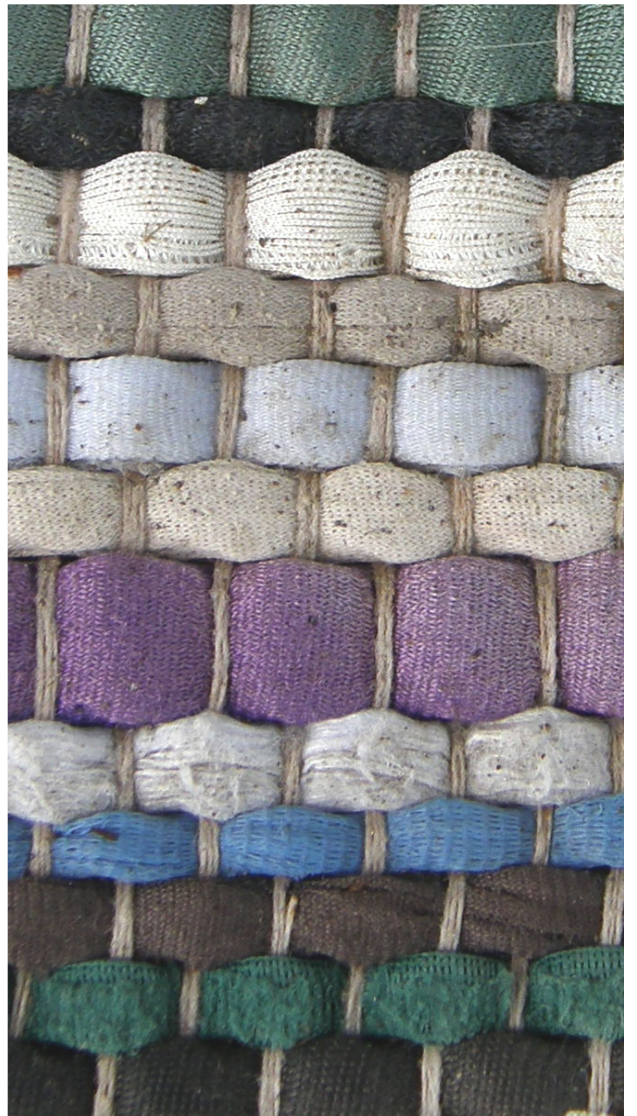
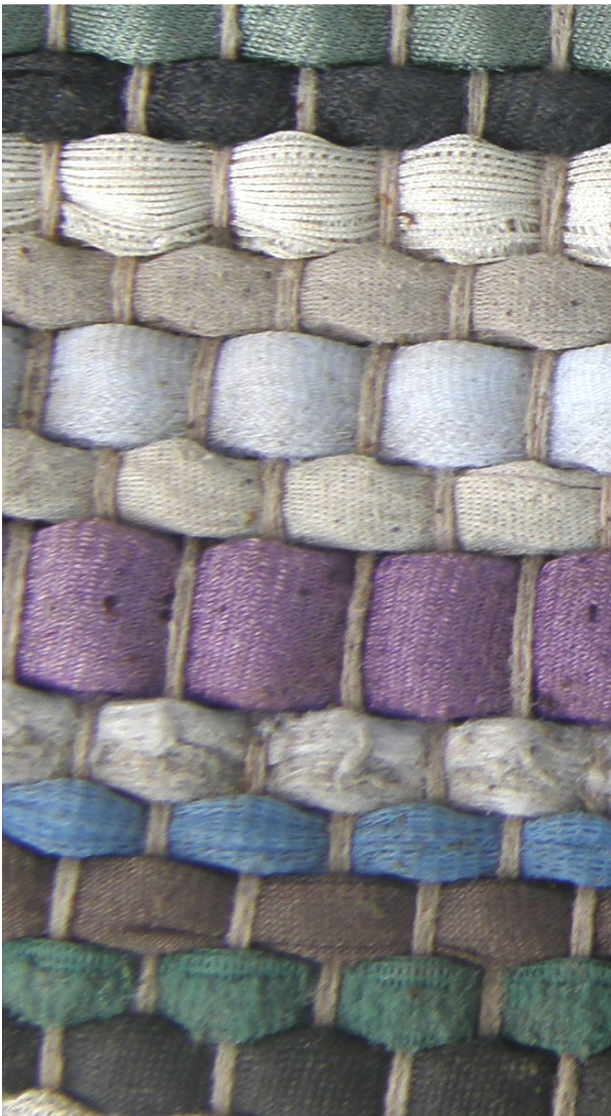
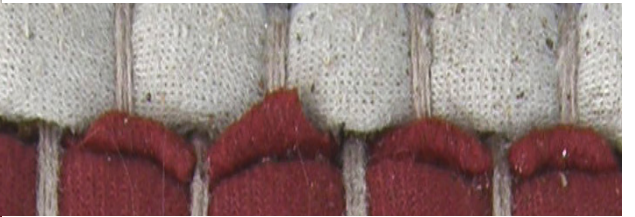


