feel (and be) Ghanaian in order to have a transforming effect and have moral authority.

In the same way, it is imperative that the resource feels as authentically Ghanaian as possible, even though the principle author is an American expat. I have sought to be an avid student of Ghanaian culture during my two years living in Ghana and hope it shows in the writing of the curriculum. This curriculum is a highly contextualized presentation for the Ghanaian Christian audience. It utilizes Ghanaian themes, imagery, humor, traditions, and culturally specific examples. This was a collaborative effort with many of my Ghanaian colleagues as IJM.

## **Implementation**

The curriculum is designed to be used in a wide variety of contexts in Ghana and speak into a number of justice issues. For the immediate purposes of IJM, however, the

one place the curriculum must connect well is the area around Lake Volta. Therefore we concentrated our early implementation and assessment efforts on the shores of the lake. These are the communities with the highest prevalence of child trafficking. Many slave masters attend local churches in these regions. Many people seem to encounter victims of child trafficking on a regular basis. Impacting churches in these regions could lead to increased case referral and cooperation from the community in intervention efforts.

Further, if this curriculum is to be widely used in the church, it must appeal to pastors. Pastors are revered in as moral authorities. Since the pastor-led Sunday school format is far more common than home groups led by lay people, pastors set the agenda for biblical study in churches. Therefore, we focused our early implementation and assessment on pastors in the fishing villages along the shore of Lake Volta.

### Ecumenical Councils

In order to gather large numbers of fishing village pastors from diverse denominations, we sought partnerships with ecumenical organizations. Two large ecumenical organizations exist in Ghana. The Christian Council of Ghana is comprised of most mainline denominations, such as Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and A.M.E. Zion. The Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council gathers in fellowship most charismatic denominations such as the Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, Apostolic Church of Ghana, Christ Apostolic Church, and the Global Evangelical church. We began by networking with the national leadership of these ecumenical councils, as well as with the regional level leadership of these councils in the Volta Region. These high-level ecumenical leaders made phone calls and introductions for us to leaders of

local church councils in the communities we wanted to work in. Local church councils are based in a particular town and draw pastors from both ecumenical councils (mainline and charismatic) into regular fellowship and cooperation. The local church councils were formed all over Ghana by the Christian Council of Ghana back in the mid-twentieth century and continue to thrive in rural communities.

Our team made a series of multi-day road trips to visit the local church councils in three communities, which are extremely important for IJM's work: Kpando, Yeji, and Kete-Krachi. With each visit, we sought to build trust with the council and propose a joint venture with them of hosting a pastor's conference in their community to train pastors on biblical justice. Overtime, each of these councils became very enthusiastic about the project and contributed a great deal of time, energy, and resources to put on a "Justice Conference" in their community. The council in Yeji, which is the epicenter of child trafficking in Ghana, was the most difficult to win over and took several months longer than the others. They identified fear of reprisal as their primary reason for delay, but eventually took the courageous step of proceeding with the conference. In each case, the council was solely responsible for inviting and mobilizing participation. They sent representatives all over the coast line for at least two hours travel in either direction to invite pastors from the coastal villages. All together, these three local church councils mobilized over five hundred pastors and church leaders to attend a justice conference!



## Sponsoring Churches

The financial cost of each conference was approximately \$5,000, or \$15,000 in total. This cost includes transportation and food for all participants, lodging for those who travelled furthest, and honorariums for key speakers. Neither the local church councils, nor IJM's field office in Ghana, had the financial resources available to pay for these expenses. The participants were unlikely to attend if they bore the expense, as many were from impoverished villages with little to no salary from their churches.

To address the financial needs of the conferences, we developed strategic partnerships with American churches who are already interested and invested in IJM's work in Ghana. Eastern Hills Bible Church from Syracuse New York sponsored the Kpando and Kete-Krachi conferences and Westwood church from Minneapolis sponsored the conference in Yeji. In all three cases, these churches paid for the conference expenses and sent representatives from their churches to participate, offer greetings, and assist with logistics. Each of these churches has committed to a long-term annual investment in continuing these conferences in the future. Their long-term commitment will help this work continue long after my time in Ghana is complete.

## International Justice Mission

In addition to the local church councils and the American church partners, the third partner necessary for this project's ongoing success is International Justice Mission. Great care was taken to consult with IJM's leadership in Ghana for direction on how to make this a resource useful to them. The legal department contributed a summary of Ghanaian anti-trafficking laws. The legal and investigation departments contributed to

the appendices which equip participants to investigate and report cases of child trafficking. The church and community mobilization department were engaged in every phase of the curriculum's development, field testing and revisions. Finally, Gary Haugen officially endorsed the curriculum.

### **Assessment and Development**

The IJM mobilization team organized a series of conferences for pastors in the IJM project area themed around biblical justice. Each “justice conference” began with a one-day plenary session with a keynote speaker on biblical justice (including the general secretary for the Christian Council of Ghana for the Kete-Krachi conference), testimonies from child trafficking victims, legal briefings from IJM lawyers, music from an Ghanaian singer-song writer from Accra, an IJM documentary, and discussion groups. A select group of those pastors who attended these conferences were invited to stay overnight and attend a Bible study workshop utilizing the *Justice Thread* material. Each workshop began the evening after the main conference and continued the next day. Approximately two hundred and forty pastors and church leaders participated in these *Justice Thread* workshops.

#### Field Testing at the Justice Conferences

These workshops doubled as field tests for the curriculum. We recruited small group leaders from the local church councils, from the IJM church mobilization staff, and from the teams sent by the American churches (which were pastors and church leaders themselves). We provided a pre-conference training of the trainers for these leaders and

then assigned a group of pastors to each of them in the workshop. In each workshop, we did four or five of the sessions in small groups and I summarized the remaining lessons and the introduction from up front. It was a high volume of rigorous Bible study compressed into a relatively short period of time, but the students were eager and the group leaders were highly enthusiastic about the project.

After each workshop, we assessed the curriculum in three ways. First, we gave all participants a written survey in which they were asked to quantitatively rate the curriculum on clarity, organization, biblical faithfulness, motivational power, and likelihood that they would teach it in their churches. The survey then asked a number of open-ended questions looking for ideas for improvement. An example of a completed survey is supplied in Appendix Two.

With one hundred and one respondents, survey participants rated the curriculum highly in all the categories with biblical faithfulness (9.43/10) and motivational power (9.6/10) being the most highly rated. Organization and clarity received the lowest marks (9.02/10). The likelihood of participants teaching the curriculum in their churches (9.27/10) was high and varied strongly depending on the role of the participants within their churches. Pastors tended to answer in the affirmative while non-pastors expressed a desire for it to be taught, while acknowledging that they may not be in a position to do the teaching or leading.

The final question of the survey asked for suggestions for improvement. The most common responses involved an expansion of the implementation of the material. Twenty-six respondents expressed a desire for more training conferences in the future. Twelve respondents expressed the need for it to be taught in island and coastal villages with high

prevalence of child trafficking. Three wanted to see the course taught to government authorities. Seven requested that the conferences to train pastors on the curriculum be expanded beyond the two days they experienced, to either three days or a full week due to the level of content. The curriculum is designed to be taught in eight segments, once per week; the pastor conferences used as field tests blitzed through in a day and a half. This left many participants desirous of more processing time.

A suggestion made by six of those surveyed was for the material to be translated into local languages. The curriculum is in English, which is the national language of Ghana and the language that public education utilizes in schools. Yet, Ghana is a nation with sixty-two recognized local languages, many of which have very distinct dialects within the language. Most Ghanaians speak several of these languages in addition to English. In more rural locations by Lake Volta, where we were field testing the curriculum, many participants feel more comfortable operating within the local language. Missiologists refer to a person's first language as their *heart language*. Not only do people feel more comfortable and confident participating in a discussion in their native language, but it has more potential to reach them at a deep and transformative level. In further discussions, participants agreed that priority should be given to translating the curriculum into the two most widely spoken languages in Ghana (particularly around Lake Volta): *Twi* (pronounced "chwee") and *Ewe* (pronounced "eh-way" or "ay-way"). We have since hired translators to fulfill this request.

We correctly assumed that all the literate pastors we would work with would be literate in English, the primary language of their education. However, we underestimated how much Ewe and Twi literacy there is among these pastors. Most significantly, the

field tests revealed that pastors leading discussion groups in a local language while using an English discussion guide have the added burden of having to translate the material to their participants. Having the guide already translated into that language will greatly relieve the stress on these discussion leaders.

Surveyed participants were asked open-ended questions regarding the personal outcome of the study. The first question was designed to measure success in achieving cognitive goals: “What have you learned from this workshop?” The response was encouraging. One respondent wrote, “I learned God is just and loves all no matter their condition. God wants leaders to be just and stop being unjust to their people. Church leaders should preach justice in their churches.” A second remarked, “I have learned that God sees the pain and hears the cries and suffering of the oppressed.” A third reflected, “I have learned that everybody, including the poor and widow, are created in the image of God so I have to be at peace with all. I learned I must provide for their needs. I must avoid injustice. I must confront wisely leaders who abuse peoples’ rights.” More responses can be found below in Appendix Two. These responses, as well as the quality of discussion observed indicate that cognitive goals were met.

Another open-ended question was intended to measure success in achieving both affective and behavior goals: “How will this course affect your life and ministry?” A participant wrote, “This programme has changed my attitudes toward the vulnerable in society.” Another shared, “I now have compassion for the oppressed. At the ministry I organize, I will teach them about justice and pray for justice.” A third responded, “I now have a burden to raise a team to reach out to the children on the Volta Lake and elsewhere to be liberated.” These responses, and others found in Appendix Two,

indicated to the implementation team that affective goals had been achieved and participants were expressing intentions, which if fulfilled, would meet behavioral goals.

To supplement our written survey, we sought verbal feedback from participants as Ghana is more of an oral culture and many feel more comfortable in this medium. To reduce potential barriers to the giving of honest feedback, we used a Ghanaian IJM staff member who had not presented the material to solicit verbal feedback. This verbal feedback was recorded and incorporated into each round of curriculum revision.

The third form of assessment was done through debriefing with small group leaders. I met with small group leaders after each workshop and asked for feedback, ideas for improvement, and insights into how their groups were responding. Small group leaders from IJM and from the American church partners kept detailed notes and submitted those after the workshop.

After each workshop, I thoroughly revised the curriculum based on input received. After the first workshop, we rebranded the curriculum as “The Justice Thread” based on an opening analogy I gave when introducing the material comparing the Bible to Ghanaian *Kente* cloth. This informal introduction was also written down and included in the curriculum. The leader’s guide was revised and moved toward the end of each chapter, as per the urging of some group leaders. Several lessons were judged to be too long and were trimmed down to meet time limitations.

## Informal Testing at Other Venues

In addition to the justice conference workshops, where we formally field tested the material, we also tested it informally by using portions of it at a variety of other venues. We led the Singers Artists Speakers Association (SASA) through it at their weekly gatherings. We used portions of it to train our newly formed IJM volunteer team. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EP) asked us to train 150 of their district supervisor pastors in biblical justice in preparation for their participation in *Freedom Sunday* with IJM so we used a portion of the curriculum for this purpose. At each venue, informal feedback was received and incorporated.

## Promotion

### Endorsements

At one of the field tests, it was discerned the curriculum would benefit from endorsements. This is because the curriculum's theological emphasis was so different from many churches are accustomed to. Also, it directly challenges perpetrators of various injustices, some of whom are violent criminals. Finally, it calls out injustices and abuses associated with the prosperity gospel and for-profit prophecy, which are quite popular in Ghana. Thus, we expect opposition. Endorsements from well-known and regarded church leaders could provide much needed cover and legitimacy when this opposition arises. It will also open doors for future utilization and give pastors confidence in using it.

I sent the manuscript to three prominent Ghanaian academics: two seminary professors at Trinity Theological Seminary whom I met at the EP training, and one

religious studies professor at the University of Ghana, whom I consulted with throughout the project. All three professors provided helpful feedback and endorsements. I did the same with seven prominent denominational and ecumenical leaders and have received endorsements so far from two of them (and intentions to do so from the rest). We added Gary Haugen's endorsement to the Ghanaian church scholars to rally participation among IJM staff.

