

Missional Serving Communities

UNIT 2 - Week 1

PRAY – see – learn – serve

Objective: Our goal this week is to develop the desire to have God direct our praying so that our hearts more closely reflect God's heart

Meal and/or team building (30 min)

- If you have new people joining your group, make sure to do some sort of getting to know you/ice breaker/would you rather type of activity. One suggestion is to ask the following questions:
 - Share your name and how long you have been a part of CCC
 - If you were part of unit 1, what was one thing from the unit that challenged and/or encouraged you?
 - If you are new to this MSC, why did you sign up?
 - Would you rather...
 - Would you rather have all traffic lights you approach be green or never have to stand in line again?
 - Would you rather be able to talk to land animals, animals that fly, or animals that live under the water?
- If you do not have new people, use this time to check in and share prayer requests for the week. (High, Low, huh?)

Review MSC Pray - See - Learn - Serve rhythm (30 min.)

- Our desire is to serve but before we serve, we need to pray, see, and learn
- Our goal tonight is to pray but also to have our praying expanded.
- Read 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.
- Then, together, pray the following prayer:
 - Triune God,
 - you are just,
 - you are kind,
 - you are holy,
 - and still you want to walk with me.
 - How amazing it is that when I am lost, or questioning, or wondering;
 - when I am unsure of the next step;
 - when I cannot find my way,
 - when voices are many and loud,

you invite me to slow down,
to seek the good,
to center myself on your holy invitation:
“Do justice,” you tell me, “today.”
“Love kindness,” you advise, “right now.”
“Walk humbly with me,” you invite, “and I will show you the way.
My will for your life is not hard to find: do justice, love kindness, walk with me.”
Father God, turn my heart toward justice.
Brother Jesus, show me how to love kindness.
Holy Spirit, invited me to walk with you in humility, now and forever.
Amen.
--Mary Hulst

- Why start with this verse and prayer?
 - What about this scripture and prayer catches your attention?

*>> Leaders: Be careful not to dive into a heated discussion on what justice is and isn't.
There will be time for this later. <<*

Acknowledgement/Disclaimer -

We understand that the topic of “justice” is really broad and can mean different things to different people. Our goal this session is not to come up with a clear definition of justice that we can all agree upon. Rather, **our goal is for God to direct our praying so that our hearts more closely reflect God's heart.**

- We will do this a few different ways:
 - First, Scripture activity
 - Second, reading additional poems, prayers, and songs.

Expanding our praying (30 min)

- Scripture guided prayers: 1 word prayer exercise (Handout and PPT):
 - After each scripture is read, circle one word from the scripture that caught your attention.
 - After all of the passages have been read (and after each person has a word from each verse) have each person, without any explanation, share their words
 - After everyone has shared their words have each person write a prayer using their words as prompts
 - Once everyone has written their prayer ask if anyone would be willing to share their prayer with the group

Scriptures:

- 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.”

- Isaiah 1:17 - “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”
- Isaiah 42:1-4 - “Here is my servant! I have made him strong. He is my chosen one; I am pleased with him. I have given him my Spirit, and he will bring justice to the nations. He won't shout or yell or call out in the streets. He won't break off a bent reed or put out a dying flame, but he will make sure that justice is done. He won't quit or give up until he brings justice everywhere on earth, and people in foreign nations long for his teaching.
- Psalm 10:17-18 - “You listen to the longings of those who suffer. You offer them hope, and you pay attention to their cries for help. You defend orphans and everyone else in need, so that no one on earth can terrify others again.”
- Matthew 25:38-40 - “When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”
- Isaiah 61 - The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.
- Read Ephesians 2:10 and the following poem inspired in part by this verse:
 - o Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
 - o Poem by Danielle Coke - Created to do good work. (handout and PPT)

“You were created to do good work. Work that empowers and inspires,
liberates and transforms, restores and softens.

Yes, work can be hard – as it was meant to be. The verb itself calls us to action, rejecting passivity and demanding sustained effort. It provokes, agitates, and disturbs. But this work – the call for justice – is good work. It defends the oppressed and frees the captive. It tears down walls and destroys barriers. It changes things.

So when you are feeling weary, or hopeless, or spent, remind yourself that the darkness is being flooded by marvelous light.

