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Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Proverbs 21:15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.

Schedule

Lesson	Title
Lesson 1	The Justice of God
Lesson 2	The Law of God
Lesson 3	The Roots of Injustice
Lesson 4	Legal Justice
Lesson 5	Hospitality and Justice to Strangers
Lesson 6	Economic Justice, Part 1
Lesson 7	Economic Justice, Part 2
Lesson 8	Gender and Class Justice
Lesson 9	The Sabbath and Justice
Lesson 10	Jesus' Ministry and Justice
Lesson 11	Jesus' Death and Justice
Lesson 12	Leaders and Justice

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Version 1

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 1: The Justice of God

Initial Questions

- How would you define justice?
- What does it look like? What are just acts?

The Justice of God

Isaiah 5:16

Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are brought low. But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

Deuteronomy 32:4

The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

Jeremiah 9:24

But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."

- How are God and man contrasted in Isaiah 5:16?
- How does the metaphor of the Rock adequately describe God's characteristics?
- What three qualities does God practice according to Jeremiah 9:24?

Psalms 113:1-9

¹ Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!
² Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! ³ From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised! ⁴ The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, ⁶ who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? ⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, ⁸ to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. ⁹ He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!

- How is God "high above the nations" and "his glory above the heavens"?
- What does God do when he looks far down on the earth?
- What does this passage say about God's concern for the downtrodden?

- To whom does God show justice according to the following passages:
 - Deut. 10:17-18
 - Psa. 10:17-18
 - Psa. 146:7-8

Psalm 82 depicts a court scene where the true God is determined by his actions. See verse 1 for a description of this court scene.

- What issue is brought before the court to determine the innocence or guilt of the gods?
- What is the verdict for the gods?
- What is the verdict for God?

God's Impartiality

Acts 10:34

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

See also Rom. 2:11

- Could God be just if he were partial?
- What does this say about the doctrine that God arbitrarily elects certain individuals to be saved?

Pursuing God's Character

Leviticus 20:26

You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

See also Lev. 19:2 and 1 Pet. 1:16.

- Who is our model and motivation to live holy lives?
- What is holiness? What is involved in living a holy life?
- How does holiness relate to justice?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 2: The Law of God

Initial Questions

- What role does Scripture play in a study of justice?
- Are both the OT and NT beneficial in this study? What are the differences between the testaments?

The Old Testament and Justice

Romans 15:4

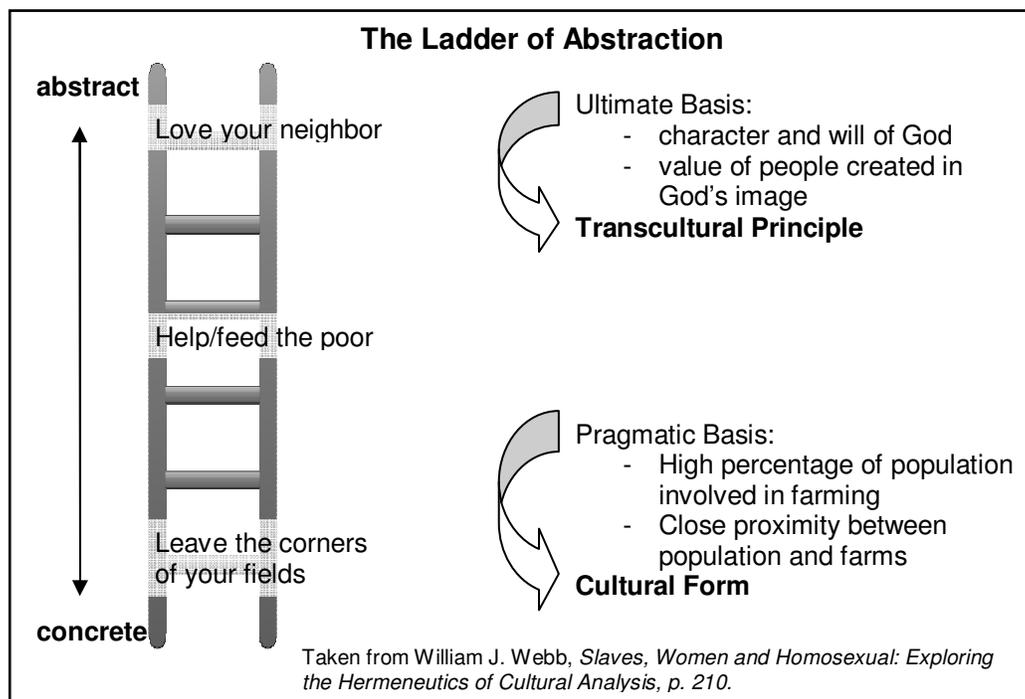
For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