### **Outdooring**

In Ghanaian culture, when a baby is born, he or she is kept inside the house and away from visitors for a period of time to protect the infant from disease. Once a baby reaches a certain threshold, usually at least eight days, an outdooring ceremony can be scheduled in which the baby is brought outside and introduced to the community. Relatives and friends gather for this outdooring event to meet the new child. Ghanaians tend to introduce new ventures, organizations, and projects in a similar way. Ghanaians love formal ceremonies to officially launch new ventures. Sometimes these launch events are even called "outdoorings."

We held an official launch ceremony, or outdooring, on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to introduce the curriculum to church leaders and Christian media outlets. Many of the prominent church leaders and scholars who endorsed the curriculum publicly read their endorsements and shared reflections on the resource. We were honored to have as the chairman of the event the Apostle Professor Opoku Onyinah, former chairman of both the Church of Pentecost and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council. Other endorsement speakers included Cyril Fayose, (General Secretary of the Christian Council



of Ghana), Professor Abamfo Atiemo of the University of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe of Calvary Baptist (former General Secretary of CCG), and Akpene Nyomi (representing her husband Setri Nyomi, professor at Trinity Seminary and also former General Secretary of the World Council of Reformed Churches). The Ghana Police Service, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the country director of IJM, and a member of the Parliament of Ghana all spoke in support of the project. We were led by a local artist, Selorm, in *The Justice Song*, inspired by IJM's work and viewed *The Deep Place*, a film telling the story of an IJM client rescued from Lake Volta. I gave an overview of the book and gifts of printed copies were distributed. A large number of media outlets were present. It was a truly wonderful introduction of *The Justice Thread* to the public. We hope and pray that the momentum will be sustained and the resource utilized.

I recruited my former church, University Covenant Church in Davis, California, to sponsor the launch event, the translation of the curriculum and the printing of twelve thousand copies with a gift of \$22,000. We will offer these copies to Ghanaian church denominations at a slightly discounted rate. All proceeds collected from the sale of the curriculum will go towards either printing more copies, the care of rescued victims of child trafficking, or future rescue operations. Orders are beginning to come in for copies of *The Justice Thread* from various churches and the general secretary for the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (Immanuel Barrigah) has pledged to distribute copies to the leaders of all two hundred denominations comprising the council. We are excited by the warm welcome this work has received so far by church leaders in Ghana and are hopeful it will be well utilized.



## **Endorsements**

“The Justice Thread is a straightforward and helpful study tool that serves to connect the church with God’s inexorable love for the poor and His deep heart for justice.”

**-Gary Haugen**

Founder and CEO, International Justice Mission

"Human rights advocates are doing their best to bring justice to the forefront, but they have their limitations as they do this from a humanistic perspective. Very few Christians have written on justice from a Christian perspective. This lack is what this study guide attempts to address. Reading it will help you understand the basic principles of justice from a biblical perspective. You and your group need this resource material."

**-Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyina**

Chairman, Church of Pentecost, Ghana

This is a great resource that is needed for our times. It is long overdue. In this booklet, Christians have a useful guide to strengthen our faithfulness to God in responding to His calling to be witnesses to God’s love, mercy, might and justice. We are very grateful to the International Justice Mission for spearheading this important work.

**-Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, Ph.D.**

General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches  
(March 2000 to August 2014)

Senior Lecturer at Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana

Ordained minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

Ghana’s Coat of Arms boldly displays “Freedom and Justice” as a core value. Ghanaians have been very enthusiastic in affirming and asserting our freedom since independence. Justice, however, has not received much traction in our understanding and application.

In this study material by Matt Robbins, he delves into the definition and nuances of justice. Using biblical, linguistic and historical texts, he shows us the importance of justice in the development of any society if the people want to experience peace, progress and prosperity. This is the reason why the Bible exhorts humanity to ensure that there is justice for all, especially for the four

vulnerable groups: widows, orphans, foreigners and the poor. Trafficked children in particular receive attention in the study.

The Justice Thread curriculum is a rich study of the issues of justice. It offers practical insight and steps to rescuing trafficked children. It equips the reader, whether an individual or a group, with the skills and tools for advocacy. I heartily endorse its use in our churches and communities

**-Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe**

Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Accra

Former General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana

This curriculum is a very useful resource. It can be used by churches as well as every group of people who are concerned about the injustices in society and would like God's intervention to bring about justice and God's righteous reign on earth. The suggestion of how the group should sit in a circle gives the feeling of inclusiveness and the participation of all group members exhibits justice in dealing with each other and doing right by all.

The most important part of the curriculum is that it is Scripture-based in the Word of God, the Bible. This makes it different from any ordinary book on righteousness and justice.

The topic of justice and righteousness is inexhaustible and I would suggest that the Scriptures and examples in this curriculum could be used as a springboard on the topic, and users anywhere and at any time could add on as they use the resource.

Good work by IJM.

**-Rev. Dr. Dorothy BEA Akoto, Ph.D.**

Academic Dean and Senior Lecturer in Biblical Hebrew,  
Old Testament, and Gender Studies

Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana

District Pastor, Kisseman District

Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

With the publication of this book, the International Justice Mission has provided a long-desired resource needed to equip the whole church to uphold justice and pursue mercy as a Christian life-style. Christian leaders concerned about the neglect of issues of justice as a major part of the call to discipleship now have material to disciple their church members. Church leaders, committed to making holistic disciples, can realize their goal more easily by using the material in this book. It is a strong Bible-based interactive study written in a language and style easily accessible to everybody who can read and write. Now ordinary Christians can understand their calling to uphold justice and pursue mercy, and hopefully, respond in obedience.

**-Rev Dr. Abamfo Atiemo, Ph.D.**

Former Head of Department for the Study of Religions,  
University of Ghana  
Minster of the Grace Presbyterian Church, West Legon

This is a precious and priceless piece. It contains simple, straight to the point and self-explanatory sentences and yet is a brilliant Bible-based booklet that delivers God's mission for justice to God's people everywhere irrespective of social status or situation. This is certainly a worthy work tool for the arsenal of any serious social justice student. I have one.

**- Rev. Dr. Cyril Fayose, Ph.D.**

General Secretary Christian Council of Ghana  
Former President of Evangelical Presbyterian University College  
Former President of Trinity Theological Seminary

## **Dedication**

To my beloved colleagues at International Justice Mission who work tirelessly every day to rescue children and end child trafficking in Ghana and for the thousands of children still in need of rescue. Tell them we are coming.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Leo Ackon for his encouragement and companionship throughout this project. Leo's vision, insight, and enthusiasm was a driving force for the project and he wrote most of the prayers and conclusions.

Thank you to University Covenant Church for your generous financial support throughout the project and publication. Thanks also to Westwood Church, Eastern Hills Bible Church, Central Presbyterian Church, and Pole Line Baptist Church, Ken and Jean Robbins and Brett and Erin Arnold for your support as well! Special thanks to professors Abamfo Atiemo, Dorothy BEA Akoto, Setri Nyomi, and Mark Labberton for their insights and encouragement.

Many thanks to everyone at International Justice Mission for all their incredible support and inspiring work. Your patient steadfast faithful labour is changing the world one rescued child at a time. A special acknowledgment is due Gregg Conley and Monica Nettey from the IJM legal team and to the IJM investigations team for their contributions with regard to Ghanaian law and intervention strategy. Thanks to drivers Randy Jones Amediku, Henry Agbeko, Robert Odoi, and Samuel Opare for always getting us to the field and back safely!

Thanks to Enoch Asmah, Selorm Tamakloe, Leo Ackon, Ken Kaiser, Brian Suter, Chaz Nichols, and Dan Mans for field testing this material all over Ghana with me. I will always remember fondly these adventurous road trips. Thanks to the Local Council of Churches in Kpando, Kete-Krachi, and Yeji for hosting our field tests and partnering with us on Justice Conferences in your communities. Thanks to all my great editors, including Dianne Marty, Dorinda Bosu, Thomasine Laib, Lauren Agnew, and the justice team from Westwood Church. Thanks to Landon Ellis for the cover design.

Thank you Joy Robbins for your Kente photography, your patience, and your many sacrifices during this project!

Thank you to Gary Haugen for introducing me to the God of Justice, whom I never knew before, but now find everywhere and love with all my heart.

Thank you most of all to each of you who will use this curriculum to teach others. May eyes be opened, lives be changed, and justice be done. To God be the Glory!

Osofo Kwame Matthew Robbins

---

## INTRODUCTION

### THE JUSTICE THREAD

---

#### **Kente Weaving and the Bible**

Few things can be said to be more authentically Ghanaian than the weaving of Kente cloth. Kente is a woven cloth made of silk and cotton threads forming colorful and complex designs rich with symbolic meaning. It is the favorite cloth of chiefs and is often used in celebrations such as graduations and weddings.



Kente weavers stretch out a great length of parallel threads running vertically and then methodically weave a variety of colored threads horizontally (side to side) to create beautiful designs in the finished fabric.

The weaving of Kente cloth can help us understand the way God has woven together the Bible into a rich and ornate fabric with deep meaning for our lives and potential to transform our communities. As you read the Bible, you might notice a great number of stories about people. Each of these characters come and go, and the Bible moves forward beyond them. Imagine that each of these stories is a horizontal thread woven by a Master Kente Weaver.

If the stories in the Bible represent the horizontal threads, then what corresponds to the long vertical threads? Into what are these stories about people being woven? What are the long threads which hold them all together and form a coherent



whole? What are the long threads that run through the length of the Bible forming a great story and teaching us a great truth?



Since God is the main character of the Bible, these long threads are the characteristics of God that the Bible reveals. They are the great biblical themes of God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s faithfulness and God’s holiness. We see these themes on display throughout the many stories of the Bible: Creation, the Exodus, the history of Israel, the Coming of Christ, and the formation of the Church. Ask yourself, “What stories from the Bible have taught me that God is powerful?” You might think of the creation story or the parting of the Red Sea. What other stories that reveal God’s power come to mind? Now consider, “What stories from the Bible have taught you that God is loving?” You could make a list of many such stories, and if you did, you would be tracing the theme (or thread) of God’s power and God’s love throughout the Bible as it interweaves with the great stories of the Bible.

If a Kente weaver tried to weave Kente cloth with only horizontal threads (side to side), it would not work. It would be weaving into air. A Kente weaver who tried such a thing would end up with only a pile of thread on his or her shoes! No cloth could be made with only side-to-side threads. In the same way, it is not enough for a Christian to simply learn the stories of the Bible while neglecting the great themes of the Bible that teach us the character of God. This is what ties the fabric of the Word of God together and helps us see a rich and meaningful design.

In the same way, one could not remove one of the long threads from the middle of the cloth without severely damaging it and destroying the design of the maker.

Can you imagine a Bible that teaches that God is powerful but not that God is loving? What kind of faith would we have in this God? Perhaps we would be very afraid of this god, but we would never love him or have a relationship with him. Imagine a Bible that teaches God is loving but not powerful. What would our faith in this god be like then? Perhaps we would like this god, but we would not trust him with our lives. We might still be seeking protection from shrines and traditional religion thought to be more powerful than the God of the Bible. But no, the Bible reveals that the one true God is both powerful and loving and our faith reflects this knowledge.