Yes, this is work. And it is good.”

- What words or ideas stood out to you?
- How does this poem connect with the scriptures we just read?

- Listen to “When the Saints” by Sara Groves (lyrics on handout):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HilC9j2XvIA>
 - What words or phrases stood out to you?
 - How does this song connect with the poem and the scriptures we just read?

Debrief/Wrap Up:

- According to the scriptures, poems, songs and prayers we’ve read today, what are some things that are important to God’s heart?

- End by rereading Micah 6:8 and this prayer (from mercyisnew.com) (handout & ppt)
 - 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.

 - Yes, Lord, this is the cry of our hearts! You have SHOWN US what You desire from us! You have given us instruction in Your Word. We cannot miss this. Oh God, help us not to miss this in the midst of our crazy days! You have shown us what is good! You want us to live just lives and do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with You! God, all around us we see a desperate need for justice, mercy and humility. May we be those things to a lost and dying world. They cannot see You in us if we do not live and love like You. God, prick our hearts and break our hearts for what breaks Yours.

Missional Serving Communities

UNIT 2 - Week 2

pray – **SEE** – learn – serve

Objective: Our goal this week is to learn to see through God’s eyes. In order to do this, we need to consider what are the obstacles or things that make it difficult for us to do so.

Meal and/or team building (30 min)

- Checking in with each other
- High, Low, Huh?
- How can we be praying for each other going into this week?

Pray - See - Learn - Serve (15 min)

- Review the Pray-See-Learn-Serve steps of the MSC
 - Still start with prayer
- Read 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.
- Then, together, pray the following prayer:

Triune God,
you are just,
you are kind,
you are holy,
and still you want to walk with me.
How amazing it is that when I am lost, or questioning, or wondering;
when I am unsure of the next step;
when I cannot find my way,
when voices are many and loud,
you invite me to slow down,
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to center myself on your holy invitation:
“Do justice,” you tell me, “today.”
“Love kindness,” you advise, “right now.”
“Walk humbly with me,” you invite, “and I will show you the way.
My will for your life is not hard to find: do justice, love kindness, walk with me.”
Father God, turn my heart toward justice.
Brother Jesus, show me how to love kindness.
Holy Spirit, invited me to walk with you in humility, now and forever.
Amen.
--Mary Hulst

- **What about this prayer catches your attention this week?**
- Our goal this week is to learn to see through God's eyes. In order to do this, we need to consider what are the obstacles or things that make it difficult for us to do so.

Opening Justice Conversation (5min)

- What is justice?
 - let the varied opinions go unchallenged
- What are the chances that all our varied opinions on what justice is are in alignment with how justice is defined in scripture?
 - hopefully we are humble enough to confess that all of our opinions might not completely match God's

Images Exercise (10 min) (PPT)

- 3D images
- <https://www.vision-and-eye-health.com/autostereograms.html>
 - Take a minute or two with each image
 - Not everyone will be able to see the images but that is OK. The goal is not to have everyone see each image. The goal is to set up the continuing conversation regarding the difficulty of seeing/understanding justice
- After looking at each image tell the group:
 - It is sometimes very difficult to clearly see the image in the art work
 - We need to work hard to see it
 - Same with clearly understanding biblical justice
 - it takes work to see it clearly

Bible Project Video on Justice <https://youtu.be/A14THPoc4-4>

- **Watch the video (6 min) and then discuss the following**

Discussion Questions:

- What was one thing that caught your attention in the video?
- In the video it said, "we were created to be God's representatives, that rule the world, by his definition of good and evil." Why is it important that our definitions of good and evil are built upon HIS definitions of good and evil?
 - We are constantly redefining, good and evil to our own advantage at the expense of others
 - We see this happening on a personal level but also in families and then in communities and in whole civilizations that create injustice, especially towards the vulnerable
- What is "tsedeka"?
 - Biblical Hebrew word for righteousness