See also 1 Cor. 10:1-13.

Major Law Codes in OT

- Decalogue or Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21)
- Book of Covenant (Ex. 20:22-23:33)
- Priestly Legislation (Lev. 1-7; 11-16)
- The Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26)
- Laws Given Before Entry into the Land (Deut. 12-26)

The Old Testament is an authoritative source for moral reflection for the Christian. In it, God has revealed the story of his activity among his people Israel, and his character is displayed throughout its writings. Specific laws in the Old Testament that do not appear to “translate” to our time still have value. They should point us to God’s character and principles that can be used today. The Old Testament law will be heavily used in this study because it contains both civil and religious law, as well as a greater volume of material.



Motive Clauses

A common element within the Old Testament law is the *motive clause*. A motive clause gives an explanation for a particular law, providing a reason for obedience to the law, appealing to ethical sentiments, God's character or historical events. Motive clauses are a unique feature of Israelite law code in the Ancient Near East.

Examples with the motive clause in bold:

Deuteronomy 22:8

*When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, **that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.***

Deuteronomy 24:21-22

²¹ *When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.* ²² ***You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.***

The New Testament and Justice

Since the New Testament is not a civil law, it lacks the number of specific laws relating to justice found in the Old Testament. This does not mean that the New Testament does not have something to say about justice. Many of the epistles address treatment of others, and these statements provide great benefit in the study of justice. More importantly, the New Testament portrays a way of life that promotes justice. This lifestyle is most concretely displayed in Jesus, who is the full revelation of God and the exact representation of his nature.

Character as a Basis for Law

God's law is rooted in his character. It comes from him, and he gives it in order that humans might become more like him. Since God is a God of justice, it makes sense that one of the fundamental aspects of the Law is justice. The law will further develop a person's character to align with God's character.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- What does the Lord require according to this verse?

Amos 5:24

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

- Read Amos 5:21-24.
 - Why didn't God accept their worship? What was lacking?

 - What does God really want from his people?

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

- How did Jesus summarize the entire law in Matthew 22:34-40? What was its most fundamental component?

- How does this relate to justice?

Matthew 23:23

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

- Is it enough to outwardly do the law?

- What is identified as the "weightier matters of the law"?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 3: The Roots of Injustice

Initial Questions

- For what reasons do people act unjustly? What is the motivation of injustice?
- What groups of people are most likely to inflict injustice?
- What groups of people are most likely to be treated unjustly?

The Value of People

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- What value does each person possess according to this passage?
- How should this passage promote justice?

1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

- How do people often judge others?
- How does God judge people?

Consider the differences between the groups of people in the following passages. Which group is considered more valuable by society? Which group is deemed less valuable by society?

Passage	Deemed Valuable	Deemed Less Valuable
1 Sam. 16:7		
John 4:9		
Luke 18:9-14		
Matt. 9:10-11		
James 2:1-13		

Devaluing a person or group of people becomes the justification for injustice. A person may reason that a certain person does not “deserve” kind treatment. Groups are disparaged, mistreated and dehumanized. If a person views others as anything other than human or lacking the image of God, that individual will more easily perpetrate injustice.

- Consider feuding families. How do you think the Hatfields would characterize the McCoys? Or how would the Montagues talk about the Capulets?
- What propaganda did the Nazis put forth about the Jews?
- Consider how African Americans have been viewed and characterized throughout American history.