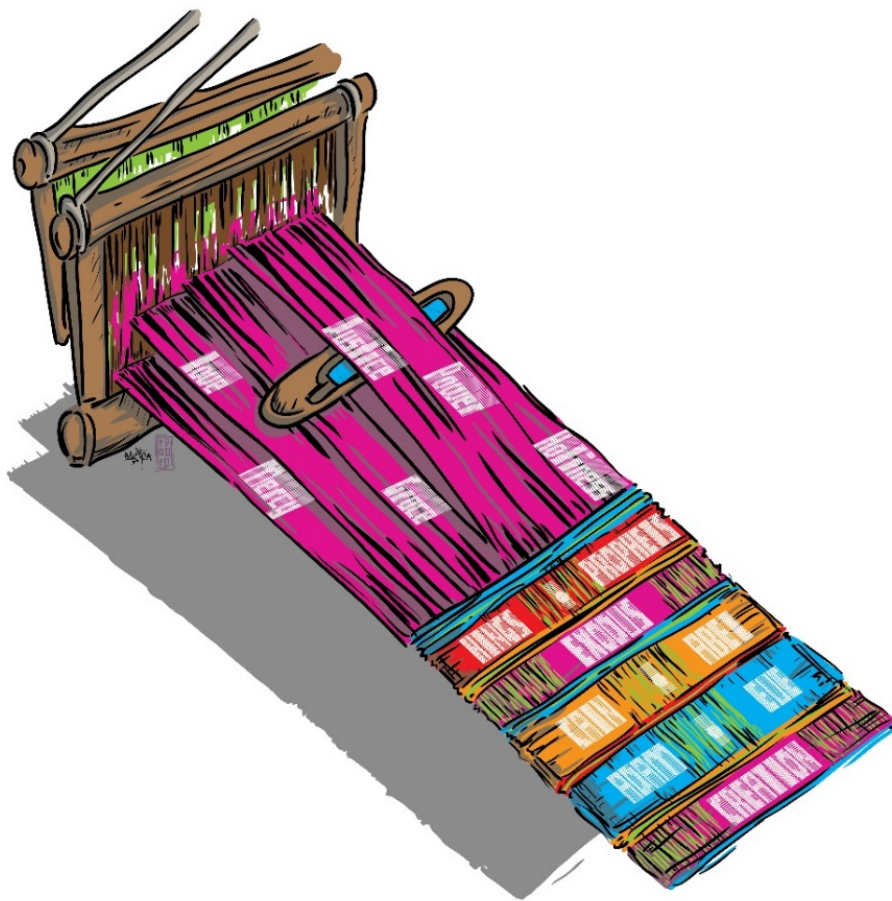


You cannot remove the thread of God's power or God's love from the Kente cloth of the Bible without severely damaging the design of its Maker. However, this is what sometimes happens in our churches when one of the important themes of the Bible is neglected or forgotten. One of the greatest themes of the Bible, which has been neglected and forgotten in a great many churches in Ghana and the world at large, is the theme of God's Justice.

The Bible teaches us that God is VERY passionate about justice. We see one example out of hundreds in Isaiah 61:8: "*For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing.*" As this study will demonstrate, justice is one of the central themes of the Bible. Yet it is not a theme we tend to talk about in our churches.

Can you imagine how incomplete your understanding of God would be if you never heard about God's love? Or God's mercy? What if you never learned that God is powerful and holy? Think how that would affect your life, your faith, your understanding of the Word of God! The Kente cloth would be less beautiful and complete and strong without those threads. Yet many of us have been missing a thread without even knowing it: THE THREAD OF JUSTICE. We are missing out!

This study traces the thread of justice that runs throughout the pages of the Bible. We begin with the creation of the world and God's perfect vision for the way people should treat one another. We then study man's fall into sin as we read stories about injustices such as Cain killing Abel and Joseph being sold into slavery. The Exodus story shows us that God is a rescuer of slaves and defender of the oppressed. We see God's heart for justice in the Old Testament laws defending vulnerable widows and orphans, foreigners and the poor. We see God advocating for justice through Judges and Kings and Prophets. Finally, we see true justice lived out and modeled for us in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We extend a warm welcome to you to join us on this journey following the justice thread through the pages and stories of the Bible.





Before we begin, it is important to note that the “justice thread” is one that makes a significant difference in the way a church behaves. It is a sad fact of history that some churches who have forgotten the justice thread have become complicit in acts of great injustice.

Ghana has two great monuments to the transatlantic slave trade: castles at Elmina and Cape Coast. Both of these castles contain churches in which European Christians worshipped God and professed faith in Christ just steps from Africans in chains. Many people rightly ask, “How can this be?” At least part of the answer is a neglect of the justice thread. Perhaps they just focused on other attributes of God such as God’s forgiveness of their sin without also learning about God’s call to justice. We need to heed the justice thread to avoid making similar mistakes.

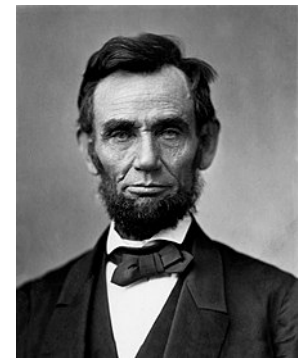


*Church in Elmina Castle, where European Christians worshipped just steps from where African slaves were held in chains.*



*Harriet Tubman, American abolitionist who, after escaping slavery herself, risked her life on 13 separate rescue missions that rescued seventy people from slavery via the “underground railroad.”*

However, we can be inspired by other Christians throughout history that took seriously the theme of justice in the Bible and thus became advocates of God’s justice in the world. We must take note of great Christian abolitionists that fought against the slave trade like William Wilberforce, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln.

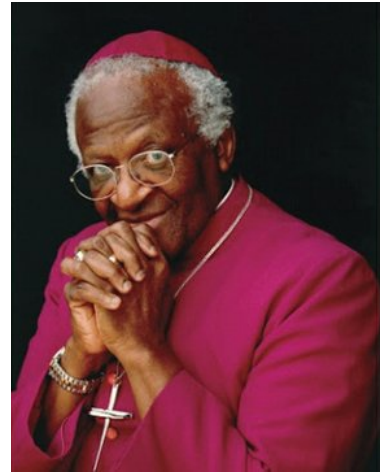


*American President Abraham Lincoln led the fight to abolish slavery in the United States.*

We must applaud modern Christian leaders like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Desmond Tutu who have fought for equal rights. These were all Christians who took the justice thread seriously and it changed their lives in a way that also changed the world.



*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Jr. who famously led the civil rights movement in the United States demanding equal rights for all people.*



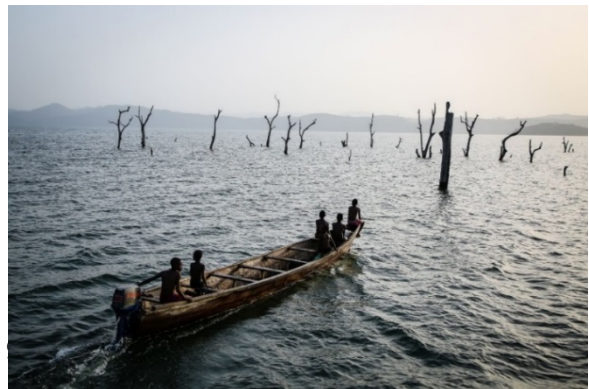
*Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who led opposition to Apartheid in South Africa, a system of racial segregation and discrimination.*

In Ghana today, we are confronted with many forms of injustice. We see injustice in gender-based violence, corruption, child abuse, abuse of power, victimization, work place inequalities, human trafficking, and land-grabbing, among many others. One particular form of injustice to which this curriculum will call attention is child trafficking, a modern form of slavery. Will generations in the future ask, “How can it be that Ghana was a devoutly Christian country but allowed child trafficking to continue?”

It is our prayer that those same future generations will be told the heroic stories of Ghanaian Christians who stood for justice in our society and ended many injustices including child trafficking.



*Perhaps your photo will one day be placed here as an example of a Christian hero who helped end child trafficking in Ghana!*



*Thousands of Children have been trafficked to Volta Lake, sold, or rented to boat masters to be used as cheap labour on fishing boats.*

---

## LEADER'S GUIDE

### THE ROLE OF SHEPHERD

---

Dear Leader,

Thank you so much for taking the time to lead your group in studying such an important theme in Scripture. We hope this study will be enjoyable, enlightening, and challenging for both you and your group. Your leadership role will be key in helping your group to grasp and embrace this important topic. Please allow us to share with you some suggestions on how you can lead in such a way as to maximize your impact.

#### **How to Feed Sheep**

The job of a pastor or church leader is to be a shepherd of Jesus' sheep. In John 21:16, Jesus told Peter, "Feed my sheep." Pastors have long understood this to mean "feeding God's people with the Word of God." We hope this Bible study helps to accomplish this sacred mission.

Leaders must ask themselves though, **how** does a shepherd feed his sheep? Do shepherds pick up the grass and push clumps of it into the sheep's mouth? Do shepherds chew the grass for the sheep? No! A good shepherd guides the sheep on the path to fresh water and green grass and then lets the sheep find it and eat it themselves. **The sheep have a role to play in their own feeding.**

The same is true in how we teach this curriculum. Our job is not to deposit information into them. Our job is to guide them on a path where they can find good food to eat. They must do much of the discovery and chewing themselves.

How do we do this? Mostly it is through **asking good questions**. In this curriculum, we walk them over to a portion of Scripture and ask them to look at it in a new way. We then give them our undivided attention as they search the Scripture, reflect, and process. We provide encouragement along the way. When they stumble upon fresh insight, we marvel at it and celebrate with them!

You might ask, "Why?" Isn't it easier and faster to simply preach the truth and tell them the facts directly? While that form of teaching has an important place, **there is also great power in self-discovery**. When you discover a new insight

yourself, you get something more than knowledge; you get excitement and ownership of the knowledge. You will remember it longer, you will repeat it more often, and you are more likely to apply it to your life. That's why we encourage our group leaders not to *preach* this material, but rather gently *guide* your group and ask questions and draw godly insights out of your people. **You know you have been very successful when your group begins to preach these truths to you!**

### Action Steps

- 1. Invite Your Group Members to Share Their Thoughts.** When you read a question or Scripture passage, seek group members' thoughts *before* providing them with any of your own knowledge. Be the best listener in the room!
- 2. Get your group to sit in a circle rather than in rows.** This will signal to the group that this is a mutual discussion instead of a lecture.
- 3. Make Each Group Member Feel Valued.** Show your group that you value their thoughts and give them lots of affirmation for their contributions.
- 4. Celebrate your group.** At the end of the entire study, express excitement and appreciation for their commitment, thoughts, and what you've also learned from them through the study. Celebrate them for a good job done and for making the conversation fruitful and impactful.

### **How to Guide Sheep**

Sheep are prone to wander. A little wandering is good. It means the sheep have a healthy desire to explore, but a lot of wandering can get them in trouble. A shepherd sets boundaries and gently rounds up strays. Good group leadership is similar.

In the same way, **leaders need to keep things moving in the right direction.** A good shepherd does this with gentleness. Time will move fast and we do not want to waste it. The group leader must be the judge of when time is being used well or not. If the group is really interested in a particular question and the discussion is bearing fruit for their understanding of biblical justice, slow down and let them linger in it. However, if the discussion is becoming repetitive or has moved off topic, gently get them back on track or move to the next question.

### Action Steps

5. **Keep Track of Time.** Do not let your group feel rushed, neither let time be wasted. Use your judgment on when to move to the next question or even skip a question (if it's already been answered) to ensure you finish the lesson in time.
6. **Maintain the Course.** Encourage discussion about biblical justice, but provide enough direction so that the conversation does not veer off track.
7. **Use the Leader Guide.** Whenever you see an asterisk (\*) after a question, it means that there is a leader's guide note for you about this question. You can find these leader's guide notes at the end of the lesson.

### **How to Guard Sheep**

Another role of a shepherd is to protect the sheep. In the case of leading this study, we suggest you watch out for these two dangers: *distraction* and *domineering*.

### Action Steps

8. **Minimize Distraction.** Ask your group to silence their phones or turn them off. Find a quiet place for your group to meet. Sit in a circle so that everyone can see and hear each other. Take responsibility for assuring the best possible environment for focused attention.
9. **Decrease Domineering.** Domineering is when one member of the group does most of the talking while others remain silent. If this continues, the group will miss out on the opportunity to hear from other group members and quiet members lose out on the chance to process their own thoughts with the group. We believe all sheep must eat and thus the group leader must ensure that **everyone participates**.

If one group member is dominating all the discussion, the leader must tactfully help draw out the others so that all group members are involved. This can be done by giving extra eye contact and attentiveness to the quieter group members, calling on them for their thoughts, and saying something like, "We've heard a lot from this member of the group, I'd love to hear from the rest of you as well."

**Final Word:** When you have completed the entire study, take time to ask your group to share some of the compelling things they have learned from the teaching. Week 8 has some questions that can guide the reflection.