- An ethical standard that refers to right relationships between people
- Treating others as the image of God with the God given dignity they deserve
- What is “mishpat”?
 - The Hebrew word for Justice
 - Can refer to retributive justice but most often refers to restorative justice
- What is the difference between retributive and restorative justice?
 - Paying the consequence of wrong doing vs. seeking out vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of and helping them
 - More than charity. Taking steps to advocate for the vulnerable and changing social structures to prevent injustice.
- Are the following verses talking about justice as retributive or restorative and what do the verses call us to do?
 - Prov. 31:8-9
 - Jer. 22:3
 - Ps. 146:7-9
- What is “Rashah”?
 - Hebrew word for “wicked”
 - In the wrong; refers to someone who mistreats another human, ignoring their dignity as an image of God
- According to scripture, where do we see examples of people or countries being declared rashah?
- In the video it said, “We all participate in injustice, actively or passively, even unintentionally. We’re all the guilty ones.” Agree or disagree? Why?
- What role does Christ play in restoring the rashah to righteousness?
- How are we to respond to what Christ has done for us?
 - When, through Christ, we are made righteous and are sent to courageously make other peoples problems our problems. Loving our neighbors

Instant debrief

- How has your thinking about seeing around the topic of justice changed or been informed tonight?

Missional Serving Communities

UNIT 2 - Week 3

pray – see – **LEARN** – serve

Objective: Our goal this week is to learn about how the call to biblical justice impacts how we relate to the “strangers” in our midst and begin to discern how we are called to participate in what God is already doing

Meal and/or team building (30 min)

- Checking in with each other
- (High, Low, Huh?)
- How can we be praying for each other going into this week?

Pray - See - Learn - Serve (15 min)

- Review the Pray-See-Learn-Serve steps of the MSC
 - Still start with prayer
- Read 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.
- Then, together, pray the following prayer:

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when I am unsure of the next step;
when I cannot find my way,
when voices are many and loud,
you invite me to slow down,
to seek the good,
to center myself on your holy invitation:
“Do justice,” you tell me, “today.”
“Love kindness,” you advise, “right now.”
“Walk humbly with me,” you invite, “and I will show you the way.
My will for your life is not hard to find: do justice, love kindness, walk with me.”
Father God, turn my heart toward justice.
Brother Jesus, show me how to love kindness.
Holy Spirit, invited me to walk with you in humility, now and forever.
Amen.

--Mary Hulst

- What about this prayer catches your attention this week?

Hebrew Recap

- Review the three Hebrew words from last week's study:
- "Tsedeka"- Righteousness
 - An ethical standard that refers to right relationships between people
 - Treating others as the image of God with the God given dignity they deserve
- "Mishpat" - Justice
 - Can refer to retributive justice but most often refers to restorative justice
 - More than charity. Taking steps to advocate for the vulnerable and changing social structures to prevent injustice.
- "Rashah" - Wicked
 - In the wrong; refers to someone who mistreats another human, ignoring their dignity as an image of God

Biblical justice (mishpat) calls us to take steps to advocate for the vulnerable and change social structures to prevent injustice.

Who are the vulnerable today? (PPT)

- Who are some of the most vulnerable people groups in the world today?
 - List as many as possible
- What defines someone as a refugee?
 - Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their home country because of war, persecution, or violence. To be granted refugee status, they must establish a well-founded fear of danger or of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social or ethnic group. [The 1951 Refugee Convention](#) outlines refugees' rights, including the right to [non-refoulement](#) — not to be returned to a country where they may be persecuted. People who have committed serious crimes or people who might pose a security threat are specifically excluded from refugee protection.
- How many people are displaced in the world today?
 - As of May 2022, 100 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide. This accounts for an increase of 10.7 million people displaced from the end of the previous year, propelled by the war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts.
 - More than half of all refugees are children.
 - Every 3 seconds someone flees their home from violent conflict.
- More than 100,000 Afghan refugees are now living in the U.S.
 - About 12,000 live in California, including 8,000 in the Greater Sacramento region.

Xenos (*Becoming a Just Church*, p.133-136, Adam Gustine) (PPT)

In the New Testament, the word *xenos* is used for both 'stranger' and 'guest'. They are interchangeable. Stranger = Guest

- When we think of strangers, what comes to mind?
- When we think of guests what comes to mind?
- When we think of refugees, where do they fall? Closer to stranger or closer to guest?
 - WHY?

Stranger ≠ Guest

- What severs the line between stranger and guest?
- How many of you have heard of the word *xenophobia*? *phobia* is the Greek word for fear. When fear or *phobia* is injected between stranger and guest, we get *xenophobia* - fear of the stranger.

