

INTRO TO JUSTICE

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- What is the most interesting thing that has happened so far today?
- What is something you've done lately that you're proud of?
- What's the nicest thing someone has ever said to you?
- Who's the funniest person on TV at the moment?

DISCUSS

Jesus came to earth so that whoever calls upon his name might be saved. Salvation is for everyone! But alongside that truth the Bible continually illustrates God's heart specifically for the poor, the oppressed and the hopeless.

Do we share that special concern God has? A movement like The Salvation Army obviously shares that concern, but how about us as individuals? Do we truly care about justice? Is justice a nice concept, or something that actually impacts our daily choices and actions?

Read Luke 4:14-21.

NEW CHRISTIANS

- What comes to mind when you hear the words 'social justice?' Where have you heard it talked about before (if anywhere)?
- Do you think this passage is about social justice?
- What does this Scripture tell you about Jesus' mission on earth? Does it show you anything you previously weren't aware of?
- Jesus says he fulfils the prophecy from Isaiah. Do you think the prophecy applies to us too? Why/why not?
- The Scripture mentions the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. Where are those people in our modern world? (Leader: You might want to talk about each one individually. E.g. Where are the poor? Where are the captives? etc.)
- Should justice be about making sure everyone is treated the same or about giving those most disadvantaged the greatest benefit? Why?



SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTRO TO JUSTICE

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

In addition to the above, you may also want to use the following:

- What stands out to you most from this passage of Scripture?
- What is the 'Good News to the poor'? What do you think that means?
- Turn to Isaiah 61 and read the whole chapter aloud. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about this passage. After reading, share with each other any thoughts, questions or observations you have. (Leader: you might want to work through the chapter verse by verse to help process any questions or observations your group has.)
- Do you think social justice is something God calls specific people to respond to or is the call for everyone? Why?

INVOLVE

The Scriptures are clear (see verse 14): our response to injustice isn't fuelled by emotion, or by morality, it's fuelled by the Spirit of the Lord.

Spend some time as a group praying for each other, and give God permission to share His heart for justice. Ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see injustice, to give us courage to confront it, and to give us wisdom to know how to respond effectively.

APPLY

Here are some options for your group to work through this week:

Challenge your group to spend time every day asking the Holy Spirit in prayer to give them a heart for justice. (The prayer in the INVOLVE section could be useful thing for your group to take away with them).

OR

Challenge your group to keep a journal this week of every time they notice injustice. It could include things that happens at school, something they see on TV (on any show, factual or fictional), or maybe even in conversations through the way people talk about other people or issues. Next week, set aside time for everyone to share what they've noticed.

OR

Challenge your group to read Isaiah 61 every day this week.

THE POOR

This week you will need:

- Meals (as outlined in the 'Involve' activity)

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- If you could trade places with any person in the world for a day who would you choose?
- Which website (besides facebook) do you spend most time on?
- What's one thing that has stood out to you in this 'social justice' series so far?

INVOLVE

(This is based on groups that have 5 group members. Adjust to fit your numbers).

Place numbers 1-5 on small pieces of paper in a hat. Have each of your 5 group members randomly select a number. Ask all group members to sit at the dining table.

If they took the number 1 they will represent the world's richest people (Australia included). Give them a 3 course meal with their choice of juice and soft drink.

If they took number 2 or 3 they represent those who have a sustainable lifestyle. Give them a reasonable serve of plain rice and vegetables.

If they took the number 4 they represent those who have access to some food – but not enough. Give them a very small portion of rice and a small glass of clean water

If they took the number 5 they represent those who have no access to clean water or food. Give them a dirty, undrinkable glass of water (make sure they don't drink it!)

During the meal, ask various people to share what they thought/felt.

Did the 'rich' share with the poor?



SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE POOR

DISCUSS

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 25:41-43 and Luke 14:12-14.

NEW CHRISTIANS

- What image first comes into your mind when you think of 'the poor'?
- If Jesus lived on earth and you knew that he didn't have enough food to eat or water to drink what would you do?
- Why do you think Jesus says: "Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored that was me – you failed to do it for me." Have you ever thought of it like that before?
- According to these verses, do you think Jesus wants everyone to care for the poor or just some people?
- Can anyone give an example of a time when they did something to help the poor?