---

## WEEK 1

# CREATION AND THE FALL

---

**Memory Verse:** Genesis 4:10

The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”

**Key Concepts:** *Shalom*, Image of God, Injustice

**Introduction** (Have a volunteer read this to the group)

In the beginning, God created a world with perfect *shalom*. Before humanity’s fall into sin, the Garden of Eden was a place of perfect health, righteousness, and peace. We often think of “the fall” as the moment when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, but that was only the beginning. Humanity kept falling. Cain killing his brother Abel was the next chapter of the fall. This introduced violent injustice into our world, which continues to grow through the chapters of the Bible and throughout our history.

Shalom is the Hebrew word we translate into English as *peace*. It is a word rich with meaning that the English word “peace” does not fully convey. In English, we might think of peace as the absence of war, but the Hebrew word Shalom implies a certain quality of relationships between people, tranquility, safety, well-being, and holistic health (physical and relational). Shalom is not merely the absence of violence, but also the presence of justice.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once asked his church to imagine that two men are fighting and one man successfully strikes the other so that he is knocked out and collapses on the floor with the first man standing over his unconscious body. Dr. King asked his church, “*Is this a picture of peace because the two men are no longer fighting?*” The answer is “no” because true peace (shalom) is not merely the absence of fighting, but the presence of justice.

The shalom in the Garden of Eden is not merely non-violent, but also includes the right relationship of all things to each other: God, people, animals, and plants. It was a place of health, justice, and peace. The shalom of creation is shattered by a series of sins. These sins are rebellions against God and unjust actions against human beings made in God's image. The result is a fallen world without shalom, full of *injustice*.

While the definition of justice can be difficult and will be the subject of this entire Bible Study series, let's begin with a definition of *injustice*, something we all intuitively recognize:

*“God intends for you to have life, liberty, dignity, well-being and the fruit of your love and labour. **Injustice** is when someone misuses power to take these things away from someone.”* -Gary Haugen, Founder of International Justice Mission

**Question:** What do you think of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s analogy? Can you think of situations that appear peaceful, but really are full of injustice and thus not truly shalom?

## **Bible Study Questions**

### **Read Genesis 1:26-27 (Creation of Humanity)**

- 1) What does it mean that God created men and women in His image? What does it tell you about the value of every human life?
- 2) In Genesis 9:6, God tells Noah that one reason why no person should be murdered is because each person bears the image of God. What does this tell you about the dignity and importance of every human life, even those people we might think are “beneath” us?

### **Read Genesis 4:1-12 (Cain and Abel)**

- 3) In verse 10, God tells Cain, “Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!” When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, it was a direct offense against God. This time, the sin is an attack on another human. God is also angry about this and treats an offense against a human as an offense against Himself.

- a. What does this teach us about the character of God?
  - b. Can we have shalom peace with God while refusing to give peace and justice to others?
- 4) In verses 11-12, God punishes Cain for the murder of Abel.
- a. Why? What purpose is served by the punishment of severe sins?
  - b. What would happen in our world if there were no punishment for acts of injustice such as murder?
  - c. Can you think of crimes in your community that are rarely or never punished?

**Read Genesis 37:18-36 (Joseph Sold into Slavery by His Brothers)**

- 5) Because of their jealousy and rivalry, Joseph's brothers commit the crime of child trafficking, the buying and selling of children for labour, a crime which still exists today. Those who practice child trafficking use two tools to enslave children: **violence** and **deception**. How are these two tools used by Joseph's brothers in this story?
- 6) In verse 36, the Midianite traders resell Joseph in Egypt for a profit. Children who've been trafficked onto Volta Lake are often sold many times to new masters, even rented out to other boat-masters for a small fee.
- a. How would you feel if your family sold you as a child?
  - b. How would you feel if someone did this to your child?
- 7) If Jacob learned the truth of what happened to Joseph and decided to try and rescue his son, what challenges would he face in finding and rescuing Joseph?
- 8) Many parents and aunties and grandparents in Ghana have been deceived into trusting someone to take care of their children, only to discover years later that they've been lied to and the children are treated badly and worked as child-slaves in a place such as Volta Lake. What challenges do these parents face in recovering their children?

## **Conclusion**

God's perfect plan is for all people to have right relationships with others and be treated with dignity and respect. God wants everyone to live in peace and have the freedom to live life to its fullest, no matter their race, social status or gender. The Bible teaches us to treat everyone with dignity (1 Peter 2:17a).

However, in our society today, many are being treated unfairly as a result of their vulnerability and lack of social prestige such as influence, wealth and education. Many are treated differently based on their economic and social status. This has led to the abuse of rights, oppression, violence and denial of basic human essentials such as health care, water, rest, leisure and freedom.

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord Almighty, I pray that You forgive me of any form of injustice I have committed against my fellow human beings. Please help me to be an instrument of your shalom to everyone I meet. Help me to see the image of God in everyone I meet. Lord, for all the children in the world today who have been trafficked, we ask for freedom, hope, and peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

---

## WEEK 2

# EXODUS: GOD OF JUSTICE, RESCUER OF SLAVES

---

**Memory Verse:** Exodus 3:7

The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.”

**Key Concepts:** Slavery, God is a rescuer of slaves, Sabbath as anti-slavery command

### Introduction

One of the most dramatic moments in the Old Testament is when God rescues the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is an event that is referred to throughout the Old Testament and came to define God’s relationship with His people. It also tells us a great deal about God’s character, His heart, and what really matters to Him.

The so-called “gods” of the Ancient World did not tend to care about the poor, the oppressed, and the enslaved. In fact, many of these “gods” behaved like slave-masters and criminals. Here in Ghana, there are shrines people visit to perform curse rituals in order to get a local “god” to do all sorts of harm to someone. In this way, the “gods” can become agents of injustice.

In the introduction to this study, reference was made to the transatlantic slave trade, and how the church was silent, even though there were chapels in places such as the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in those terrible centuries. Many who professed Christ did not link God’s thread of justice with their faith and therefore they surrendered to the “gods” of this world and could think only of their gain. Even after the abolition of slavery, the descendants of slavery continued to suffer violence and injustice. This was often at the hands of Christian who were ignorant of the “justice thread.”

This is never the case with the God of the Bible. God is always on the side of justice. The Exodus story reveals that the one true God cares deeply about victims of

injustice and that God is, in fact, a rescuer of slaves. God works for justice **by** His power, but **through** His people. He works through His people to bring freedom to the oppressed.

## **Bible Study**

### **Read Exodus 1:6-14 (Israelites Enslaved in Egypt)**

- 1) What was life like for the Israelites in Egypt? How would you describe their suffering?
- 2) What do you think God would say about enslaved persons who were forcibly taken from their homes in Africa and made to become slaves, they and their descendants, for hundreds of years in foreign lands?
- 3) Slavery still exists in the world today. A recent study by the United Nations affiliated International Labour Organization estimates there are more than 40 million people in slavery today.<sup>1</sup> This plague persists despite being outlawed everywhere in the world. The slave-masters prey on people who are weak, poor, or uneducated by using lies, tricks, or threats to enslave people. They sometimes pretend to be “helping” the poor, while actually taking advantage of them. They do not call it “slavery” anymore. They may call it “domestic servitude” in the Middle East, “bonded labour to pay off a debt” in India, or a “fishing apprenticeship” on Volta Lake in Ghana, but it is still slavery all the same. Slavery is when someone is forced to work, often without pay, and is not allowed to leave the job.

Would you recognize modern-day slavery if you saw it in your community?

### **Read Exodus 3: 1-10 (Moses and the Burning Bush)**

- 4) In Exodus 3:7 and 3:9, the LORD tells us what He has seen, what He has heard, and what He is concerned about. What does this verse teach us about God? What matters to God’s heart?
- 5) Does your heart reflect the heart of your God? In what ways are you concerned about those who suffer injustice?

---

<sup>1</sup> 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, published by International Labour Office (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- 6) In Exodus 3:8, God announces that He has come down to rescue His people from slavery. What do you think and feel about God being a “rescuer of slaves”?
- 7) In Exodus 3:10, God reveals that He will use an ordinary man (Moses) to stand up to the King of Egypt and rescue His people from slavery.
  - a. How do you think Moses felt when he heard this?
  - b. How would you feel if God asked you to stand up to a strong slave-master and set a slave free? Would you obey?

**Read Exodus 6:5-7 (The LORD is coming to the Rescue!)**

- 8) The King of Egypt refused to obey God and release his slaves, but God encourages the people to trust that He is coming to rescue them. How would you feel...
  - a. if you were a slave and your master refused to let you leave?
  - b. if you heard God say that He is coming to rescue you?
  - c. the day you were finally set free?

**Read Deuteronomy 5:6 (Introduction to the Ten Commandments)**

- 9) In Deuteronomy 5:6, God refers to the rescue from slavery as His introduction to the 10 commandments.
  - a. Why does God begin the commandments like this?
  - b. What does it tell us about God’s character?
  - c. What does it tell us about His relationship to His people?

**Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (The Fourth Commandment: Sabbath)**

- 10) What reason is given in Deuteronomy 5: 15 for why we should observe the Sabbath?
- 11) Deuteronomy 5:14 teaches that the Sabbath command is not just for us to rest, but that we must also give Sabbath to our children and to all those people who work for us.

- a. If we do not give our workers Sabbath rest, are we acting like the Egyptian slave-masters?
- b. If our house helpers or other employees work from dawn to dusk for seven days each week without at least a day's break, are we breaking the Sabbath commandment by not giving Sabbath rest to our workers?
- c. How does the Sabbath command break the cycle of slavery?

## DO YOU KNOW THE LAWS OF GHANA?

In 2005, in order to protect people in Ghana from modern forms of slavery, the government passed *The Human Trafficking Act*, which makes human-trafficking illegal in Ghana. It is against the law for anyone to recruit, transport, transfer, harbour, or receive a person for the purpose of exploitation. Furthermore, no one can exploit that person by threat, use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, trading in persons, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person, or by giving or receiving payments or gifts to gain the consent of a guardian of a person to be trafficked.

This means it is illegal for anyone in Ghana to buy a person, to threaten them, trick them, or take advantage of them in any way so they can be exploited for work. Moreover, Ghanaian law requires that anyone with information regarding a victim of child-trafficking MUST report that information to the authorities.

Moreover, there are also very strict rules governing the use of children for work.

- Children cannot be made to do work that deprives them of health, education, or development.
- Children may not work during school hours or between 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Children may not be employed before age 15.
- Children cannot be used for light work before age 13.

All of these rules were set down by the government of Ghana for the good of our country's children.

Romans 13:1-2 says, *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.”* This means that as Christians we are to follow the laws put in place over us. Accordingly, as Christians, we are required to obey the laws against trafficking and child labour in Ghana.



## **Conclusion**

We live in a world full of injustice in many forms. Murder, adultery, armed robbery, fraud, corruption and child trafficking abound. It can be depressing to think of it all. But there is some good news for us! As Gary Haugen says, “The good news about injustice is that **God is against it.**” This is the good news we read about in the Exodus story. God sees when His children suffer. God hears their cries. God is concerned about it. God uses His power and His people to rescue people, to fight injustice, and to right wrongs in the world. It is exciting that we may worship a God like that! It is an honour that we are invited to serve in His work of doing justice in the world. How might God use you?

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, I pray for the countless multitudes of people who are being oppressed and enslaved, and ask that You bring freedom and restoration to them all. My Father, please grant me the wisdom and courage to help in every way possible to bring freedom to the oppressed in my family, community and nation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **Leader’s Guide**

Today’s lesson focuses on the Exodus story. It is the goal of this lesson that your group members will come away with a greater understanding and appreciation of God’s compassion for those who suffer injustices at the hands of others. If that is all that is accomplished by your study today, it will still be a great success! Next week, we will study the definitions of righteousness and justice, but you are laying the foundation now by studying God’s heart and character, which are the foundations of biblical justice!

When discussing issues of injustice, your group members are likely to express a variety of emotions, including sadness, compassion, and anger. Please assure them that these are all OKAY.

God shows us He also has these feelings about injustice in the world. Please do not feel the need to calm them down. Instead, let your group members fully explore

the emotions connected with injustice. It will lead to a greater appreciation of our God, the God of Justice. It might become a great comfort to your group members to learn that God cares about their suffering. Emphasize this. But do not let them think only about their own suffering. Push them to also think about other people in your community who suffer injustice. Push them to consider those in other countries who suffer injustice. Challenge them to think about how God might use the people in this very room to do justice, similar to the way God used Moses.