JUSTICE





Introduction

Since the start of Hope Chapel three years ago, serving the city of Greensboro has been a foundational part of the life of our church community. You have probably heard us use the phrase, “social renewal” (maybe many times!). You may have heard us talk about “justice” and “mercy”. As a community, we have spent thousands of hours serving throughout the city and have, on several occasions, focused our worship services on the topic of social renewal. In short, this belief that God has called us to join him in the renewal of all things (both spiritual, cultural, and social) has been a central piece of Hope Chapel’s vision, purpose, and mission.

Because of that, we have decided to spend four weeks on a sermon series and corresponding community group curriculum to press further into this issue of social renewal-- or justice and mercy. I have no doubt that this will be a challenging study to those who choose to engage it. God’s clear and inescapable call in Scripture to care for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable is nothing short of staggering. But there is great hope and excitement in this call. Tim Keller, in his book *Generous Justice* (on which this study is based) says this:

The Bible describes the making of the world...as the weaving of a garment. God turned chaos into a cosmos, and also turned a tangle into a tapestry....The fabric metaphor conveys the importance of relationship. If you throw thousands of pieces of thread onto a table, no fabric results. The threads must be rightly and intimately related to one another in literally a million ways. Each thread must go over, under, around, and through the others at thousands of points. Only then do you get a fabric that is beautiful and strong, that covers, fits, holds, shelters, and delights. God created all things to be in a beautiful, harmonious, interdependent, knitted, webbed relationship to one another. Just as rightly related physical elements form a cosmos or a tapestry, so rightly related human beings form a community. This interwovenness is what the Bible calls shalom, or harmonious peace.

I invite you to join us in this four week exploration of what it means to seek shalom and live lives of justice and mercy. To dream and to practice weaving our lives into God’s great tapestry. It is important that we do this in community, so I encourage you to engage in discussion and ask the hard questions. Our great desire is that Hope Chapel would more and more be aligned and at work with God’s mission for making all things new.

Michael Van Patter
director of worship arts

Contents

WEEK ONE || What is justice?

WEEK TWO || Who is my neighbor?

WEEK THREE || Why do justice?

WEEK FOUR || How to do justice?

How to use this discussion guide

Opening Question (10 minutes)

Scripture (5 min)

Additional Reading (2 min)


Discussion Questions (30 min)

Most of the group time should be spent discussing these questions. Also, this is a good time to incorporate questions raised during the sermon.

Reflection Questions

Looking Forward

Further Study



This is a question for your group to discuss to introduce the week's topic. Take about 5 minutes to talk, then read the opening illustration.

Have someone in the group read the Scripture passage(s) to lead into the discussion questions.

Each week a few extra quotes are provided to help with discussion.