The Powerful

Differences in power between individuals and groups of people can also lead to injustice. Power, in this context, refers to the ability or capacity to exert influence or control over others, and it is a basic component of nearly all human interaction. Power can reside within individuals or classes of people. When unchecked, power becomes the means by which people act unjustly toward others.

The book *Powershift*, by Alvin Toffler identifies three main kinds of power: violence, wealth and knowledge.

Consider the following passages and comment on how they relate to justice:

- Violence in Luke 10:30
- Wealth in Luke 6:19-21
- Knowledge in 1 Cor. 8:1

The Vulnerable and Powerless

In a community, there are certain individuals who are more likely to be overlooked or exploited. Injustice occurs when the powerful take advantage of those without power. For this reason, special attention must be paid to meeting the needs of the vulnerable.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the

fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

- Who is identified in this passage as receiving God's justice?
- How is justice displayed for these individuals?
- What motive clause is provided for the Israelites to love the sojourner?

Deuteronomy 27:18-19

¹⁸ Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road. And all the people shall say, "Amen." ¹⁹ Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say, "Amen."

- Who are the vulnerable members of society mentioned in these verses?

The Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:9-12)

The Feast of Booths (Deut. 16:13-15)

- Who was included in the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths?
- What lessons can be learned from their inclusion?

See also Ex. 22:21-27 for an example of justice for the helpless.

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 4: Legal Justice

Initial Questions

- What is the purpose of government?
- What does it mean that “justice is blind”?



The Good of Society

Laws are provided for the good of the community. The 10 Commandments illustrate this point by addressing core elements of society. While the first 4 commandments deal with a person’s relationship with God, the last 6 address relationships between people.

Commandment	Passage	Societal Principle
“Honor your father and your mother...”	Ex. 20:12	<i>Sanctity of Family</i>
“You shall not murder.”	Ex. 20:13	<i>Sanctity of Life</i>
“You shall not commit adultery.”	Ex. 20:14	<i>Sanctity of Marriage</i>
“You shall not steal.”	Ex. 20:15	<i>Sanctity of Property</i>
“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”	Ex. 20:16	<i>Sanctity of Truth</i>
You shall not covet...”	Ex. 20:17	<i>Sanctity of Motives</i>

- How many of these laws deal directly with the home and family?
- What role does the 9th commandment have in preserving legal justice?
- Why is the 10th commandment given? Can it be prosecuted in a court of law?

An Eye for an Eye

Exodus 21:23-25

But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

This law of equal retribution is called the *Lex Talionis*. See Gen. 4:23-24 for retribution that is different than the *lex talionis*.

- Is it just to ensure that punishment takes place?
- How would this law be merciful and limit retribution?

Capital Crimes

There were various laws in the Old Testament, which called for the death penalty. The severity of the penalty illustrates the seriousness of the crimes.

Numbers 35:31

Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death.

- Which law could not receive a ransom in exchange for the prescribed penalty?

The following crimes called for the death penalty:

- 1) Premeditate murder (Ex. 21:12-14)
- 2) Kidnapping (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7)
- 3) Adultery (Lev. 20:10-21; Deut. 22:22)
- 4) Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13)
- 5) Incest (Lev. 20:11-12, 14)
- 6) Bestiality (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16)
- 7) Incurable delinquency and persistent disobedience to parents and authorities (Deut. 17:12; 21:18-21)
- 8) Striking or cursing parents (Ex. 21:15; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20; Matt. 15:4; Mk. 7:10)
- 9) Offering human sacrifice (Lev. 20:2)
- 10) False prophecy (Deut. 13:1-10)
- 11) Blasphemy (Lev. 24:11-14, 16, 23)
- 12) Profaning the Sabbath (Ex. 35:2; Hum. 15:32-36)
- 13) Sacrificing to false gods (Ex. 22:20)
- 14) Magic and divination (Ex. 22:18)
- 15) Unchastity (Deut. 22:20-21)
- 16) Rape of a betrothed virgin (Deut. 22:23-27)

- Kaiser, Old Testament Ethics, 91-92.