Two notes about the final Scripture, the commandment to observe the Sabbath. First, note that the Sabbath command does not just say we should not work on the Sabbath. It also demands that we do not force other people to work on the Sabbath. If we are resting on the Sabbath, but demanding that our children and workers labour on the Sabbath (as child-traffickers and slave masters do), we are breaking the command in a very serious way. Second, note that the reason given for the Sabbath in Deuteronomy is the history of slavery. God did not rescue the Israelites from slavery just to see them enslave one another. That would be working against God's miracle. When one person enslaves another, he/she is taking the place of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and fighting against God Himself. When someone tries to free a slave, he/she is functioning as Moses and fighting on God's side with God's power.

---

## WEEK 3

# JUST LAWS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

---

**Memory Verse:** Proverbs 21:15

When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous  
but terror to evildoers.

**Key Concepts:** Righteousness (*Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah*), Corrective Justice (*Mishpat*), Duty of Government, Quartet of the Vulnerable (note: a quartet is a group of four)

### Introduction

In the Old Testament there are two important Hebrew words for justice that appear together frequently throughout the pages of the Bible: *Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* and *Mishpat*.

### **Bible Study: The Hebrew Word *Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* (Righteousness/ Being Just)**

*Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* can be translated as “being just”, but is more often translated as *righteousness*. It is important to know that when you read the word *righteousness* in the Old Testament, you are reading about justice.

In *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller writes, “*Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* refers to a life of right relationships...When most modern people see the word “righteousness” in the Bible, they tend to think of it in terms of private morality, such as sexual chastity or diligence in prayer and Bible study. But in the Bible, *tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* refers to day-to-day living in which a person conducts all relationships in family and society with fairness, generosity and equity.”<sup>2</sup> *Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* means that children respect and honour their parents. It means that parents nurture and provide for their children and always act in the child’s best interest. It means that neighbours are honest with each other and share with one another. *Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah* means that a husband and wife are faithful to each other and do not have extra-marital affairs. It means that employers pay honest wages to their workers and workers do not cheat or steal

---

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes us Just*, (New York: Penguin’s Book, 2010), 10

from their employers. People are treating each other with fairness, respect, honesty, generosity and love. This is Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah.

Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah can be understood well by examining the Ten Commandments.

### **Read Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (Ten Commandments)**

- 1) We defined Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah as a life of “right relationships”. How do you see this reflected in the Ten Commandments?
- 2) How many of the Ten Commandments govern the relationship of people with God? How many of the Ten Commandments govern the relationship of people with other people? \*
- 3) Notice that for most of the Ten Commandments, no punishment is listed. That is because the Ten commandments are examples of Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah, what it means to be a just person who lives in right relationships with God and others. If all people lived according to these rules, would we need police, jails, courts or even locks? \*

### **Bible Study: The Hebrew Word *Mishpat* (Justice/ Corrective Justice)**

The Ten Commandments reflect Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah, a vision of righteousness that, if all people followed, would result in peace and justice. Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world in which people sin and commit acts of injustice. Through greed and rebellion, by deception and violence, people break these commands, shattering shalom and abandoning Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah. Other people get hurt.

This is why God has also given us mishpat, or corrective justice. Mishpat calls upon societies and God-fearing people to correct injustices in the world. This is the word you most often see translated as *justice* in the Old Testament. Mishpat means punishing wrongdoers, caring for victims of injustice, and protecting the vulnerable from potential injustice. When God punished Pharaoh and rescued the Israelites, it was an act of Mishpat (justice) founded on the Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah (righteousness) of God’s character.

Much of the Torah consists of laws with punishments attached. Prophets, judges, and kings all have a role in enforcing these laws, correcting injustices and promoting justice in the land.

In a fallen world, the strong prey on the weak (Joseph attacked by older brothers, Israelites enslaved by Egyptians). To correct this, God sets up rulers, governments, and judges to advocate for justice.

- 4) What is the difference between Tzedeqah and Mishpat?

**Read Deuteronomy 16:18-20 (The Duty of Judges and Officials)**

- 5) In verse 18, what is the duty of the judges and officials?
- 6) What does verse 19 warn the judges and officials against? Why is this so important?
- 7) Do the leaders in your community follow the guidance of this Scripture? If not, what can be done about it?

**Read Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14 (A Prayer for the King)**

- 8) Psalm 72 is a prayer for the King.
  - a. What does the psalmist pray that God give to the King?
  - b. What does this psalm show as a primary duty of the King of Israel?
- 9) Reflect on your government and leaders in relation to Psalm 72:
  - a. Do they “judge the people in righteousness, the afflicted ones with justice?” (verse 2)
  - b. Do they “defend the afflicted among the people, save the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor?” (verse 4)
  - c. Do they “take pity on the weak and the needy” (verse 12) and “rescue them from oppression and violence?” (verse 14)
  - d. Do they “regard the blood of the oppressed as precious in the sight of God?” (verse 14)
- 10) How might your church encourage your government leaders to fight for justice?
- 11) What are some forms of injustice that occur in your community to which you would like to see corrective justice (mishpat) applied? What would justice look like in these cases? \*

## **Bible Study: Mishpat Laws for the Protection of the Vulnerable**

Throughout the biblical teachings on justice, there are four groups of people who are quite frequently mentioned: *widows, orphans/fatherless, foreigners, and the poor*. Theologians refer to these four groups as “**The Quartet of the Vulnerable.**”<sup>3</sup> In Israelite society, these four groups are identified as requiring special attention and care because of their unique vulnerability to injustice. Widows and orphans have no man to protect them and provide for them. Foreigners are minority groups and may lack language skills and social connections to protect them. The poor have less resources to fall back on in times of trouble and cannot afford a lawyer if they need one. In today’s world, we might add other groups to the list of those “most vulnerable” such as the mentally ill, the elderly, the homeless, single parents, and refugees. God consistently reveals throughout the Bible that He has a special place in His heart for these vulnerable groups. Righteousness and justice demand that we all join Him in extending an active interest in protecting and providing for these people.

“The *mishpat*, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity but a violation of justice, of *mishpat*. God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to “do justice.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Read Psalm 68:4-5 (Praise to God)**

12) God is called “father to the fatherless and defender of widows.” What significance do you see in this being a title of God?

---

<sup>3</sup> Quartet means group of four. If someone performs alone, they sing a solo. If two, then it is a duet. Three is a trio. Four is a quartet. The phrase “Quartet of the Vulnerable” is used to describe the four groups of vulnerable people who often appear together in scriptures about justice in the Bible: widows, orphans/fatherless, foreigners, and the poor.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes us Just*, (Penguin’s Book: Audible, 2016).

### **Read Deuteronomy 24:19-22 (Farming Law)**

13) How does this farming law show God's concern for the vulnerable?

### **Read Deuteronomy 14:28-29 (Tithing Law)**

Many churches teach on verse 28, but forget to study verse 29.

14) In verse 29, what was the tithe used for?

15) How was the tithe meant to advance justice for the vulnerable?

## **DEFINING BIBLICAL JUSTICE**

Based on what we have learned so far, a definition of biblical justice begins to emerge:

**To relate rightly to God (through loyalty and devotion), to relate rightly to other people (through fairness, honesty, and generosity), and the orderly, morally upright use of power to correct and discourage acts of injustice. These corrective actions include punishment of perpetrators and protection for the vulnerable.**

### **Conclusion**

Many of us want to limit righteous living to simply avoiding certain sinful behaviours. These are called *sins of commission* because these sins are actions people *commit*. But there is another category of sin called *sins of omission*: this is when we fail to do (omit) something God commands us to do. These are sins of inaction or *omission*.

For example, we might feel we are innocent of the sin of commission regarding child trafficking and say, "I have never bought or sold a child!" But what of the sin of omission? Have we known about a child who is suffering and done nothing to help? That would also be sinful.

The Word of God teaches us that we have a responsibility to be an extension of God's justice to others. God wants us to support the oppressed by taking courageous action to set them free of oppression. God wants us to protect the vulnerable from potential oppression. God wants us to support the poor with livelihood development to help them thrive and to be less vulnerable in the future. This is righteousness. This is justice. Let us not commit a sin of omission by refusing to heed God's commands.

This will sometimes require us to hold our government accountable and ensure it puts in place social interventions that protect vulnerable groups against slavery, violence and oppression. Holding governments accountable will be the subject of next week's lesson.

### **Closing Prayer**

My Father, I commit to become a person that truly lives a life of righteousness. Help me to be an extension of Your justice in my community. Today, I ask for Your grace to pursue both Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah and Mishpat in its totality. I offer myself to Your service.

### **Leader's Guide**

**Question 3:** The first four commandments describe a right relationship with God. The last seven commandments describe right relationships with other people. Notice it adds up to 11! This is a bit of a trick question. As we discussed last week, the fourth commandment (Sabbath) covers both our relationship with God and with others because we are required to give our workers and children Sabbath.

**Question 5:** If everyone practiced Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah, we might live in a just world and would not have need for police or jails or courts or punishments. We would live in shalom.

**Question 13:** If your group needs prompting, consider suggesting crimes you are aware of locally such as armed robbery, fraudulent land deals, witchcraft trials, child trafficking, forced child marriage, rape, and domestic violence. Help your group to yearn to see justice done and to imagine a more just community.



---

## WEEK 4

# REFORMING GOVERNMENT: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

---

**Memory Verse:** Ezekiel 45:9a

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “You have gone far enough, princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right.”

**Key Concepts:** The Role of the Prophet: Speaking Truth to Power, Servant Leadership

### Introduction

We saw in weeks 1 and 2 that in this fallen world, there is a sinful tendency for the strong to prey on the weak. Cain killed Abel. Joseph was attacked and sold by his older brothers. The powerful Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. God is the great leveler, standing up for the downtrodden and fighting for justice.

In Week 3 we learned that God sets up laws and leaders for the purpose of representing Him in administering justice. Laws and leaders fight the sinful tendency of the tyranny of the strong by defending the weak and restraining the hand of the oppressor. God-ordained power given to rulers is **not to be used for personal profit, but for establishing justice.**

But what happens when the leaders appointed by God to fight for justice fail to do the job? Even worse, what happens when these leaders abuse their power and use it for injustice and personal gain? This is the subject for study in Week 4.

In the story of the Old Testament, when the Kings turn to evil and injustice, that's when God raises up godly men (called prophets) whose job is to speak truth to power. They are God's voice for justice against an unjust ruler. This is the original and truest mission of a prophet of God. As Christians, we should pay attention because it is not a role reserved uniquely for prophets; Jesus will show us that being advocates for justice is a calling for all of us.

## **Bible Study: The Role of Prophet to Speak Truth to Power**

### **Read 2 Samuel 12:1-13 (Nathan confronts King David)**

- 1) In what ways did King David abuse his power?
- 2) Why was it important for Nathan to confront the King?
- 3) What happens if no one confronts leaders who abuse their power?
- 4) How would you feel if God chose you to be like Nathan and confront a powerful ruler? Could you trust God enough to obey?
- 5) It is difficult to confront or challenge a person of authority such as a chief, elder or government official about an injustice. Have you ever tried? How did it go? If someone you know planned to do this, how would you advise them to go about it?
- 6) Why did Nathan tell a story? Was it effective?
- 7) In verse 13, David was struck to the heart and repented of his sin (see also Psalm 51) and God had mercy on him. In light of these results, was Nathan's confrontation of David actually an act of love?

### **Read 1 Kings 21 (Elijah confronts King Ahab)**

- 8) God gives rulers power not for their own benefit, but for those they lead.
  - a. In what ways did Jezebel abuse her power?
  - b. In what ways did Ahab abuse his power?
  - c. What is the Lord's response to these abuses of power?
  - d. Why is it so important that leaders are held accountable for the way they use their power?

### **Read Malachi 3:5 (Malachi confronts Jewish Leaders)**

- 9) Malachi describes a trial in which God will judge people for the injustices they have done. How does God's judgment of oppressors show God's love for the victims of injustice?
- 10) Can you think of a local example of each injustice listed in verse 5?