These are designed as "take home" questions. We encourage you to process them personally-- journaling, discussing with friends/family, praying through the ideas.

Each week we provide one question to get you thinking about next week's topic. It's more of a rhetorical question and let's you know where we're heading.

Want to read more? Each week we've provided additional Scripture readings and, in some cases, articles or essays related to the week's topic.



There is no way you will be able to grow spiritually apart from a deep involvement in a community of other believers.

-Tim Keller



Bernard Madoff, 2009



Tamil Nadu, India

“

Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. This kind of life reflects the character of God.

Timothy Keller

Week One: What Is Justice?

Opening Question:

What do you think of when you hear the word “justice”?

Here are two stories that illustrate different “angles” of justice...

Madoff Goes to Jail After Guilty Pleas

Judge Chin asked, “How do you now plead, guilty or not guilty?” “Guilty,” Mr. Madoff responded. The fraud’s collapse erased as much as \$65 billion that his clients thought was their’s. “I knew what I was doing was wrong, indeed criminal,” he said. “When I began the Ponzi scheme, I believed it would end shortly and I would be able to extricate myself and my clients.” He continued, “As the years went by I realized this day, and my arrest, would inevitably come.”

Bernard L. Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison, the maximum for his crimes. District Judge Denny Chin condemned his crimes as “extraordinarily evil” and imposed a sentence that was three times as long as the federal probation office suggested and more than 10 times as long as defense lawyers had requested.

More than 500 slaves rescued from brick kilns

In June, 2011, the government of Tamil Nadu state in India raided a brick kiln and rescued 500 people living and working under a brutal and oppressive system. Beaten with rods, belts and subjected to other forms of abuse, the bonded laborers toiled away in a tiny brick kiln in southern India day after day with little hope of freedom and escape.

After being rescued, the government organized trucks to send the laborers to a school nearby, where they were given meals, police protection, medical treatment and counseling. They also given a certificate of freedom and a thousand rupees, or about \$25, which is the first installment of rehabilitation funds the government will provide.

Justice is...

"The administration of law; especially : the establishment or determination of rights according to the rules of law or equity."

"The quality of being just or fair" or "Fair Treatment."

"Having a basis in or conforming to fact or reason, and acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good."

Toward a fuller definition

Who determines morals or what is good? A Christian's view of justice should be based in Scripture, but the church tends to function within an American view of justice which is essentially a) private morality and/or b) a public/government judicial system. In this study we will see that God calls his followers to a more complex view of justice.

Scripture

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.

Zechariah 7:9-10 ⁹"This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. ¹⁰ Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'

Matthew 25: 35-38 ³⁵For 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, ³⁶ 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.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

Isaiah 58:6-7 ⁶"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? ⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

Additional Readings

"Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. This kind of life reflects the character of God. It consists of a broad range of activities, from simple fair and honest dealings with people in daily life, to regular, radically generous giving of your time and resources, to activism that seeks to end particular forms of injustice, violence and oppression."

– Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*

Discussion Questions

1. How are mercy and justice related in Micah 6:8?
2. According to Zechariah 7:9-10 and Matthew 25, who does the Lord command us to care for? Who should we add to this list that lives in Greensboro?
3. What does the God want us to do, according to Isaiah 58: 6-7? How do you loose the bonds of wickedness and break every yoke today?

Reflection Questions

1. How does this broader understanding of justice affect the way you view your life?
2. The way your community group approaches service?

Looking Forward

1. Who are the vulnerable among your friends, neighbors and at work?
2. What keeps you from spending time with them?



Amish Schoolhouse
Lancaster County, PA

“

Who's your brother,
Who's your sister?
You just walked past him,
I think you missed her.

Derek Webb
A King and A Kingdom

Week Two: Who is your neighbor?

Opening Question:

Mr. Rodgers made famous the phrase, “won’t you be my neighbor?”.
Who do you consider to be your neighbor?