- Could other laws receive a ransom in exchange for the penalty?

Legal Justice in the New Testament

The Old Testament speaks of legal justice as practiced within the theocratic (God-ruled) or religious-political government of Israel. It is a view of justice from within the community.

The New Testament addresses Christians who are not in a position of government for the most part. The view of the legal process from the perspective of the New Testament is from the outside looking in.

Read Romans 13:1-8

- What are Christians supposed to do in relationship to the government?
- What does God command the government?
- What is the role of government?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

- Why shouldn't a Christian take another Christian to court?
- How is a lawsuit between Christians a "defeat" in verse 7?

Perverting Justice

Exodus 23:1-8

¹ "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ² You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. ⁴ "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him. ⁶ "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. ⁸ And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

See also Lev. 19:15-16.

- How does telling the truth relate to justice?
- How were enemies to be treated?
- How could justice be perverted in this passage?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 5: Hospitality and Justice to Strangers

Initial Questions

- What kind of needs would a stranger in a foreign land have?
- Have you ever been in a strange place and needed something? How did you feel at that time?

HOSPITALITY:
From Greek word *philoxenia*, which literally means “love of strangers.”

Hospitality in the Law of Moses

Exodus 23:9

You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³ "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18

¹⁷ "You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, ¹⁸ but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

See also Ex. 22:21; Deut. 10:18-19; 27:19

- What motive clauses are provided for Israel's treatment of the stranger?

Contrasting Hospitalities

- Read Genesis 18-19.

	Abraham	Lot	Men of Sodom and Gomorrah
Was hospitality shown?			
If so, what was done to show hospitality?			
Is their example approved?			

Hebrews 13:2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

- Why should we help someone we do not know?
- How will kindness from a stranger be received differently than kindness from a friend?
- The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is often used to condemn homosexuality. Is that the only sin mentioned against them? What sins are identified in the following passages?
 - Ezek. 16:48-50
 - Luke 10:3-12
 - Jude 7

Consider these other Old Testament accounts where hospitality is a central element of the story:

- The Levite and his concubine (Judges 19)
- Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25:2-42)
- Rahab (Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17-23)
- The Shunnamite Woman (2 Kings 4:8-10)

Hospitality in the New Testament

Romans 12:13

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

1 Peter 4:9

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

- How does the character of a Christian lend itself to practicing hospitality?
- Is hospitality still needed today? Who needs it?
- Who is required to practice hospitality according to the following passages:
 - 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8
 - 1 Tim. 5:9-10

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 6: Economic Justice, Part 1

Initial Questions

- Why do some people have more money than others?
- How does money create a difference of power between people?
- Why is injustice often associated with money?

Oppression of the Poor

Proverbs 14:31

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

Proverbs 21:13

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.

Amos 4:1

"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'

See also Prov. 14:21; Prov. 22:9

- What kind of attitudes is associated with oppression of the poor?
- What standing does the oppressor have with God?

Old Testament Models

Job in Job 29:11-16; 31:16-22

- How does Job portray a positive picture of treatment of the poor in Job 29:11-16; 31:16-22?

David in 2 Sam. 12:5-6

- How does Nathan appeal to David's sense of justice?
- Why is injustice easier to identify in others?

Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 21

- How did Jezebel and Ahab each display injustice in this passage?

The Destitute Israelite

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

⁷ If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸ but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Leviticus 25:35, 39-40

³⁵ If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.

³⁹ If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: ⁴⁰ he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.

- How were the poor to be treated according to these passages?
- How were indebted servants to be treated according to Lev. 25:43?
- What are the motive clauses provided in Lev. 25:42 and 55?
- What was to happen to indebted servants in the 7th year? See Deut. 15:12-18.

Charging Interest

Exodus 22:25-27

²⁵ If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. ²⁶ If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down... ²⁷ And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

- What was wrong with charging interest? Also Lev. 25:35-38 & Deut. 23:19-20.
- How did Nehemiah address the problem of usury? See Neh. 5:1-13.

Fair Business Dealings

Fair business dealings are commanded in Lev. 19:36 and Deut. 25:15.

