

# Healing Our Broken Humanity

## Chapter 5: Restore Justice

“Justice is a central and complex biblical theme. The Bible presents God as a just God who calls for justice among his people, for creation, and in the world. We know what justice is when we know who God is. The just nature of God defines our understanding of justice.

### 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.

“God requires all of us to engage in the work of justice.”

“Justice is not an optional extra. *It is our first activity.* Justice is the first and primary demand that God places on his people. As a God of justice (or righteousness), he expects that we, his community, be his agents for bringing justice to bear in the world; to usher in a just society without discrimination and with fair treatment and equality for all.”

“Injustice is a contagious sin that breaks and angers the heart of God. God’s antidote to injustice is truth, love, grace, reconciliation, peace, compassion, and welcome. God calls the church to be a just community that pursues justice for all peoples and all creation by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.”

“Restoring justice involves listening to the concerns and perspectives of others even when these seem to address issues that don’t directly affect us. It involves standing up for the rights of others—even if their well-being or prosperity or flourishing seems only indirectly related to ours, and even when their well-being comes at our expense.”

“We must not be silent in the face of poverty, exploitation, injustice, sexism, racism, misogyny, torture, hate, division, conflict, and authoritarianism. We must choose to speak and act even when we suffer the consequences...Silence speaks volumes. When you or I choose not to act, we are in fact taking a form of action.

In her book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, Brenda Salter McNeil uses the acronym CARE to describe how we can work for justice in the world:

**Communicate:** Communicate what we have learned about a specific justice issue

**Advocate:** Talking isn't enough, we must take action and advocate for change

**Relate:** We need to be part of a community that is committed to change

**Educate:** We need to keep educating ourselves throughout our lives

In his book *Inclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf asserts that there is no forgiveness and reconciliation apart from justice. Following the way of Jesus means seeking both justice and reconciliation. However, forgiveness and reconciliation don't only occur after complete justice is done since it is only rarely, if ever, fully satisfied. We choose to offer forgiveness and embrace as an act of grace even as we are seeking after justice.

### **Practices, Challenges, and Activities for Small Groups**

*Learn about a biblical theology of justice:* Spend four weeks discussing a book like Chris Marshall's *The Little Book of Biblical Justice* and discuss questions like: What do we learn about justice from the Bible? Why is justice a central theme in the Bible? How does our understanding of justice arise out of God's just nature and actions? What are the key contours of biblical justice? How do we practice biblical justice as individuals and as a community?

*Write prayers about justice:* Having learned about a biblical theology of justice, spend an evening writing prayers about justice. Try writing both individual and group prayers that focus on peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation as well as justice.

*Collect and sing songs that focus on justice:* Identify and collect your own list of songs that focus on justice and sing them regularly.

*Write a series of justice commitments, and hold each other accountable for being justice advocates:* Write a series of twenty things you will commit to do to address injustice. Have five commitments in each of four categories: racial justice, gender justice, economic justice, and environmental justice. Then identify people to hold you accountable to the commitments you have made.

*Go to a justice conference together:* Attend a conference devoted to justice with friends such as The Justice Conference, the Beyond Festival, or Voices for Justice. Afterwards spend time debriefing together about how you will respond.

*Support groups working for justice:* Research and find groups in your community, neighborhood, city, or country working to bring about justice and change. Choose two that particularly challenge you and find out how you can support and get involved in their work. There are thousands of groups that you can choose from.

*Make lifestyle changes that reflect the UN's Sustainable Development Goals:* The UN has provided a list of things you can do to help the world reach sustainable development goals: [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction)

### **Discussion Questions**

Why does justice involve walking in other people's shoes?

What injustices are present in your neighborhood, city, and society?

Why is silence a form of injustice?

Why does our concern and action for justice need to be based on our understanding of God and God's work in the world?

Why do we need partnership with other groups to achieve justice?

What needs to change for you and your church to help restore justice to those who have been denied justice?

What steps will you take to apply this practice fully and in the long term?