- a. Sorcery (Juju)
  - b. Adultery
  - c. Perjury
  - d. Defrauding (cheating) a worker out of his wages
  - e. Oppressing the widows and fatherless
  - f. Depriving the foreigner among you of justice
- 11) In child trafficking, a child is often lured into slave labour by the promise of benefits that never come, such as school fees or a large future payout such as an outboard motor after a certain number of years of work. How is this “defrauding a worker of his wages”?
- 12) How is the fear of God related to a life of justice?

### **Bible Study: Servant Leadership**

Much of the rampant injustice in the world occurs when those with power make one simple mistake: believing their power exists for their own personal gain. Here in Ghana, we say these men are “chopping their post!” Jesus teaches us a different form of leadership, one that is consistent with the intentions of God in the Old Testament.

### **Read Matthew 20:20-28**

- 13) Why does the mother want her sons to sit at Christ’s right and left?
- 14) What does Jesus mean that Gentiles “lord their authority over” each other?
- 15) What examples have you seen of people in authority behaving in this way?
- 16) How is Christian leadership to be different? What is servant leadership?
- 17) How might Ghana change if our leaders all learned from Jesus and became servant-leaders?

## STORY: SAINT ANTONY AND THE FIRST CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT

St. Antony lived from the year 251 to 356, during the transition from Roman emperors persecuting Christians to a time when the emperors themselves became Christians. St. Antony was a monk who lived in the desert of Egypt and had an international reputation for righteousness and wisdom.

One day the emperor of Rome wrote him a letter asking for advice on how to be a Christian ruler, since the world had never seen one before. St. Antony wrote back “approving them because they worshipped Christ, and giving them counsel on things pertaining to salvation, not to think much of the present, but rather to remember the judgment that is coming, and to know that Christ alone was the true and Eternal King. He begged them to be merciful and to give heed to justice and the poor.”

*-The Life of St. Antony, by St. Athanasius, translated by H. Ellershaw*

### **Reflection Questions:**

- 1) What do you like about St. Antony’s advice for the emperor?
- 2) Imagine that the President of Ghana wrote you a letter to ask your advice on how to apply in Ghana what you are learning about biblical justice. What would you advise? Take some time to write your response in the space provided and then share with your group.

Dear President,

Thank you for your kind letter requesting my advice on how you can practice biblical justice as you lead our country. Here is my advice...

### **Conclusion**

God requires us to speak truth to power. He wants us to speak truth to our pastors, bosses, parliamentarians, president and anyone in authority. This is often difficult, especially in our cultural context, where it is often seen as disrespectful to disagree with a leader. Deference to elders and authority figures is taught to us from an early age. We fear the consequences of confronting those with power, as they might turn and abuse or oppress us.

However, God wants us to rise up and become His prophetic mouthpiece just like Nathan and Elijah. God wants us to call out the wrongs in our society like Micah did, declare what is right, and help fix what is broken. He wants us to confront the authorities that oppress the poor and vulnerable. To those in authority who simply neglect their God-given duty to do justice...God wants us to prod them into action! This means we must learn to be brave.

We are not to do this in an uncooperative and obnoxious manner. God wants us to confront with respect, love, and wisdom. Make up your mind today to become God's mouthpiece that will speak truth to power. It is only when we hold our leaders accountable that our community and nation will be full of justice.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, I offer myself to be Your mouthpiece. Help me to be a person with the courage to speak truth to power in love and wisdom. I pray for those in authority and leadership, that they would be receptive to accountability and truth, even when it does not sound good to them.

---

## WEEK 5

### JUST WORSHIP

---

**Memory Verse:** Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

**Key Concept:** God wants us to worship Him *by* doing justice.

**Introduction**

Last week we learned that God sent His prophets to speak truth to power. Prophets stand up to corrupt rulers, demanding that they reform their ways and use their power for justice instead of personal gain. Before we become too judgmental of others, we need to remember that the prophets and Jesus Himself often reserved some of their harshest words for religious leaders. Sometimes religious leaders, even Christian pastors, are the ones to misunderstand their God-given authority and use it for personal gain or for increasing their own profile. When we do this, we fail in God's mission for us and we abandon those in our care who most need our help. In addition to the prophets' rebuke of corrupt rulers, they also speak warnings from God to the religious leaders and the worshippers of God when they go astray in their worship of God. This is the subject of study for Week 5.

We will see in each of these cases that the people of God have lost sight of what really matters to God. They are still praising, praying, and performing religious rituals, yet God is not pleased with their worship. Why not? What is missing? The Scriptures in today's lesson show us that worship is about more than simply singing and music. Worship includes living a life of obedience and orienting our lives around what truly matters to God.

## **Bible Study Questions**

### **Read Isaiah 58:1-11 (True Fasting)**

- 1) In verses 3-4, what has gone wrong with the people's worship? Why does God reject their fasting?\*
- 2) God gives His people a list of actions (verses 6-7 and 9-10) that He would receive as very pleasing worship and which would lead to blessing.
  - a. How many of these actions can you name?
  - b. Do you think of these actions as acts of worship?
  - c. How do you feel about God asking us to worship Him through our acts of justice?
- 3) How might you and your church adjust your efforts so that you focus more on what really pleases God?

### **Read Amos 5: 7, 10-15, 21-24 (True Worship)**

- 4) In Amos 5:21-23, God says He despises the peoples religious festivals, which were intended to worship Him. Why does God despise these traditions?\*
- 5) What does God ask the people for instead (Amos 5:14-15, 24)?
- 6) What would it look like in your community for justice (Mishpat) to roll down like water and righteousness (Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah) to flow like a never-failing stream?

### **Micah and Jesus make known What Really Matters to God**

The prophet Micah and then later Jesus find themselves in similar prophetic confrontations with religious leaders who have lost sight of what God values. Each seeks to refocus the people of God onto what pleases God.

### **Read Micah 6:6-8 (What the LORD Requires)**

- 7) What are the three things mentioned in verse 8 that God requires of us?
- 8) Which of these do you find the most challenging? Why?
- 9) What does it mean to "do justice"?

- 10) How would you apply these three requirements of God to the modern problem of child trafficking (child slavery)?

**Read Matthew 23:23 (The Weightier Matters of the Law)**

- 11) What similarities do you see between Jesus' words here and Micah 6:8?
- 12) How can your church practice all three of these things Jesus says are the "weightier matters of the law"?



## STORY: A MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS REQUEST

A mother had four children who all grew to be successful adults who loved the LORD. Each child got a job, got married, moved away, and had children of their own. Every year, the whole family would gather to celebrate Christmas and they would say to the mother, “Ei, Momma, you have shown us so much love all these years, caring for all our needs and paying our school fees. We want to buy you some Christmas presents to thank you and show we love you. What do you want us to give you for Christmas?” The mother would smile at her children and say, “I want just one thing for Christmas and if you give me this, I will be so happy. What I want is to see all my kids gather together and enjoy each other’s company. I want to see you get along and love each other. That is all I want for a Christmas present.” Every year the children tried to present their mother with this gift, but they were headstrong, and had quick tempers, and loved to argue with each other. So, instead, most years they would just buy her dresses, shoes, and cakes from the market and hope they would make her happy.

- 1) *What does this story teach us?*
- 2) *Do you see the similarity between the loving mother with her children and God with His people?*

We offer God all sorts of gifts and praise songs, but deny Him the thing He most desires: to see His children love each other and treat each other with justice.

- 3) *How might acts of justice on behalf of those who suffer injustice be like giving God a Christmas present?*

## Conclusion

Last week, we discussed how political rulers can forget their power exists to promote justice and defend the weak. Instead, they focus on their own personal gain. In a similar way, we as the people of God sometimes forget that worship exists for God, not for us. We focus on what would please us: prayer for blessings from God, music that we enjoy, a sermon that makes us feel good.

Instead, we need to remember that when we gather in worship before Almighty God, it is a time which changes us. It resets our priorities and aligns them with the priorities of God. One fundamental thing which takes place is that worship realigns power. We surrender to God, acknowledging that He is the One who truly holds the power in the world. We are reminded that the power God has given us is to be used for justice. We seek God's strength to overcome those who abuse their power. We seek God's strength to do our part to defend the weak and oppressed. We are brought together to worship as equal brothers and sisters before the Lord.

## Closing Prayer

Father, I confess that I have been selfish in my worship and in my prayers. I have focused on what pleases me and how to get that from You, instead of focusing on what pleases You. Help me to reform my ways. I offer my life as an act of true worship to You. Help me to focus on things that please You and truly matter to You. I surrender myself totally to You and commit to be a person that pursues the best interest of others. May my life be a worship song to You!

## Leader's Guide

**Question 1:** *Your group might answer that the worshippers were not passionate in their worship. A stronger answer is that even though the people were worshipping in earnest (fasting, praying), they lost sight of what really matters to God: living lives of justice.*

**Question 4:** *It is not that God hates all traditions. It is not that the people are not seeking Him with passion. God rejects their worship festivals **because** they have rejected justice.*

---

## WEEK 6

# THE HOLISTIC MISSION OF JESUS

---

**Memory Verse:** Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

**Main Concepts:** Holistic Ministry (Spiritual, Physical, Social)

### Introduction

Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the three Old Testament callings: Priest, Prophet and King.

As High Priest, Jesus makes intercession with God. He makes atonement for our sin (in His own body, rather than a sacrificial lamb). He gives unrighteous people an opportunity to repent, turn their lives around, and share in the shalom of God.

As Prophet, Jesus calls out the injustice of His day. Jesus urges the people to repent of their injustice and return to God. This includes the religious leaders of His time.

As King, Jesus is an establisher of justice. Jesus reorders power according to the righteousness of God. Jesus will one day return, on Judgment Day, to render final and lasting justice to the world.

At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, right after His baptism and temptation, He returns to His hometown and visits the synagogue of Nazareth, where His ministry begins. He is given an opportunity to choose a Scripture to read and then to teach on it. What did Jesus choose for His very first sermon? Read Luke 4:14-21 to find out.

## **Bible Study**

### **Read Luke 4:14-21 (Jesus' Mission Statement)**

- 1) Of all the Scriptures in the Old Testament, why do you think Jesus chose this Scripture for His first sermon?
- 2) In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon God's chosen agents to empower them to fulfill their callings from God. The Spirit fell on Jesus at His baptism and now Jesus tells us what the Spirit will empower Him to do. What do verses 18-20 tell us about Jesus' mission?
- 3) Can you think of examples in Scripture of Jesus doing each of those tasks?
- 4) Jesus specifies that part of His mission is to set the oppressed free.
  - a. What does Jesus mean by that?
  - b. Does this freedom only have spiritual meaning or does it also have physical and social meanings?

### **Read Luke 5:12-13 (Jesus and the Leper)**

- 5) In what way does Jesus address the spiritual needs of the man?
- 6) How does Jesus meet the physical needs of the man?
- 7) How does Jesus meet the social needs of the man?

*Hint: Lepers were social outcasts because people were afraid of catching leprosy. For fear of infection, lepers were cut off from human contact and forced to live outside of town. When they walked through town, they had to shout "unclean, unclean!" so people could clear out of their path. They were viewed as being "unclean" and consequently "unblessed." Can you imagine having zero human contact for years because you were considered dirty and untouchable? Think how Jesus' touching the man changes the man's social position and connects him with humanity!*

- 8) Which happened first: Jesus healing the man or Jesus touching the man? Why did Jesus do it in that order?

*Hint: What message would it have sent to the man and to other lepers (who do not get healed) if Jesus had done it in the reverse order? What message does it send to society that Jesus touched an "unclean man"?*

### **Read John 9:1-7 (Jesus and the Man Born Blind)**

- 9) In what way does Jesus address the spiritual needs of the man?
- 10) How does Jesus meet the physical needs of the man?
- 11) How does Jesus meet the social needs of the man?

*Hint: Notice that the community around the man believes that his blindness is God's punishment for his sins. The community is debating whether this punishment is due to his sin or his parents' sin, but they are convinced that his affliction is God's judgment. This adds to the man's pain. He is ostracized and shamed in his community as a sinner and someone that God is against. Jesus challenges that theology and identifies the man as one who has been specially chosen to glorify God. Think of how that changes his role in the community.*

### **Read Matthew 18:5-7**

- 12) In this case, Jesus champions another lowly category of person in society: children. What do Jesus' words instruct us about how children should be valued and treated? What warning do these words have for those who harm children?