- What causes people to be unjust in business?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 7: Economic Justice, Part 2

Initial Questions

- What is the purpose of money? How is it to be used?
- How can money be used in a godly manner?
- How can money be used to promote injustice?

The Needs of Each Individual

Exodus 16:17-18

¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

Acts 2:44-45

⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Ephesians 4:28

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

- How was the manna divided among the Israelites in the wilderness?
- Was the manna divided in a just or unjust way?
- How did the early Christians use their possessions?
- What motivation does the writer of Ephesians provide for honest labor?

Proverbs 30:8-9

⁸ Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹ lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

- Why does this prayer request neither poverty nor riches?
- What does God say about meeting our needs in Matthew 6:25-34?

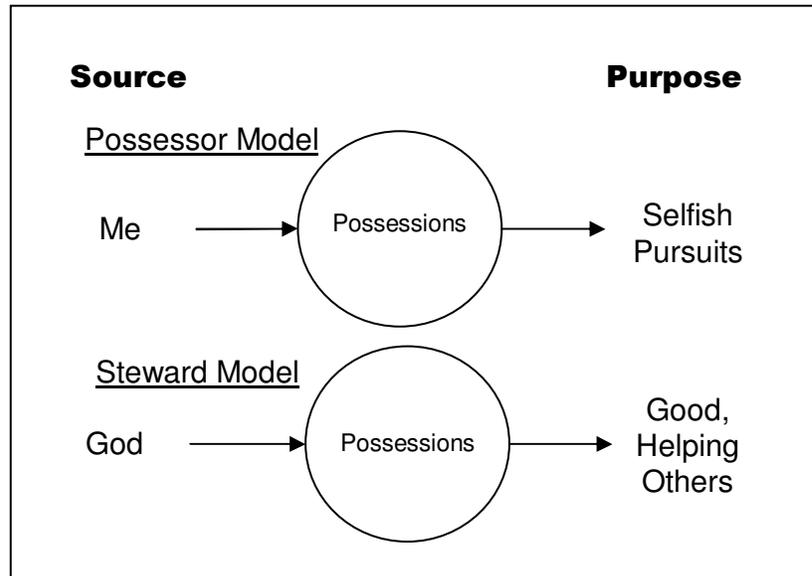
The Use of the Land

The land was important for providing food and an income for the people. It was a blessing from God, and it was to be extended to others in need. The land was not to be bought and sold. It was supposed to stay within a family.

Leviticus 25:23

²³ The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.

- What provisions were made to keep land within a family? See Lev. 25:23-28.
- Who really owned the land? Why didn't the Israelites own the land?



- Read Prov. 1:19. What effect does greed have on a person?
- Read Psalm 50:9-15. Why did God condemn their sacrifice? What attitude was the people displaying toward the sacrifices?

The following provisions were made for the poor from the land:

- The tithe at the end of the third year (Deut. 14:27-29)
- The edges of the field and bypassed sheaves (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)
- The offering of the first fruits (Deut. 26:1-19; esp. v. 12-13)

Leviticus 23:22

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

- Why does it make a difference whether the harvest is viewed as a blessing from God or the product of one's own work?
- How was the blessing of harvest to be used for others?
- What motive clause is provided in Deut. 24:22?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 8: Gender and Class Justice

Initial Questions

- Classes of People
 - How are people often divided into groups?
 - What makes people different across cultures?
 - How are people the same across cultures?

The Ancient Near East

The nation of Israel came into existence within the Ancient Near East, and they lived in a world with existing social customs and practices. Many of these practices were sinful, and they represented the fallen world of sin.

The Ancient Near East was a patriarchal society, where men had an elevated status over women. Women were afforded few rights, and they were considered the property of their father and eventually their husband.

Slavery was another ingrained aspect of the culture. Classes of people were subjected to slavery. Slaves were deemed to bear an inferior status, and they were treated as the property of their master.

Consider that OT Laws were sometimes concessions to the ingrained practices of sin (Matt. 19:1-9, esp. verse 8).

The Status of Women

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- What was the status of woman in the creation?

