

Answers to the bible study

1. Define what justice is. There are several types of justice – retributive justice, social justice, restorative justice and justice dealing with equity. This is a very complex subject and one that takes a lot of study to understand. I have a book called “Justice and Grace-bringing God’s Kingdom to earth.” That has a lot more information on justice and is not exhaustive. It will be available in about a month but we can take an order ☺

Justice as a subjective concept is about fairness, but objectively it is about a fair distribution of benefits or punishments. When we talk about retributive justice it is about people getting what they deserve for misbehavior, illegal or immoral behavior. This is most often implemented by the legal system. When we define social justice most often that is addressing injustices and making the wrongs right. Scripture addresses this most often when there is abuse of power and a godly or righteous person advocates or intervenes for a person lacking power, education, money, or resources. “Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor.” (Jeremiah 22:3) Restorative justice is when the reconciliation process is or has taken place. The perpetrator confesses, repents, and makes their wrong right and each person tells their story and is heard by the other. This is like when Jesus spends time with Zacchaeus a hated tax collector who is viewed as a betrayer to his people for personal gain. His confession and amends is, “Behold Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” Jesus response, “Today salvation has come to this house ...” (Luke 19:8&9) Justice is again very complex and is foundational for human rights, especially when they are being abused. Each person is valuable because they are made in the image of God and has God given rights. Equity has to do with the distribution of resources. Is there equity? The person who has tremendous gain and withholds a just wage from those working for him is unjust and inequitable. Or the person who carries too much of a burden for others may be treated unjustly or without concern for equity of responsibility. “I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves, I only mean that there should be some equality.” (2 Corinthians 8:13) Equity has to do with reciprocity and give-and-take in relationships.

2. Define what injustice looks like and give a personal example and a systemic example of injustice. Years ago, in this country, abolitionists wanted to see slavery eliminated. The problem was that many people normalized the institution of slavery and did not know or care about the atrocities of this level of racism. After all we don’t know what we don’t know. Harriet Beecher Stowe decided to write a book “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” exposing the abuse of slaves in America. It became a best seller and opened eyes and hearts to the pain caused by slavery. The African Americans were not given positions of dignity and could not marry because they were someone else’s property rather than a person created in the image of God with equal rights. There are endless stories of abuse and these stories turned Americans towards abolishing slavery. This institutional evil was eliminated in this form, but took on other unjust forms, like indentured servitude. Today a person in our State can take out a loan from a title loan company and be in debt for many years. I have a black man who borrowed \$7000 (3) years ago and still owes \$6500. He does not owe his soul to the company store, like in share cropping, but may never be free from the oppression of a 200% interest rate.

3. Why is grace and redemption so important in creating justice? In many stories of injustice, grace plays a significant role in eliminating injustice and creating justice. Christ is the predominant story of a grace given to create justice. He dies to pay for our sin and we do not deserve His grace. We have our sins forgiven and no longer are in debt. This would be like my friend having his \$6500 debt paid off through the sacrifice of another. This unjust high interest rate would be eliminated and he would have peace rather than oppression, through the grace and generosity of another.