Watch either/both of these youtube clips:

- <http://youtu.be/PTzfQLRP4kk>
- http://youtu.be/laegS_1IADI (please note this URL is case-sensitive and contains 3x capital 'i' letters and 0x lower-case 'L' letters.)

How do these clips make you feel? Do you think someone like you could make a difference? Why?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- Are you surprised by the challenge Jesus makes in Matthew 25:41-43? Why?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 how passionate do you think Jesus is about looking after the poor?
- How does this compare to your personal passion to look after the poor?
- How do you think we can go about developing a deeper concern for those who are poor?

Watch one or more of the suggested clips (see 'new Christians' section).

- How do you feel when you hear/watch stuff like this? What sorts of thoughts go through your mind?
- Why do you think Jesus cares so much about the poor?
- Do you think, in light of this it is wrong for us to spend money on anything other than basic necessities – brand named clothing/footwear? Why?
- What does Luke 14:12-14 suggest about the type of relationship we should have with the poor? How is this the same/different to how you usually think of the poor?

THE POOR

APPLY

As a group, decide on one thing you will do to help fight poverty. You could:

- Sponsor a child. (salvos.org.au/said/become-a-sponsor/sponsor-a-child/)
- Do the 40 hour famine (www.worldvision.com.au/40hourfamine/)
- Participate in 'Live below the line' (www.livebelowtheline.com.au)
- If you usually buy each other Christmas/birthday presents agree to buy each other something from the 'gifts that keep on giving' catalogue instead this year. (salvos.org.au/said/buy-a-gift/gift-catalogue-shop/)
- Each choose one luxury item you usually spend money on (e.g. chocolate, shoes, music, new clothes, magazines, coffee). Fast from it for a set period of time and give the money you would have spent to help those in need.

LEADER'S NOTES

Familiarise yourself with each of the 'apply' options a bit before your group meets so that you can explain what that option might look like for your group.

THE FOREIGNER

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- What would be the best and worst things about being a celebrity?
- If you could only listen to one genre of music for the rest of your life what would it be and why?
- What's one thing you feel like God is teaching you lately?

INVOLVE

Think of someone who's a fringe person at church/youth—maybe someone who's come along recently and hasn't easily fitted in. As a life group come up with a couple of practical steps that you'll commit to in order to help that person feel more connected and welcomed.

And/or

'Foreigner' Ice-Breaker

1. Have one person leave the room, they're the foreigner.
2. Give the others a scenario or topic that they need to role play without the foreigner figuring out what was going on. Encourage them to use facials and gestures.
3. Ask the foreigner to come back and figure out what's going on.
4. After a few minutes (or when they figure it out) ask the foreigner how it felt as someone coming into an existing situation.

DISCUSS

In the Old Testament the Israelites are God's chosen people, unique from all other people groups. Even though God had a unique relationship with the nation of Israel he commanded the Israelites to be hospitable to foreigners (those from other countries who were displaced and living in Israel). Sometimes these foreigners are also referred to as 'aliens', which reinforces that they were both different to, and isolated from, the Israelites.

Read Exodus 23:9 and Zechariah 7:9-10.

The Exodus verse is referring to the story of Israel's story of being welcomed into Egypt but then becoming captives. You may want to ask your group to share what they know of that story to help put the verse in context.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE FOREIGNER

NEW CHRISTIANS

- When was a time you felt like you were the odd one out? Have you ever moved schools, or town, or country? How did that feel?
- Why do you think God cared about foreigners in a time when he seemed mostly concerned with Israel?
- What would be the equivalent of 'foreigners' in our culture? What are some of our society's responses to these people?
- What was one thing that someone has done for you when you were a foreigner that made you feel welcomed?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

In addition to the above you could also have your group read Jeremiah 22:3 and Leviticus 19:9-10 and ask the following:

- What is the difference between God telling the Israelites to go to war against other countries but then commanding them to not oppress foreigners?
- Who are some heroes of the Bible who were also at some time 'foreigners'? (Check out the leaders notes if short of answers.)
- Who are modern-day foreigners? How does our society respond to them? According to these verses how does God want us to respond?
- When it comes to feeling accepted and welcomed, what do you think 'foreigners' need most?