Tragedy in Lancaster County

On October 2, 2006 tragedy struck Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in a way that echoed across the nation. The day started out like any other. Amish students gathered in a one room schoolhouse, however the familiar comfort of everyday routine unexpectedly came to a screeching halt when gunshots were fired and several young girls were killed by an armed gunman attempting to gain vengeance for supposed past wrongs committed against his family. The perpetrator, Charles Roberts, committed suicide after killing no less than ten schoolgirls for what he believed to be a just cause. The event made national news, and the public at large circled around this community in a way that demonstrated great care and sympathy.

What is hard to believe about this event is not the response of outsiders looking in, but the response of the Amish community, including the actual families of the young girls who lost their lives that day. They did not cast blame. They did not retaliate. They did not look to punish someone. They responded with simple grace and compassion towards the killer’s family. Family members of the victims publicly expressed forgiveness toward Charles Roberts. More from the Amish community visited the Robert’s family the very day of the shooting to comfort them in their pain and confusion. The Roberts family was invited to the funeral of one of the girls who had been killed, and Amish mourners outnumbered the non-Amish at Charles Roberts’ funeral.

We see the same principle in Luke 10 in the story of the good Samaritan.

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37 ²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Additional Readings

"Before you can give this neighbor - love, you need to receive it. Only if you see that you have been saved graciously by someone who owes you the opposite, will you go out into the world looking to help absolutely anyone in need. Once we receive this ultimate, radical, neighbor - love through Jesus, we can start to be the neighbors that the Bible calls us to be."

Tim Keller
Generous Justice

"Who's your brother, who's your sister
You just walked past him
I think you missed her
As we're all migrating to the place where our father lives
'Cause we married in to a family of immigrants"

Derek Webb
A King and Kingdom

Discussion Questions

1. When asked how to gain eternal life, why do you believe Jesus answers with, "What is written in the law?" what does the man's answer tell us about his understanding of the gospel?
2. What does the Parable of the Good Samaritan tell us about who our neighbor is?
3. With whom do you most identify with in this story?

Reflection Questions

1. Who are our neighbors in need of help in Greensboro? Beyond Greensboro?
2. What does it look like to seek justice beyond our city?