Genesis 2:18

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

- What role did the woman provide in the first family?
- Does helper imply inferiority? See Ps. 10:14 and 54:4.

The laws of the Old Testament regulate much of the existing social practices in the Ancient Near East. Within this regulation, there are times when the laws of God provide greater justice for women than existed in society.

- Daughters were given inheritance rights in the absence of living sons (Num. 27:1-11; 26:1-13).
- Wives were protected from the whims of a divorcing husband (Deut. 22:13-19; 24:1-4). Husbands were commanded to give the wives they divorced a certificate of divorcement.

The Old Testament also highlights faithful godly women for their great influence:

- Miriam the prophetess (Ex. 15:20-21)
- Deborah the Judge (Jdgs. 4:4-7; 5:1-31)
- Huldah the prophetess (2 Kgs. 22:14-20; 2 Chron. 34:22-28)
- Naomi and Ruth (Ruth)
- Queen Esther (Esther)

The Virtuous Woman is praised as the model woman in Hebrew scripture (Prov. 31:10-31).

Slavery

Slavery was a way of life in the Ancient Near East. Similar to the status of women, the laws of God did not approve or endorse the existence of slavery. Instead, the existing practice was regulated to prevent further abuse and injustice.

- Fellow Israelites were not to be sold into permanent slavery because of debt. They were to work as servants until the Sabbath year when they would be released (Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12). Upon their departure, they were provided with liberal gifts of food (Deut. 15:13-14).
- Slaves were given a generous amount of rest compared to other cultures. They were given the weekly Sabbath day for rest, in addition other holy days throughout the year (Ex. 20:8-10)
- Runaway slaves were not to be returned to their master (Deut. 23:15-16).
- Excessive punishment for a slave resulted in his freedom (Ex. 21:26-27).

Deuteronomy 15:15

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.

- What motive clause is provided in Deut. 15:15 in regard to the release of Hebrew servants?
- What principles can be learned from the Scriptures about the status of women and slavery today?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 9: The Sabbath and Justice

Initial Questions

- Is rest important? What happens when rest is not provided?
- Should debts ever be cleared or forgiven? Is that fair?

The Observance of the Sabbath

Three different observances of the Sabbath occurred.

- Weekly or every 7th day
- Every 7th year
- Every 50th year (the year after 7 groupings of 7 years)

The Weekly Sabbath

Exodus 20:8, 11

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

¹² Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or you ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

- Who is to observe the Sabbath? Who is specifically identified?
- What is the motive clause provided in Exodus 20:11?
- Is the Sabbath instruction indicating work is unimportant? Why or why not?
- Why were animals included in the Sabbath?
- What is the motive clause provided in Deuteronomy 5:15?

Violating the Sabbath

Amos 8:4-6.

- For what reason was the Sabbath violated in this passage?
- What other problems were occurring at this time?

Nehemiah 13:15-22.

- For what reason was the Sabbath profaned in this passage?

Numbers 15:32-36.

- Why was the punishment for breaking the Sabbath so severe?

The Seventh Year and Jubilee

The following events were associated with the seventh year and Jubilee (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25; Deut. 15):

- ✓ Let the land lie fallow
- ✓ Return of family property
- ✓ Liberation of slaves
- ✓ Remission of debts

Notice the words associated with the Sabbath year and Jubilee: liberty, release, redemption, set free.

Exodus 23:10-11

¹⁰ For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield,

¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

- What benefit was the seventh year...
 - To the land?
 - For the poor?
 - For the beasts?

Jubilee occurred every 50th year (the year after the 7th grouping of 7 years).

Leviticus 25:10

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

- What events were to take place on the year of Jubilee? See Lev. 25:8-12.

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 10: Jesus' Ministry and Justice

Initial Questions

- How can our treatment of others create opportunities for the gospel?

The Year of the Lord's Favor

Luke 4:16-19

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

- What type of event is Isaiah referencing? How does it relate to justice?

Jesus' Association with Others

Jesus often associated with the marginal and fringe elements of society, showing them care and compassion when society normally shunned them.