APPLY

As a group, arrange a trip to visit and speak to someone who has come to Australia as a refugee. Prepare questions to ask them.

OR

Discuss modern day foreigners, both in the conceptual and literal sense of the term. How can we respond? How can we show hospitality to these people? Decide on a course of action that everyone agrees to enact this week. Check in next week to see how everyone week.

THE FOREIGNER

LEADER'S NOTES

- The Salvation Army's positional statement regarding refugees can be found at salvos.org.au/about-us/overview/documents/Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees.pdf
- Check out www.oxfam.org.au/refugee/public/index.php before your life group meets to familiarise yourself more with the issue
- Key characters in the Bible who were also 'foreigners' at some stage.
 - * Abraham: The father of Israel was required to move from his homeland in order to follow God's plan.
 - * Joseph: The first Israelite to be taken into captivity in Egypt after being sold by his brothers.
 - * Rahab: The Jericho prostitute who helped the Israelite spies then continued to live among the Israelites.
 - * Ruth: A Moabitess who moved to Israel with her mother-in-law and subsequently features in Jesus lineage.
 - * Daniel: An Israelite prophet who maintained a strong faith in God despite being held in the foreign city of Babylon.
 - * Esther: Similar to Daniel, Esther was an Israelite who rose to prominence in the Persian kingdom.

THE ENVIRONMENT

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- Who is the funniest person you know? What's so funny about them?
- Describe your day in 1 word.
- How did you go with last week's foreigner challenge - did you complete what you said you would?
- What was the best part of church last weekend (if you went to one)?

INVOLVE

Your group must come up with a 30 second TV ad (presented live is fine – film it if you have the skills) aimed at stopping people from littering. It must include a slogan, the involvement of all life group members, and preferably a catchy jingle. Give them 5-10 minutes before they must present it to the group leader.

**This is meant to be a light-hearted exercise, encourage them to have fun with it.*

DISCUSS

We don't often make the connection between Clean Up Australia Day and Christianity but they should probably be more linked than they are. Sometimes we're so focused on the gift of salvation that we forget about the gift of creation that we've been given the task of looking after. Does it mean that all Christians should become tree-huggers...?

Read Gen 1:26-30.

NEW CHRISTIANS

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'look after the environment'?
- Why do you think God created all of creation? Food chain? For kicks? To give Adam a job?
- What do you think it means that Adam and Eve were given all creation to 'rule' over? (NIV translation) What do you think this meant for them?
- In many cultures there is a strong link between people and the land which they inhabit. Do you think that is true of our society?
- What are some of the reasons that we should be concerned with the environment? Which one is most convincing to you?



SOCIAL JUSTICE

life.

THE ENVIRONMENT

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- To what extent is the environment our responsibility? Is this because we're Christians or does it apply across the board?
- Why does God care about creation? Why did he create it in the first place? What does Colossians 1:16 mean in this context?
- What do you think it meant that Adam and Eve were given rule over all creation? Is it different from our responsibility now?
- Where else in Scripture is creation featured? (Check out the leaders notes if short on answers.)
- Do you think most Christians are more concerned with the environment than the average person? Should they be?
- What are some of the things that inhibit us getting more involved in environmental issues?

APPLY

What are some of the small things that we can do that will make a difference?

Which one of these are you going to commit to this week?

If your group is in need of some direction, here's a suggestion: have your Life Group spend 1 hour cleaning up rubbish in your community. All you'll need is gloves, rubbish bags, and a place with plenty of rubbish, which is probably not too hard to find. Maybe it could be your life group session next week.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Creation and Scripture:
 - * Creation worships its Creator (Psalm 96:10-13, Psalm 19:1)
 - * Creation reveals its Creator (Romans 1:20)
 - * Creation teaches us about faith (Matthew 6:25-29)
 - * Creation is used to reward us (Lev 26:3-5)
- Resources for taking it further:
 - * Share The Earth (Micah Challenge) - www.micahchallenge.org.au/share-the-earth
 - * Act Now - www.actnow.com.au/Themes/Environment.aspx
 - * Inspiring environment clip - http://youtu.be/M5IT_ou1naw

THE OPRESSED

This week you may need:

- Pen and one piece of paper for each person.
- 5 items everyone would be familiar with, for example:
 - * A bar of Cadbury's chocolate
 - * A can of coke
 - * A DVD
 - * A pair of new shoes
 - * An apple

When you purchase these, make a record of how much they cost.