Looking Forward

1. What keeps you from loving your neighbor?

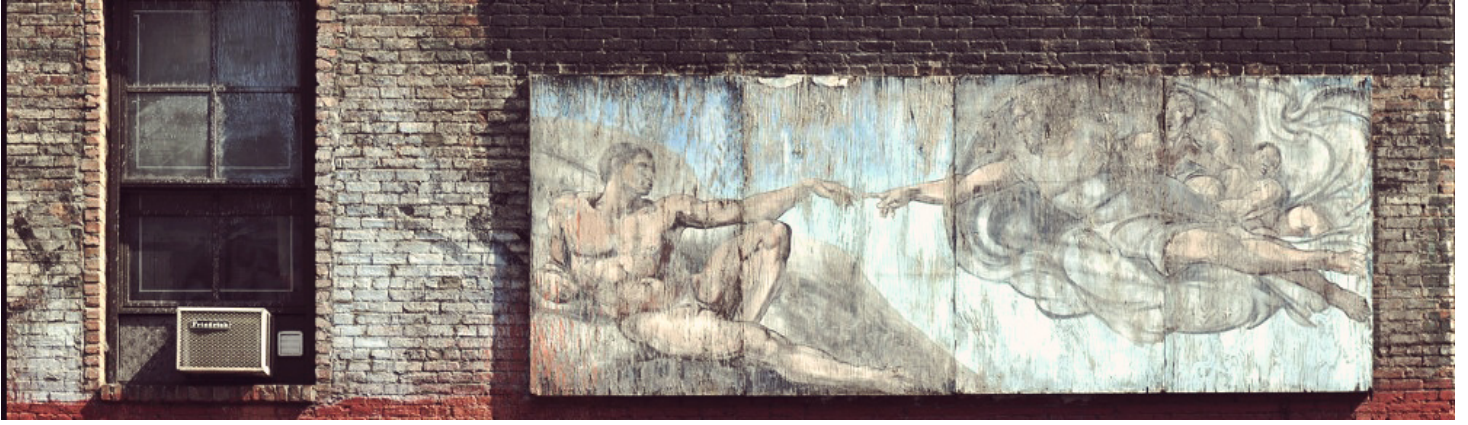
Further Study

"The Duty of Charity to the Poor" John Edwards

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/charity.htm>

Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 5:43, Matthew 19:19, Romans 13:9

Galatians 5:14, James 2:8



“Creation of Adam”
an urban interpretation

“

Most people believe that they should share with others and help the poor. The real problem is that, while knowing it, they are insufficiently motivated to actually do it.

Timothy Keller

Week Three : Why do justice?

Opening Question:

What motivates you toward a lifestyle of justice and mercy?

This week we will look at two primary motivations for a lifestyle of justice and mercy...

Gospel

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?" He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself." "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?"

Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

"A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.'

"What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?" "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

Image

In a sermon entitled 'The American Dream,' Martin Luther King Jr., said:

"You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of the imago dei, as it is expressed in Latin, the 'image of God,' is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected. Not that they have substantial unity with God, but that every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: There are not gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God. One day we will learn that. We will know one day that God made us to live together as brothers and to respect the dignity and worth of every man. This is why we must fight segregation with all of our nonviolent might."

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-27, 31 ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... ³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Isaiah 64:6-7 ⁶All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. ⁷No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Additional Readings

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is ours as the life of a gnat. It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit..."

C.S. Lewis

"Most people believe that they should share with others and help the poor. The real problem is that, while knowing it, they are insufficiently motivated to actually do it."

Tim Keller

Discussion Questions

1. According to Genesis 1, where do we get our value?
2. How and why do your everyday experiences differ from this idea of value from Gen. 1?

Discussion Questions, cont.

3. According to Isaiah 64 and Luke 10, what is our spiritual state without Christ? How does this understanding of “spiritual poverty” impact our view of the poor?
4. Matthew 5:3 says, “blessed are the poor in spirit.” What might it mean to be “middle class in spirit”?

Reflection Questions

1. Do you believe that everyone has value?
2. Based on our study, what should be our motivation for doing justice?
3. Keller argues that the degree to which you feel the need to do justice is a barometer indicating the degree to which you understand the gospel. Do you agree with his conclusion? If so, is that a challenging statement?

Looking Forward

1. Based on the past few weeks of discussion, have you considered any practical ways to live a life of justice and mercy?

Further Study

James 2:14-17, Psalm 145:9, 17, 1 Chronicles 29:11-14, Deuteronomy 10:16-17, Matthew 5:21-22



Sandtown neighborhood
Baltimore, MD

“

Seek justice,
encourage the oppressed.
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 1:17

Week Four: How to do justice?

Opening Question:

We've talked about what justice is, who is our neighbor and why we should do justice. Now the big question: **how** do you think you might do justice?

Sandtown

Due to segregation the African-American newcomers from the South had to move into Sandtown, a place where the only jobs available were as low-wage domestic workers for wealthier families to the west. Many white-owned businesses would not hire African-Americans at all, or they did so for only menial work.

By the 1970's, the industrial and manufacturing job base of the city of Baltimore was in sharp decline. New jobs were created in places that were too expensive for many urban residents to live and inaccessible by transport lines. The resulting economic weakness in the neighborhood led to the kind of exploitative behavior toward the poor that the Bible condemns. Crime rose and the victims were usually members of the neighborhood. Businesses healthy to a community moved out and were replaced by gun dealers, checkcashing centers, and liquor stores. Mark Gornik and the Tibbells moved to Sandtown in 1986. They lived there as neighbors, and met as a church in Gornik's home. Eventually they got a building in the middle of the neighborhood and started work as a community-based church effort, built a health center, a school, a job and economic development program, and a housing organization. They focused on twelve square blocks and worked to see God's peace in the area. Twenty-five years later, they're still working on it.