### **Conclusion**

Jesus shows a strong compassion towards people we consider to be lowly outcasts. He shows the world that these "outcasts" are the kind of people He is so passionate about helping. The world segregates and stigmatizes vulnerable groups like lepers. Jesus flips the narrative and shows us a new order in which He, the King of Kings, embraces lepers and promotes their livelihood and well-being.

Today, we treat people differently based on their social status, influence, and potential benefit to us. Most of us today wouldn't want to associate with someone who is physically challenged, poor, mentally unstable, or sick. We have stigmatized such people and do not want to have anything to do with them. We regard them as problems, baggage, outcasts. We simply do not care about them because they do not benefit us.

However, through this study, Jesus is teaching us to flip the narrative. He wants us to show mercy to such people and offer them both social and spiritual support. He wants us to stand with them in love! He wants us to love them, just as He has loved us!

### **Closing Prayer**

Forgive me, Lord, for thinking some people are beneath me. Father, please forgive me for not treating the socially excluded with love and respect. Please help me to be an extension of Your love to those considered to be outcasts in our society. Today, I declare my willingness to support the well-being of those who are vulnerable, socially segregated, or sick. So help me God! Amen.

---

## WEEK 7

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND “THE LEAST OF THESE”

---

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 25:40

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.”

**Key Concepts:** The Kingdom of God and “the Least of These”

### Introduction

Many people make the mistake of viewing Jesus as a convenient helper for them to lead the lives they already want to live: lives of wealth, comfort, and ease. However, this is not how Jesus is presented in the Bible. When Jesus calls His disciples, He asks them to live for something different, something greater than themselves. Jesus calls His disciples to leave their possessions behind to follow Him. He calls His disciples to enter into lives of discomfort and struggle. He does not call His disciples to lounge with the rich and famous, but to stand in solidarity with the poor, the lowly, the sick, the persecuted, and the outcast. Similarly, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him. This requires dying to ourselves and our selfish world-centred ambitions and beginning to live for God. We are not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven. We are to live our lives as citizens of the Kingdom of God. This means submitting ourselves to be used by God to bless the poor, the oppressed, the sick and the downtrodden. This way of life matters to Jesus and He wants us to live it to the fullest.

Jesus’ teaching about the Kingdom of God turned the world upside down. In Luke chapter 6, the Sermon on the Plain, which is similar to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7, Jesus pronounces a set of blessings and woes. These blessings and woes are very surprising, even shocking because of whom Jesus pronounces as “blessed” (also translated as “happy”) and to whom Jesus issues “woes.” We are used to thinking of riches as being a sign of God’s blessing, and poverty and misfortune as signs of God’s wrath, but Jesus challenges this way of thinking.

## **Bible Study: Blessings and Woes**

### **Read Luke 6:20-26**

- 1) What do you find surprising about the list of people that Jesus says are blessed? Why is that surprising?
- 2) Do you feel blessed when you are poor, hungry, crying, hated, or rejected? How might Jesus' words comfort you and bring you hope?
- 3) What do you find surprising about the list of people to whom Jesus says, "Woe"?
- 4) Do you normally view people who are rich, well-fed, laughing, and popular as people who are blessed by God? What do you think of Jesus' warning to them?
- 5) How does Jesus' teaching turn the world upside down? How does the promise of the coming Kingdom of God reverse the way the world works?

## **Bible Study: The Final Exam**

Some of the most stressful occasions in many students' lives are exams. Students who want good marks study hard to prepare for their exams, in hopes that when they are given the questions, they will be able to answer correctly. How much easier would it make the students' lives if the teacher gave them the questions ahead of time? Then the students could become very focused in their preparation for the exam! This is what Jesus does in Matthew 25! It is revealed that the Son of Man, Jesus, will be the One to return on Judgment Day and "test" the lives that people have lived. Amazingly, Jesus gives us the questions He will ask on this test in advance so we can prepare. Before you read this amazing Scripture, ask yourselves a few questions:

- 6) What actions in life do you imagine Jesus assessing on Judgment Day? What actions are so important to Jesus that He would evaluate people by them?

### **Read Matthew 25:31-46 (Judgment Day)**

- 7) What are the standards by which people's lives will be judged? Are these surprising to you? Why or why not?



- 8) What does Jesus mean by “the least of these”? \*
- 9) What types of people are the “least of these” in your community? Who around you is considered unimportant and lowly? \*

*Note: This may be the most important question of the week!*

- 10) The Scripture says whatever we have done for “the least of these”, we have done for Him and whatever we have refused to do for the “least of these” we have refused to do for Him.
  - a. What does Jesus mean by this?
  - b. How does this change the position of the poor and lowly in our world?
  - c. How does this teaching turn the world upside down?
- 11) How well are you doing at loving and caring for the “least of these” around you?
- 12) What do you want to do differently, based on what you learned today?

### **Bible Reflection: Connecting Jesus with the Old Testament**

Now that you have invested time in studying the “justice thread” as it runs through the Bible, you may be able to make connections with concepts you have studied in previous weeks.

- 13) What similarities do you see between Jesus’ teaching in this week’s lesson and what we’ve learned from the Old Testament in previous weeks? \*

### **Conclusion**

We tend to think of righteousness in terms of “spiritual” actions like prayer and worship or in church activities such as studying the Word, serving in the church, and tithing. Inasmuch as these things are important in the Kingdom of God, Jesus’ definition of righteousness and His Kingdom goes beyond that.

Jesus defines righteousness as having right relationships with God and with our fellow men and women. As in the Old Testament, right relationship with those in need includes generosity. Jesus sees righteousness as an act of extending His love to the fatherless, poor, immigrant, and those that are socially excluded. Jesus

stands in solidarity with these groups and asks that we worship Him **by** loving them.

Our deeds of love, generosity, and justice for those who most need it is what God sees as true success, not the many things we accumulate for ourselves and our families.

Christ's Kingdom is not about gaining earthly reputation and riches for ourselves. It is about truly loving people through deeds of compassion and justice which bring glory and honour to God!

### **Closing Prayer**

My Father, please forgive me for not prioritizing things that matter to You. Thank You for helping me to appreciate what is dear to You today. I ask that You enable me to focus on things that are Your heartbeat, such as bringing hope, help, and salvation to those that are socially excluded and marginalized. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Leader's Guide**

**Question 8:** Leader's note: "The least" refers to those in the community that are considered lowly and unimportant.

**Question 9:** As noted, this may be the most important question of the week! Please do not rush through this. Take lots of time for it. Prompt your group if necessary, but give them time to think through this question because it is foundational to application of the Scripture to their lives. We hope they take particular note of trafficked children. Answers should extend beyond this, however, to anyone in the community who is treated as lowly and unimportant. Help your group to see how important the "lowly" and "least" are to Jesus.

**Question 13:** Help your group to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament on the theme of justice.

**Week 1:** Genesis teaches that people are made in the image of God, and thus a crime against a person is a crime against God. Jesus says that whatever you have done for the "least of these", you have done for Him.

**Week 3:** The Quartet of the Vulnerable (Widows, Orphans, Immigrants, and the Poor) are groups to whom God requires us to give special care and protection. Jesus proclaims blessings on similar groups in Luke 6 and requires special care be given them in Matthew 25.

**Week 5:** Isaiah and Amos teach us to worship God by doing acts of mercy and justice. This is similar to the test in Matthew 25.

---

## WEEK 8

### APPLICATION: HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

---

#### **Introduction**

This is the final week of the Bible Study. Today we have two goals: 1) Review what has been learned and 2) Discuss how the group might apply what they've learned to their lives.

#### **Memory Verse Challenge\***

Week 1: Genesis 4:10

Week 2: Exodus 3:7

Week 3: Proverbs 21:15

Week 4: Ezekiel 45:9

Week 5: Micah 6:8

Week 6: Luke 4:18-19

Week 7: Matthew 25:40

#### **Bible Study Review Questions\***

##### **Week 1: Creation and the Fall (Genesis)**

- 1) What is shalom and how does it relate to justice?
- 2) What is injustice?
- 3) Who was a victim of child trafficking in Genesis?

##### **Week 2: God of Justice, Rescuer of Slaves (Exodus, Deuteronomy)**

- 4) In Exodus, God appears in a burning bush and gives Moses a mission. What is Moses' mission?

- 5) The Sabbath commandment requires us to give a day of rest to our children, our workers, and even our animals. What reason is given in Deuteronomy 5 for why we should practice the Sabbath?

### **Week 3: Just Laws and Good Government (Deuteronomy, Psalms)**

- 6) What is Tzad<sup>e</sup>qah?
- 7) What is Mishpat?
- 8) Who are the four groups of people referred to as *The Quartet of the Vulnerable*?

### **Week 4: Reforming Government: Speaking Truth to Power (Prophets)**

- 9) What is the prophet's job in relation to rulers?
- 10) When God gives power to someone such as a judge, king, or government official, what is the purpose of that power?

### **Week 5: Just Worship (Prophets)**

- 11) In the passages we studied in the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, why is God not pleased with the people's worship?
- 12) According to the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, what kind of worship and obedience is God looking for from His people?

### **Week 6: The Holistic Mission of Jesus (Luke, John)**

- 13) What are the three elements of Jesus' holistic ministry?

### **Week 7: The Kingdom of God and the "Least of These" (Luke, Matthew)**

- 14) Jesus speaks a series of "Blessings and Woes" in Luke 6. How do these "turn the world upside down"?
- 15) What does Jesus mean by "the least of these", and how are they to be treated?

### **Application: Now What?**

We have invested 7 weeks in learning about God's heart for justice throughout the pages of the Bible. Now let's discuss ways we can apply what we've learned to our lives!

Let's start with individual application:

- 1) How has God been speaking to you through this study? How do you want to live differently based on what you have learned?
- 2) What injustices in your community do you believe God wants to change? How might God use you?

Let's now move to group application:

- 3) How might this church or group work together to apply what we have learned? What impact could we make on justice issues in our community that would make God smile?
- 4) How can we begin to align our church or group with God's heart for justice?
- 5) What obstacles will we face? Can we trust God to see us through them?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You for opening my eyes and heart to Your heartbeat for justice. Today, I surrender myself to You to be used as Your vessel of justice. Help me to be passionate about what You are passionate about, and troubled by what troubles You. Give me the grace to be a vessel through which You will work justice in this world. Finally, please help me to also lead others in my family, church, workplace and community to understand and embrace Your heart for justice. I ask this in Jesus' name.

### **Leader's Guide**

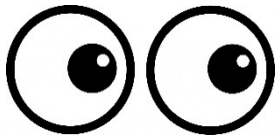
**Memory Verse Challenge:** Ask members for volunteers who can recite the memory verses. Ask a different group member for each memory verse. Have fun with this! Make sure no one feels shamed or embarrassed. Keep it light-hearted, but give lots of encouragement and praise whenever someone can successfully recite a memory verse.

**Bible Study Review Questions:** Again, this should be fun for everyone. Give your group lots of encouragement and have the group applaud for everyone. Try to avoid anyone feeling embarrassed. Use this quiz as a review to help people remember what they have learned. Help them feel successful that they have completed the study. Fill in the blanks of what they have forgotten in an encouraging manner.

## Appendix A: What can I do?

We must confess that we use most of our time, energy, and prayers on our own advancement, well-being, and greatness. Let us repent of this selfishness, and begin to use our time, energy, resources, and prayers towards the lifting up of the lowly, broken, and oppressed. Let us focus particularly today on the victims of child trafficking.

You might ask, “What can I do?” You can do so much!



**Use your Eyes:** If you see something suspicious and you suspect a case of child trafficking, report it to the police or call IJM for help. Your phone call might lead to this child’s freedom. See *Appendix B* for guidance.



**Use your Voice:** Let your voice be heard on this issue. Educate your community about child trafficking. Let your community leaders know that you want to see a change. Inform your Minister of Parliament that you hope this is a government priority. Your voice can be powerful in bringing awareness of this issue and winning the hearts and minds of your community.



