

Living Justice Leaders Guide

Introduction

Every day the world around us suffers from poverty, violence, and injustice. It may be easier to look away from the hurting world around us than to try and help, but God is calling us to be people of action.

Micah 6:8 says, “*And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*” What does it mean to act justly? The dictionary defines justice as “fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made.”¹ However, is this the same way God defines justice?

Living Justice addresses the challenges that keep us from acting out God’s justice.

Authors Jamie Gates and Jon Middendorf explore what it means to live justice in the world around us. Each chapter will ignite a desire within students to get involved and make a difference. They will learn how they can show compassion to the broken and hurting.

Use this book to examine the concept of *justice*. Encourage your students to participate in the discussions, apply the information to their individual experiences, and ask questions if they feel like they aren’t quite grasping something.

¹ justice. Encarta.com. *Encarta® World English Dictionary* [North American Edition] © & (P)2007 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed for Microsoft by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_1861623550/justice.html. Accessed June 13, 2007.

Chapter 1: Introduction—Leaving Out Left Behind

Read the parable of the sheep and goats found in Matthew 25:31-46. Then, read the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37. These two passages will help students understand that there are those who see a need and do nothing, and there are those who see a need and do something.

1. Is “justice” on this earth something God does or something we do?
2. Chapter 1 begins with the views of two students, Tim and Kara. What is the difference between the two student’s views of the world?
3. What do think the authors means by a “faith perspective” [p. 11]?
4. Can our “faith perspective” hinder us from actively taking part in what God is doing to bring justice to those who need it? If so, how?
5. According to Jeremiah 7:1-11, God’s dream for His people was to act *justly* with one another. How does this dream still apply to us today?
6. What do you think the Bible means when it uses the word *just* or *justice*?
7. What is your response to the authors’ statement on page 16: “*God cares just as much for the frail, sick, and poor as He does for the strong, healthy, and rich*”?
8. If we believed the above statement, how would it change the way we live?

Chapter 2: Two Great Temptations—Citizen and Consumer

Read Romans 11:33—12:2. Then, read the quote by Karl Martin found toward the bottom of page 19.

1. Why might a person be tempted to primarily define themselves as a consumer and/or a citizen, rather than primarily as a Christian?
2. How can consumerism affect our involvement in the world? How can it prevent justice?
3. What does it mean to have a “prophetic imagination” [pp. 24-26]? How does this help us view the world as God does?
4. Do you think that you are more loyal to your country or to the way of Christ?
5. Can a person be loyal to his/her country and to Christ at the same time? If so, how? If not, why?
6. How do we commit ourselves to the Body of Christ and show allegiance to the Kingdom community [pp. 32-33]?

Chapter 3: God's Economy—Good News to the Poor, Recovery of Sight for the Blind

Briefly tell the story of Israel's exodus from Egyptian captivity. Be sure to include the parting of the Red Sea. Then read Exodus 20:1-11, Leviticus 25:1-17, and Deuteronomy 24:14-15. Share with students the fact that God didn't just free the Israelites from captivity, but He guided and directed their lives even after they were free. Remind students of the fact that God still gives guidance and direction on how to live holy lives.

1. Why do you think God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments?
2. Read the guidelines God gave the Israelites [pp. 35-37]. Do these guidelines apply to us today? If so, how?
3. Read Luke 4:16-21. What is the message of Jesus words in this passage?
What does this message mean for us today?
4. Read this quote from page 46: "*Christ's call to the life of holiness restores our values by reshaping the way we relate to each other and by re-creating our desires and habits.*" How does a life of holiness help us live counter to the consumer culture?
5. Why is it important that we allow Christ to re-create our passions and desires?
6. Read Galatians 5:19-26. What kind of difference would we make in the world if our lives embodied these characteristics?
7. Why is it important for us to ask God for new eyes to see and new ears to hear?

Chapter 4: A Chosen People—Christian before Citizen

Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:12-17. Share with students what these passages say in relation to obeying those in authority over us. Then, read Acts 5:17-42. Discuss how Peter and the apostles were told by those in authority to stop preaching about Jesus. Focus in on “*We must obey God rather than human beings*” (v. 29). Avoid discussing the seemingly contradictory nature of these passages. Instead, use these questions to unpack them.

1. Have you ever been in a situation where your faith came into conflict with the policies of your country?
2. Read the quote by Walter Brueggemann found on pages 58-59. How can worship be a subversive act?
3. Divide up into five separate groups. Assign each group one of the following: *baptism, regular prayer and scripture reading, preaching and receiving sermons, keeping the Sabbath holy, and celebrating communion*. Have group each answer the question: How does this act of worship help us express justice? (You may want students to re-read pages 59-67.)
4. How can we live as the unified Body of Christ outside the four walls of the church?
5. How does the Body worship in service? Advocacy? Resistance? How do these relate to living justice?
6. “*The politics of Jesus stand in contrast to the politics of this age*” [p. 78]. How would you explain the meaning of this statement to someone?

Chapter 5: Imagining a New Community, a New Hope

Read Ephesians 4:4 and Acts 4:32. Ask students to imagine a Church where the people act as one.

1. How do we see through the eyes of Jesus?
2. How can we improve our godly vision? (Consider reading or summarizing pages 81-83.)
3. How can we cultivate our “prophetic imagination” [pp. 83-84]? How does this impact the way we live?
4. How does our “prophetic imagination” affect the way we worship [pp. 86-87]?
5. What would a Church that uses its “prophetic imagination” look like?
6. Summarize the ideas and steps the author gives to become a person of justice and righteousness [p. 90].
7. What is one thing you learned or that God has shown you from this book?
8. After reading this book, how can you live justice in your world?
9. Close by reading the prayer on page 91.