Scripture

Job 29:12-17 ¹² I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them. ¹³ The one who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. ¹⁴ I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. ¹⁵ I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. ¹⁶ I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. ¹⁷ I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Job 31:13-22, 28 ¹³ "If I have denied justice to any of my servants, whether male or female, when they had a grievance against me, ¹⁴ what will I do when God confronts me?... ¹⁶ "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, ¹⁷ if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless— ¹⁸ but from my youth I reared them as a father would, and from my birth I guided the widow— ¹⁹ if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or the needy without garments, ²⁰ and their hearts did not bless me for warming them with the fleece from my sheep, ²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, ²² then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint... ²⁸ then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Job mean when he says he wears righteousness and justice like clothing?
2. What do you think about Job fulfilling the desires of the poor, not just their needs?
3. How has your community group worked toward justice in practical ways?

Reflection Questions

1. Do you see Hope Chapel meeting needs? With who and how?
(for more information about Hope Chapel's social renewal structure, please see appendix 1)
2. How do you feel about fulfilling the *desires* of the poor?
3. Are you involved in serving through Project Hope? If not, consider serving at your next Community Group project or church-wide "Day of Hope".

Additional Reading

Layers of Help from Generous Justice, Chp 6 based on the work of John Perkins

"Relief is direct aid to meet immediate physical, material, and economic needs. Common relief ministries are temporary shelters for the homeless and refugees, food and clothing services for people in need, and free or low-cost medical and counseling services. Relief also means caring for foster children, the elderly, and the physically handicapped through home care or the establishment of institutions. A more assertive form of relief is advocacy, in which people in need are given active assistance to find legal aid, housing, and other kinds of help, such as protection from various forms of domestic abuse and violence."

"The next level is development. This means giving an individual, family, or entire community what they need to move beyond dependency on relief into a condition of economic self-sufficiency... It includes education, job creation and training, job search skills, and financial counseling as well as helping a family into home ownership. "Development," of course, is far more time consuming, complex, and expensive than relief."

"Besides relief and development (both individual and corporate) there is social reform. Social reform moves beyond the relief of immediate needs and dependency and seeks to change the conditions and social structures that aggravate or cause that dependency" for instance in the parable of the Good Samaritan a good question would be how do we stop highway violence? "... the answer to that question would be some kind of social reform – instituting a new social arrangement that stops the flow of victims because of a change in social conditions."

Appendix 1

Project : Hope

Hope Chapel exists to proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel to our city and world. Project Hope is the social renewal “wing” of Hope Chapel’s ministry. The following is a broad overview of Project Hope’s plan and structure.

Create Awareness

In a world where it is easy to look past the pain and brokenness all around us, we want to look toward it. We want to clearly communicate the needs of the people around us so that we might enter into it.

Establish Partnerships

Instead of partnering with many social service providers and agencies, we want to develop deep relationships with two or three social service providers. It is our desire to come alongside these organizations and agencies to serve with them and together bring about renewal in our communities.

Provide Opportunities

We will provide quarterly church-wide service opportunities to partner with our social service organizations and agencies. Additionally, we will provide opportunities for our community groups to partner with these organizations once a month.

Provide Training

We will train our volunteers by preparing them to put compassion into action and by helping them evaluate their experiences.

Credits/Thanks

This study was based on the book *Generous Justice*, by Timothy Keller.
More information about the book can be found at www.timothykeller.com/books

The content of this study was compiled or written by Jill Burnette and Patrick Collins as part of a summer internship at Hope Chapel. We are very thankful for the hours of study and writing they provided in creating this curriculum.

Design, layout, and editing by Michael Van Patter.



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IN THE CITY. FOR THE CITY.

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