**Use your Knees:** Pray and ask God to end child trafficking in Ghana. Ask Him to send His power to hold perpetrators accountable in court, and to rescue every victim. You can sign up to be on a prayer list from International Justice Mission to help guide your prayers. Send a WhatsApp message saying, “Join IJM prayer list” to 0559 783 188.



**Open your Heart:** Open your heart to the most lowly and vulnerable people in your community, particularly children and single mothers. Get to know their names and stories. Eagerly seek to serve them as you would serve Christ. You might be preventing a case of child trafficking.



**Repent:** If you have been involved with child trafficking in any way, it is not too late for you to do the right thing! You can repent of this sin and make sure that all the trafficked children you know of are set free and properly cared for.



## Appendix B: Encountering Child trafficking

### I. Signs or Indicators of child trafficking.

Child trafficking may be happening in your community without your being aware of it. These signs are red flags that child trafficking may be taking place.

- a. Not living with biological parents
- b. Living with a master
- c. Working without getting paid
- d. Under age 18, not attending school
- e. Working far from their home village
- f. Working during school hours
- g. Appears afraid of a *master* who is referred to as *father* or *uncle*
- h. Appears underfed, unkempt, and poorly clothed
- i. Arm muscles are very well developed, beyond normal for age
- j. Poor living and sleeping conditions
- k. Signs of physical abuse
- l. Lives with other children in similar condition
- m. Master's children attend school and appear better cared-for than victim
- n. Victim's answers appear rehearsed
- o. A child suddenly goes missing in your community, or suddenly appears
- p. An individual periodically comes to your community and takes children away or brings children to stay

### II. Questions to Ask When You Encounter a Trafficked Victim

In the event that you meet a child whom you suspect to have been trafficked, you should always make sure that you only speak to that child privately, in a manner that does not jeopardize the safety of the victim, because the trafficker may be watching. These are some questions you could ask to confirm the red flags that raised your suspicions:

- a. How old are you?
- b. Who are you living with?
  - i. Is she/he your biological mother/father?
  - ii. Where are your biological parents?
  - iii. How did you come to live with that person?
- c. How many times do you eat in a day?
- d. Do you attend school?
  - i. Where is your school?
  - ii. When was the last time you went to your school?
  - iii. What do you do when you are not in school?
- e. Are there other children like you that work who are not with their parents?

### **III. Important Resources**

#### **a. TO REPORT A CASE OF CHILD TRAFFICKING:**

**Call the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, GPS: 0500 325 014**

The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service is a specialized unit devoted to investigating cases of human trafficking.

#### **b. FOR HELP WITH A NUMBER OF INJUSTICE ISSUES:**

**Call the Helpline of Hope: 0800 800 800 / 0800 900 900**

**SMS to 8020**

This is a government hotline to report a wide range of cases including child abuse, rape, defilement, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child labour, assault, and related issues.

#### **c. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN STAND AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING:**

**Call International Justice Mission: 0559 783 188  
Or email [ghanaoutreach@ijm.org](mailto:ghanaoutreach@ijm.org)**

International Justice Mission is the world's largest anti-slavery organization and is a registered NGO in Ghana working to end child trafficking on Volta Lake.

IJM's investigators, lawyers, social workers and community mobilisers work closely with the Ghanaian government to rescue, rehabilitate, and reintegrate survivors of child trafficking while assisting with the arrest and prosecution of child traffickers.

## **Appendix C: Further Study**

### **Biblical Justice**

Haugen, Gary. *Good News about Injustice* (Updated 10th Anniversary Edition: *A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*). Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009.

Keller, Timothy. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. Westminster: Penguin Books, 2012.

Marshall, Chris. *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible's Teachings on Justice*. New York: Good Books, 2005.

### **Justice-Informed Christian Life and Church Leadership**

Haugen, Gary. *Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008.

Labberton Mark. *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others through the Eyes of Jesus*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010.

Labberton, Mark. *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.

Martin, Jim. *The Just Church: Becoming a Risk-Taking, Justice-Seeking, Disciple-Making Church*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.

Nyomi, Setri "The Accra Confession as a resource for Transformation" in *That They May All be One*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010 pp: 45 – 52.

Nyomi, Setri "Standing for righteousness: an ecumenical value in mission" in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 56, 2004, pp. 56–62.

### **Human Rights and Religion in Ghana**

Atiemo, Abamfo. *Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana*. Bloomsbury, London, 2013.

## **Human-Trafficking**

Bales, Kevin. *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Haugen, Gary. *Terrify No More*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

U.S. Department of State. *The Trafficking in Persons Report (published annually)*.

## **Biographies of Christian Justice Leaders**

Allen, John. *Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008.

Metaxas, Eric. *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. New York, Harper Collins, 2007.

## **Websites**

International Justice Mission [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)

Coalition of NGOs against Child trafficking [www.cnactghana.org](http://www.cnactghana.org)



To find more information about  
**International Justice Mission:**  
**Email:** [ghanaoutreach@ijm.org](mailto:ghanaoutreach@ijm.org)  
**Call or WhatsApp:** +233 26 550 6029

*The Justice Thread* is an eight week interactive Bible study tracing the theme of biblical justice as it weaves throughout the Bible. In-depth Bible discussion leads to challenging questions on contemporary justice issues. It is designed to be used in small group bible study discussions or in a Sunday school hour, but can also be a fruitful individual study.

*“Reading The Justice Thread will help you understand the basic principles of justice from a biblical perspective. You and your group need this resource material.”*

**APOSTLE PROF. OPOKU ONYINA**

Immediate Past Chairman, Church of Pentecost and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council

*“This is a great resource that is needed for our times...”*

**REV. DR. SETRI NYOMI PH.D.**

General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2000-2014)  
Senior Lecturer at Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana

*“The Justice Thread curriculum is a rich study of the issues of justice... It equips the reader, whether an individual or a group, with the skills and tools for advocacy. I heartily endorse its use in our churches and communities.”*

**REV. FRED DEEGBE**

Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Accra  
Former General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana

*“A long-desired resource needed to equip the whole church to uphold justice and pursue mercy as a Christian life-style. It is a strong Bible-based interactive study written in a language and style easily accessible to everybody.”*

**REV. DR. ABAMFO ATIEMO**

Former Head of Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana  
Minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church, West Legon

APPENDIX TWO: JUSTICE THREAD CURRICULUM EVALUATIONS

An example of a completed field test evaluation survey:

**Anonymous Curriculum Evaluation**

Your honest feedback will help us improve the course

1) What have you learned from this course? I learned to do justice, not to oppress, to be able to confront leaders who are not just help the widow, the poor and the foreigner. I must also love as God loves and keep a good relation with God and man.

2) How will this course affect your life and ministry? It will affect me positively because I will use what I learn here as a yardstick in anything I do and do justice and also impact it to the people I lead to do justice.

3) On a scale of 1-10, how well-grounded Biblically is the teaching? (Circle One)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (10)

Not grounded Biblically Well-grounded Biblically

4) On a scale of 1-10, how organized and clear is the curriculum? (Circle One)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) 9 10

Disorganized and Unclear Well-Organized and Clear

5) On a scale of 1-10, how inspiring and motivating is the curriculum? (Circle One)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (10)

Not inspiring or motivating Very Motivating and Inspirational

6) On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to teach this course in your church? (Circle One)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (9) 10

Unlikely to teach Very Likely to teach

Please explain why or why not:

Because it is needed to change the mindset of our people

7) What suggestions do you have to improve the course? It should be printed in other language and on tapes for easy presentation.

A sampling of open-ended responses collected from field Tests in Kpando (July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018) and Kete-Krachi (August 28<sup>th</sup> 2018). One hundred and one surveys were received.

*What have you learned from this workshop?*

- I learned God is just and loves all no matter their condition. God wants leaders to be just and stop being unjust to their people. Church leaders should preach justice in their churches.
- I have learned that as believers, we must practice justice without discriminating, especially to the less privileged.
- I have learned that it is my duty to support the vulnerable (children and widows) in the society and to protect them from oppression.
- I have learned that God sees the pain and hears the cries and suffering of the oppressed.
- I have learned to live justly and treat all persons fairly.
- I have learned a new standard of Christian living; it goes beyond praying and doing stuff at church.
- I have learned that everybody, including the poor and widow, are created in the image of God so I have to be at peace with all. I learned I must provide for their needs. I must avoid injustice. I must confront wisely leaders who abuse peoples' rights.
- It has changed my life.
- I have learned that to be a just person, you need not to be just only by yourself, but also help others do justice by intervening in the situation or correcting them because a service to man is a service to God.



*How will this course affect your life and ministry?*

- This programme has changed my attitudes toward the vulnerable in society.
- I have to care for those who are in slavery and also try to rescue them.
- I'll value every human and treat them justly: defend the less privileged in my community and fight for their rights.
- This course has really changed my mentality toward the vulnerable and the poor in society.
- I now have compassion for the oppressed. At the ministry I organize, I will teach them about justice and pray for justice.
- To speak for the socially-excluded
- It has changed how I treat the poor and the needy in society.
- I will be able to love as Jesus did and not neglect people considered to be unclean (sinners)
- I am highly energized to pursue justice without fears or favour.
- I now have a burden to raise a team to reach out to the children on the Volta Lake and elsewhere to be liberated.
- Giving justice to children and to all those who need help. Also, to preach justice in the pulpit.
- This course has enlightened me to stand for justice wherever I find myself, to be the mouthpiece of vulnerable people in my community.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, John. *Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008.
- Atiemo, Abamfo O. *Punish my Husband but not so Hard: Religion, Customary Values and Conventional Approaches to Human Rights in Ghana*. *Religion and Human Rights* 7 (2012): 71–93.
- . *Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Bales, Kevin. *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Bowler, Kate. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Campbell, Charles L. *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*. Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Ed. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000.
- French, Howard. *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Haugen, Gary. *Good News about Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*. Updated 10th Anniversary Edition. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009.
- . *Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008.
- Haugen, Gary. *Terrify No More*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.
- Henry, Carl F.H. "The Judeo-Christian Heritage and Human Rights." In *Religious Beliefs, Human Rights, and the Moral Foundation of Western Democracy*. Edited by Carl H. Esbeck. 1986 Paine Lectures in Religion, University of Missouri-Columbia. 27–40.

———. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1947.

Heschel, Abraham. *The Prophets*. New York: Harper Collins, 1962.

Hoang, Bethany H. *Deepening the Soul for Justice*. Downers Grove: IVP Books 2012.

Hollenbach, David. *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights: American Catholic Social Ethics in a Pluralist Context*. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

Jakobsson, Stiv. *Am I Not a Man and a Brother? British Missions and the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in West Africa and the West Indies 1786-1838*. Upspsala,: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1972.

Keller, Timothy. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. Westminster: Penguin Books, 2012.

King, Martin Luther and Clayborne Carson. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Warner Brothers, 1998.

Labberton Mark. *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others Through the Eyes of Jesus*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010.

———. *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.

Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1970.

Lissner, J., editor. *Theological Perspectives on Human Rights*. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1977.

Lovejoy, Paul. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa. Third Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 2012

Marshall, Chris. *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible's Teaching on Justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005.

Martin, Jim. *The Just Church: Becoming a Risk-Taking, Justice-Seeking, Disciple-Making Church*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.

- Metaxas, Eric. *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.
- McNeil, Brenda Salter. *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Muller, Alois, and Norbert Greinacher, editors. *The Church and the Rights of Man*. New York: The Seasury Press, 1979.
- Myers, Bryant. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011.
- Quinn, Philip. "Christian Ethics and Human Rights." *Human Rights and Religion: 233-47*.
- Rauschenbusch, Walter. *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. New York: McMillan Company, 1917.
- Sider, Ronald. *I Am Not a Social Activist: Making Jesus the Agenda*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2008.
- U.S. Department of State. *The Trafficking in Persons Report (published annually)*.
- Van der Ven, Johannes A., Jaco S. Dreyer, and Hendrik J.C. Pieterse. *Is There a God of Human Rights? The Complex Relationship between Human Rights and Religion: A South African Case*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Woodley, Randy. *Shalom and the Community of Creation*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012.
- Wright, Tom. *How God Became King: Getting to the Heart of the Gospels*. London: SPCK, 2012.