Now, going back to our Hebrew words from last week, what Hebrew word from last week contributes to us concluding that the *xenos* is a stranger to be feared rather than a guest to be welcomed?

- *rashah* (wickedness).

But the goal is *mishpat* - restorative justice - restoring the vulnerable. And in this case, we are looking at the immigrant or the refugee in our midst - the ones who are often viewed with fear or suspicion and kept in the category of stranger instead of being welcomed as guest. So how do we move from stranger back to guest? How do we go from vulnerable to restored?

stranger → guest
vulnerable → restored

Read Col. 1:21-22 (NLV)

21 At one time you were strangers to God and your minds were at war with Him. Your thoughts and actions were wrong. 22 But Christ has brought you back to God by His death on the cross. In this way, Christ can bring you to God, holy and pure and without blame.

Looking at vs. 21 - When/Why were you a stranger (the vulnerable)?

Looking at vs. 22 - How did you become a guest (restored)?

- “Christ has brought you back to God by His death on the cross”. Jesus’ ultimate act of love restores us to right relationship (*tsedeka*) with God.
- So if we follow God’s example, then loving action towards the stranger is what brings us back and restores us to right relationship with one another.

“If the movement of stranger to guest is corrupted by the introduction of fear, then the response required to resist fear is *philia* or love.”

- In the New Testament the word *xenophilia* = love of stranger = hospitality

“Hospitality is the Christian practice of demonstrating love of stranger and doing so in a way that evidences our willingness to be in community (stranger to guest) with them...The practice of hospitality is how we unearth our othering tendencies and create the possibility of a new kind of community. At its basest form, hospitality is a way of being that creates a low barrier space of welcome for anyone encountered. It is a way of life that refuses to create divisions that impede relationship and each person’s participation in the community. This requires more work, a willingness to be inconvenienced, disturbed, disrupted, made uncomfortable, stretched, and spent for those it would be easier to distrust and exclude.”

mishpat happens when we move from phobia to philia, when we practice hospitality and embrace the strangers (vulnerable) in our midst.

How do we practice hospitality?

- Draw near to those who are different from us - learn their story, their experiences and way of life.
- Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) calls this practicing proximity. He notes: “*When we get close, we hear things that can’t be heard from afar. We see things that can’t be seen. And sometimes that makes the difference between acting justly and unjustly...When you get close to injustice, you will get broken, too. But I’m here as a living witness that being broken is what makes you human.*”
- Remember Col 1:21-22, we were strangers but God drew near to us. Jesus entered into messy, broken humanity and allowed himself to be broken too, that we might be restored. As the “restored” we are called to partner with Him in drawing near to the strangers in our community.

Instant debrief

- How has your thinking about seeing around the topic of justice changed or been informed tonight?
- End by reading this litany (from “Rally: Communal Prayers for Lovers of Jesus and Justice” pg.29-30 Cory Driver) (handout & ppt)

One: God, our Loving Parent and Creator of all, your children cry out to you.

All: Those who pass through the waters, those who struggle across the land - God be with them!

One: God, you carried the Israelites through the heart of the sea.

All: Lord, you escorted them across dry land with your fiery presence. God has been with us!

One: Remember when you led your people through the wilderness of Sinai.

All: Recall when you preserved Elijah as he fled through the desert. God, be present to save!

One: As Boaz received Ruth and Naomi and provided sustenance for them.

All: As Boaz welcomed the foreigner and recognized her as kin. God train us to love!

One: God, your Word reminds us continually: We were strangers in a foreign land.

All: Lord, help us to have radical empathy for those who are unwelcomed. God teach us to welcome!

One: Lord, you sent your Son who was not of the world

All: To rescue a dying creation and to teach us how to live. Christ, Hosanna, save us!

One: Jesus, the way, truth and life, help us to walk in your ways.

All: You told us when we love the stranger, we are, in fact, loving you. Lord, help us to love the stranger, our neighbor!

One: God, create in us a compulsion not to stand idly by.

All: Lord, stir us up to holy action lest the blood of our neighbor be shed. For the glory of your name and the love of our siblings in Christ. Amen!