Matthew 4:24-25

²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Luke 15:1

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

Luke 17:12-14

¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed.

See also Luke 6:13-16 and 8:1-3

- Name the different groups that Jesus associated with from these verses.

Table Fellowship

The Gospel of Luke emphasizes Jesus and table fellowship.

Passage	Meal	Participants
5:27-32	Banquet at Levi's House	
7:36-50	Dinner at Simon's House	
9:10-17	Feeding the 5,000	
10:38-42	Hospitality at Martha's House	
11:37-54	Meal at Pharisee's House	
14:1-24	Meal at Pharisee's House	
19:1-10	At the Home of Zacchaeus	
22:7-38	The Last Supper	
24:13-35	Breaking Bread at Emmaus	
24:36-53	Supper with Disciples	

- What barriers normally existed at the table among different elements of society?
- How did Jesus use the table as a means for the gospel?

Jesus' Teaching

Consider Jesus' teaching in the following passages. What do these passages have to do with justice?

- The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:7-12)
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
- The Scene at the Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46)

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 11: Jesus' Death and Justice

Initial Questions

- How can desire for power, prestige or reputation lead to injustice?

Methods and Means of Jesus' Enemies

Matthew 12:14

¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

Matthew 26:59-61

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"

Luke 22:2

And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

- What means did Jesus' enemies use to put him to death?
- Were the Pharisees worried about their position of authority or power?

Jesus and Power

Luke 22:41-42

⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

- Whose will did Jesus primarily seek?
- What was he willing to give up in order to follow his Father?

Matthew 26:50-54

⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my

Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

- In the garden, what statement did Jesus make about the sword?
- Did Jesus have power at his disposal? How did he use it?
- Is physical force a legitimate method for disciples to use today?

Jesus' Death

Romans 5:6

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

- Who did Jesus die for?

Hebrews 2:9

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

- Who did Jesus not die for? Did he practice partiality in his death?

Luke 23:34

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

- How did Jesus treat his enemies? See Matthew 5:43-48.

Jesus and Suffering

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25

1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

- How did Christ respond to the injustice he faced?
- What perspective should one have in the midst of persecution?
- What benefit is there to "shar[ing] in Christ's sufferings"?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson 12: Leaders and Justice

Initial Questions

- Why are leaders susceptible to being unjust?

Contrasting Views

Mark 10:42-45

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Among the Gentiles, how was greatness determined?
- How was greatness to be determined by God?

John 13:12-15

¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

- How did Jesus model appropriate leadership?
- Does Jesus' teaching apply to all disciples or just leaders?

Leaders

➤ Elders and Deacons

1 Peter 5:1-4

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

➤ Husbands

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

1 Peter 3:7

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

➤ Fathers

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

➤ Masters

Colossians 4:1

Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Ephesians 6:9

Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

- From these passages, what words characterize the way leaders should not lead?
- What words describe appropriate leadership?
- How are leaders supposed to use their power or influence?
- How does Jesus' purpose in coming (Mark 10:45) relate to all leaders?
- The full context of some of the references above can be found in Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-3:7. These passages talk about the proper way to behave in relationships of authority.
 - How should leaders be treated? What language is used to describe those under the authority of leaders?
 - How would willful submission promote justice?

Justice: A Biblical Perspective

Review

1. How is God a God of justice?
2. How should God's character affect the way we live?
3. Does the Old Testament provide any instruction in justice?
4. What is a motive clause and how is it used in the Bible?
5. What in Scripture indicates that all people have value?
6. How does power relate to the subject of justice?
7. What groups of people are normally treated unjustly?
8. What is legal justice?
9. What is hospitality and why was it necessary in the Bible? Is it needed today?
10. What principle does the Scripture teach about the "needs of each individual"?
11. What is the source and purpose of possessions?
12. How does the Old Testament provide instruction about justice to women?
13. What does the Bible have to say about slavery?
14. What is the basis of the Sabbath? How does the Sabbath relate to justice?
15. How does Jesus display the character of justice?
16. Are there any people you know who embody the quality of justice?