

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 2



SPEAK UP!
TRAFFICKED CHILDREN
PSALM 82:1-4; JAMES 1:22-27; MATTHEW 25:35-40
02/19/2017

MAIN POINT

God's justice is the source of all human justice, and this compels to seek justice for those who cannot seek it for themselves.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever served on a jury? If so, describe the trial and what it was like to be an administer of justice. Do you feel like justice was served in your particular trial?

Today we will discuss God's justice and how it relates to child trafficking. Think about some of the other attributes of God—His power, presence, knowledge, sovereignty, holiness, truthfulness, and righteousness. How does knowing God is all these things help you trust that He is also just?

The system of justice is one of the backbones of our American society. Its purpose is to punish those who do wrong and defend those who are innocent. As great as our justice system is, however, it is far from perfect because it is in the hands of imperfect humanity. When we think about God's justice, we can't view it through the lens of the human race; we have to remember that He is perfect, merciful, and loving, therefore He is always the perfect judge. Yet given that He is the perfect judge, we can strive for and pray for his justice to be handed out on earth.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 82:1-4.

What does God accuse the "gods," or earthly rulers, of in this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak to God's justice?

Why is God so concerned about those with the least power?

God formally indicted the appointed political officials for social injustice since their decisions favored those who were wicked. In His indictment, God called on them to administer justice in the world, specifically by defending the weak and

fatherless, maintaining the rights of the poor and oppressed, and rescuing the weak and needy. The actions God was calling earthly rulers to were in line with His character and the way He rules the world. Time and again in Scripture God demonstrated His justice. Justice was also at the heart of Jesus' ministry while He was on earth. Like Jesus, we can use our influence, resources and voice in this world to bring about justice.

Of the three things we heard on Sunday with regard to helping trafficked children (praying for restoration, protecting our own children and grandchildren, and fighting for others), which of these most powerfully resonates with you? Which would be more of a challenge?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 1:22-27.

The Epistle of James is a practical letter. A primary emphasis in this letter is the daily expression of one's faith in action. Evidently James was dealing with some who tried to separate being a Christian from demonstrating one's faith in everyday life.

What reveals more about a person: actions or words? Why do you say so?

Why do we often "hear" and not "do" when it comes to Scripture? What does this say about our faith?

Why do you think James singled out caring for orphans and widows as an example of faith in action? What do you imagine their plight was in James's day? What is it like today?

True religion expresses itself in loving service and in holy living. Put another way, true religion includes both social ethics and personal ethics. Orphans and widows were some of the most helpless members of society, and by taking care of them the church put God's Word into practice. Jesus perfectly modeled this balance for us during His time on earth, and it is a standard He holds us to.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 25:35-40.

Later on in His ministry, when talking about His second coming and the time when we're all held accountable for our actions while on earth, Jesus described what faithfulness to Him looks like.

Why is meeting the physical needs of the hurting and helpless so important for the Christ follower?

What are the six ministry actions Jesus' followers performed in this passage? What do all of these actions have in common?

How might doing these things demonstrate God's justice to the world?

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me?"

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why is it such a struggle for us to look beyond ourselves to the hurting and helpless?

Who are “the least of these” in our community? What message do you think these groups of people are getting from Christians and area churches? What message should they be getting from us?

How do today’s passages challenge you to act differently as you represent Christ in our community?

Of the opportunities and challenges we learned about this weekend, which do you feel led to participate in?

PRAY

Ask God to open your eyes to the people around you who need to know Him and feel His love.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 82

82:1 The phrase God has taken His place indicates sentencing or judgment in progress (74:22; 94:2; Isa 3:13; 33:10) since judges normally sat (Ex 18:14; Jdg 4:5; Isa 28:6). The divine assembly has its equivalents in Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian mythology, where it refers to “lesser gods” in a pantheon. In the OT, the designation either refers to heavenly servant beings (103:19) or judges and governors appointed by God as political leaders (Ex 21:6; 22:8; 2Ch 19:5-6). The Scriptures place God in the presence of a divine council consisting of good and evil spirits (1Ki 22:19-22), sometimes designated as “sons of God” (Job 1:6-12; Ps 82:6). The emphasis on judgment (vv. 1-3,8) reinforces the failure of God’s servants.

82:2 God formally indicted the appointed officials for social injustice since their decisions favored those who were wicked.

82:5 The psalmist characterized the officials as those who did not know or understand, using language reminiscent of the impotent idols often depicted by the prophet Isaiah as blind, deaf, mute, and powerless (Isa 44:9,18; 46:1-2,6-7; Jer 10:3-5). The distorted administration of justice disrupted the cosmic order as originally intended by God, threatening the foundations on which God had established the world.

82:6-7 Kings who failed to perform responsibly and ethically deserved death. The concept finds support in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 28:1-19), where the Lord banished His divine servant, the king of Tyre, from His presence to die like a common man.

82:8 The Lord as Creator and King restores cosmic balance through the exercise of divine judgment on the nations.