

## PARISH PROJECT

**QUESTION:** Which of the areas of poverty, injustice and exploitation listed below do you and your group feel most strongly about? Which do you know most about? Which would you like to find out more about? Add to the list below any other modern forms of injustice and oppression that have local expressions.

Award yourself 100 points. Allocate them according to how much you know about the local situations, relatively speaking, listed below. What are your own and the Group's main areas of ignorance?

Award yourself another 100 points! Now allocate those 100 points between each of the areas according to your own curiosity or concern. (At your meeting, add everyone's marks together - anything interesting?)

**discrimination** (age/sex/race/religion...)

**illiteracy** (language/immigrant/refugee/asylum)

**prostitution** (pornography/prostitution/sex trade...)

**prisoner** (prisons/rehab/stigma)

**homelessness**/sofa-surfing/provision

**debt** (financial worries/loan sharks/gambling)

**poverty** (lack of/inability to afford... what, precisely)

physical **violence** (risk/victim support/murder/pain/law & order...)

**addiction** (alcohol/drugs legal&illegal/ nicotine/ pornography/gambling/TV/internet...)

**disability** (mental/physical...)

**exploitation** and abuse (children/partners/work...)

**family** breakdown (orphans/widows...)

(other).....

(other).....

*We hope to delegate a topic to each Home Group for members to explore in depth over the next couple of months (maybe using "optional" Home Group time), reporting back to the whole church fellowship with some ideas for our better engagement with the issue and support for those in need.*

## STUDY 1

Looking at JUST or "Just" looking?



Micah challenged God's people in 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC: **"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6 v8).**

**CHALLENGE:** If you don't all already know this verse, challenge each other to memorise it as our series of studies is going to examine the first requirement. What does it mean, "to **act justly**"?

**QUESTION:** How would you define our key word: Justice (injustice)?

Difficult! As noted by Prov. 28 v5 "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully." So let's start seeking the Lord...

**Justice** describes something profound about the nature of God; partly that his character always remains the same, everywhere, all the time and towards everyone. Always True, Loving, Impartial, wanting Good, hating Evil; God treats and values people equitably, whereas our own sinfulness distorts our ideas and activities.

Intuitively, we sense injustice when we (who are made in God's image) complain that something simply "isn't Fair". **QUESTIONS:**

Have you ever been treated unfairly? (What, how, when...?)

Have you noticed or witnessed anything "unfair" this week – nationally, locally?

(Have you acted unfairly recently? Where are the areas open to temptation here in our weekly lives?)

Some clues in the king's advice to his judges, 2 Chronicles 19 v 7: "Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. **Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.**" (This was the king's challenge to the country's judges.)

**EXPLORE:** Use a word search on “*just*” and “*justice*” (NIV 393 and 134 times respectively; or use highlighted sections of CEV; or ask leader for copy of references). Which 2 or 3 references give you the most insight into defining what “justice” means? (Compare ideas.)

Can you improve on:

**“Justice is...  
working to see  
that every  
person has what  
is rightly theirs.”?**

Make your own suggestion and try and come to a Group definition of Justice.

(If you have time to expand, any ideas about what’s “rightly theirs”?)

**READ Isaiah chapter 1 verses 10 – 17**

*(Background: Sodom & Gomorrah story in Gen. Chapter 19)*

**QUESTION:** What feelings does this passage raise for you? Comfortable or uncomfortable?

**QUESTION:** When push comes to shove, what does God want more: worship or doing the right thing? (How would you describe “worship” and “right thing”?)

**QUESTION:** Which do you think is easier: performing acts of worship or seeking justice? Why?

**QUESTION:** Which do you see more of in the modern church: worship or seeking justice? Why?

Look at some of the actions God calls for in the passage:

**V16 “wash and make yourselves clean”. QUESTION:** What do you think that might look like for people like us in places like St James?

**V16 “Take your evil deeds out of my sight!” QUESTION:** What’s that about – hiding better?

**V16 “Stop doing wrong.”** (Remember, Isaiah’s audience isn’t pagans, it’s people who claim to follow God.) **QUESTION:** What wrongdoing do you see today among people and institutions (like St James?) who claim to follow God? (And in you...?)

**V17 “learn to do right!” QUESTION:** When it comes to justice, how do people “learn to do right”?

On a scale of 0 (appalling; no evidence) to 10 (totally committed and active) what mark would you give yourself in “learning to do right” and getting on with it? And the Group? And St James?

SELF  My Group  St James

**QUESTION:** Whatever mark, how could it improve in each case?

**READ** 1 John 1 verse 8 to 2 verse 6. Are there any links to our thoughts and discussion? One or two members could summarise the main points and each could construct their own brief prayer, possibly some members praying for the group out loud.