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- If your group journalled about injustice last week, invite each person to share back about what they recorded.
- What's the worst injury you've ever sustained?
- What area of your character do you feel has been tested this week? (E.g. patience, anger etc.)
- When was the last time you felt God speak to you through the Bible? What did He say?
- If you could live in someone else's shoes for a week, who would you choose and why?

INVOLVE

Use the activities found at www.stopthetraffik.org/downloads/stt_cf_youthpack.pdf to help introduce your group to the idea of the modern slave trade.

AND/OR

Unveil your 5 items (chocolate, etc) and give everyone some time to write down what they think each of them cost. Unveil the true prices and have a prize for the person whose guesses were the most accurate.

Once you are finished ask everyone to guess the price of you – their leader. If you had to sell your leader how much do you think you could get for them? How much do you think they are worth? How do you put a price tag on a human being?



SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE OPRESSED

DISCUSS

There are over 27 million slaves in the world today, even though there are laws against slavery in every nation. These slaves are bound by different forms of oppression and exploitation.

Some belong to the 'traditional' form of slavery where they are bought and sold like property.

Some experience bonded labour where they have been forced or tricked into taking out a loan that they can only repay through labour.

Others are trapped in forced labour, sexual exploitation and prostitution.

But in the Bible we find that lots of New Testament Christians had slaves. Is it wrong or not?

You might like to introduce your discussion with the following clip:

<http://youtu.be/j7wN04nYCJA>

NEW CHRISTIANS & ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word 'slavery'?
- (If you show the clip) Were you aware of the examples of slavery shown in the clip? How did you feel/what thoughts went through your mind as you watched?
- Why do you think slavery exists? What do you think motivates someone to make someone else their slave?
- What would you lose if you were trafficked to another country? (Encourage them to think of as many things as possible—education, freedom, entertainment, dignity, home, family, possessions, fashion, friends, music, technology.)
- Read Leviticus 25:44-46 and Deuteronomy 23:15-16. What do you think the word 'slave' meant in these verses? How is that different what we think of now?
- Read Psalm 103:6. We read that God brings justice for the oppressed. Who are the oppressed? How is this different from the Israelites' concept of slavery? Why does God care about the oppressed? Who are the oppressed in the world today?
- Which form of oppression really gets you angry? What about it makes you so angry?
- Do you think slavery is an issue young people like you should think about? Why? Can you think of any ways in which you personally can help the oppressed?

THE OPRESSED

APPLY

The Salvation Army runs a home for women who have escaped from sex trafficking called Samaritan House. As a life group organise a fundraiser for them.

OR

Select on of the 10 stunt ideas from Stop the Traffik and make a plan to implement it - www.stopthetraffik.org/downloads/10_stunt_ideas.pdf

LEADER'S NOTES

- It is important that you help your group understand that the concept of having slaves was not a bad thing in the Old Testament. In fact, it was often the choice of the slave to put themselves in that position to avoid poverty. It was seen as a form of employment and was never meant to involve oppression of any form. More info on this can be found at www.ccmlinks.com/posts.php?id=31
- In Ephesians 6:5 God tells slaves to “obey your earthly masters with respect and fear”. It is important that we acknowledge the cultural differences and even definitions of the word ‘slave’. God is always against oppression of any form – human trafficking, exploitation and unfair working conditions.
- If your group members are under 18 make sure you get approval from their parents/guardians before you get them to participate in one of the stunt ideas.
- Extra verses regarding our responsibility to the oppressed
 - * Proverbs 31:8-9 - Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.
 - * Isaiah 58 - The kind of fasting God asks of us.
 - * Isaiah 1:10-17 - Seek justice, defend the oppressed.
 - * Matthew 22:34-40 - The greatest commandments.
 - * Luke 10:25-37 - The good Samaritan.