

General Programs

Justice Primer Study Sessions



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**Three-Session Study to Accompany Justice Primer
for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

Each of the following three sessions of study for the Justice Primer are estimated at 60-minutes. You can use them as they are outlined or modify them to suit your context.

Micah 6:8 (NRSV). . . what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 (NIV) And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 (CEV) The LORD God has told us what is right and what he demands: "See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God."

Micah 6:8 (The Message) But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.

Micah 6:8 (NKJV) He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

(Disciples identity statement, General Board 2008)

"We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

As part of the one Body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us."

(Disciples vision)

To be a faithful, growing church, which demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice.

Deep Christian Spirituality

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.” Matthew 14:23



Part 1 Study: As you begin the first study on Deep Christian Spirituality, take 5 minutes to read Micah 6:8 in a variety of translations and the ‘Introduction’ to the Justice Primer inviting the group to consider the following questions:

1. What does it mean to be a disciple, a follower of the living Christ?
2. How do we seek wholeness in a fragmented world?
3. How big is your table?
4. What is true community?
5. What is deep Christian spirituality?
6. What is justice and how do we develop a passion for it?

Begin by reading scripture and section of Justice Primer. Allow approximately 5 minutes to discuss questions 2 and 3.

1. Read “Deep Christian Spirituality” in Justice Primer.
2. Where do you find a place to pray alone?
3. What have been your most meaningful moments of renewal?

Invite the group to take time to enter into silent time. You can pray if you wish but it is not necessary. Try to be completely aware of your surroundings; don’t zone out but in silence be fully present and aware. Pay attention to where your mind wanders when you are in a time of silence. (5 minutes)

Allow 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

4. Share with one another your experience of silent time.
5. How would you describe Jesus' spirituality? Explain.
6. How does having a close relationship with God prepare you to serve and love God's children?
7. How can you be attentive to God? When or where have you felt closest to God? What made God's presence so real?

Invite participants to draw a picture of a time or place when they have felt close to God. Include who was there and what the circumstances were. Ask: "Did you call on God or did you notice God was already there?" (10 minutes)

Allow 5 minutes to discuss the following questions:

8. What gets in the way of being open to God?
9. How can you offer yourself to God?

Invite group to describe a time when they served in a soup kitchen, a homeless shelter, or some other act of servant ministry. Ask: "Did this experience bring you closer to God or was it an act of being responsive to the needs of others on a purely practical level?" (10 minutes)

Close by gathering around the Table of the Lord. As you share the bread and the cup, offer one word or one phrase about what it means to feel the presence of God. (10 minutes)

True Community

*“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”
Acts 2:44-45*



Part 2 Study: Begin by reading scripture and section of Justice Primer. Allow approximately 5 minutes to discuss questions 2 and 3.

1. Read “True Community” in Justice Primer.
2. What would prevent you from selling your possessions to provide for the needs of others?
3. What prevents today’s Church from having all things in common?

Allow 10 minutes for this activity. Think about what possessions are your most prized. Which possessions would be most difficult to part with? Why? What is it about them that gives them value? What would it take to convince you to sell them for the good of someone else? Share your stories with one another.

Allow 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. How closely bound are you to other believers? Are you more closely bound to some than others? What makes the difference?
5. What does it mean to belong? How is belonging different from membership?
6. Have you ever felt you belonged to a group until someone else made it clear that you did not? What effect does it have on you to be on the outside of a group?

What Does the Lord Require of Me?

Provide a sheet of paper for each person in the group and have them write their name at the top. Pass the sheets of paper around the group and have each member of the group write a one word or one phrase affirmation of that person. If you prefer you might prefer to draw a representation of encouragement. Return the papers to the person whose name is at the top and allow a few moments in silence to reflect on what was shared. (10 minutes)

Allow 5 minutes to discuss the following questions:

7. How have you offered 'welcome' to someone else? How have you been welcomed? What is said or done that makes a place or experience welcoming? What makes a place or experience unwelcoming?
8. What do you find most difficult about welcoming someone who is very different from yourself? Is it easier or harder than someone who has a lot in common with you?

Read Matthew 25:34-46 and ask group to consider, "How is welcoming a stranger the same as welcoming Christ himself?" (Allow 10 minutes to read scripture and answer the following questions.)

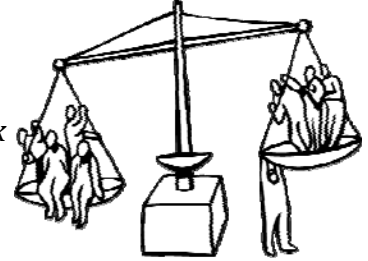
9. How can you help someone while affirming their dignity? When have you seen a person's dignity denied/ignored? How could it have been handled better?
10. Is it easier to embrace diversity of ethnicity and background than diversity of beliefs, theology, philosophy, and/or ideas? Why?

Close by gathering around the Table of the Lord. As you serve one another the bread and the cup, offer a blessing about the gift the person you serve brings to this community. (10 minutes)

A Passion for Justice

“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Proverbs 31:8-9



Part 3 Study: Begin by reading scripture and section of Justice Primer. Allow approximately 5 minutes to discuss questions 2, 3, and 4.

1. Read “A Passion for Justice” in Justice Primer.
2. What is justice? How is it lived out? What are some examples of acts of justice?
3. Have you ever actively sought justice? For yourself? For someone else?
4. What is it that moves you to stand up for what is right? Something or someone close and personal? Something on a national scale? A global injustice?

Invite the group to consider what it is like to seek justice in different circumstances. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

If you have been wrongly accused or you are fired without reason.

If your child is bullied at school.

If government programs or budgets put a group or class of people in financial jeopardy.

If a foreign government allows their citizens to be tortured or killed.

When would you seek justice? What’s the difference?

Allow 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

What Does the Lord Require of Me?

5. When did Jesus seek justice? What was it that called his attention to the injustice? Did he notice on his own or did someone else bring it to his attention?
6. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What does this passage tell us about our focus on justice? Who are the people who suffer injustice? What should our response be?

Remind the group that Jesus challenged the use of power by religious and political leaders and sought to relieve the oppressed from their difficult existence. He was also crucified as a revolutionary. Ask: "How concerned are you about the possible repercussions of speaking out against power? When you consider acts of injustice, are you fearful of what might happen to you if you speak out?" (10 minutes)

Allow 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

7. What injustice do you see around you? Is there injustice against groups of people? Based on race? Gender? Sexual orientation? Age? Beliefs?
8. Is there injustice through exclusion or domination? Through lack of availability of human necessities?
9. You have heard and probably sung "They'll know we are Christians by our love". Do you think people would recognize us as Christians by the way we show love through speaking out and moving against injustice? What can we do about justice issues to show that we are Christians?

Close by gathering around the Table of the Lord. As you conclude your study, take a few minutes to consider that impossibly large table Dr. Watkins mentioned in the introduction of the Justice Primer. As a gift of God through the Holy Spirit we have been given this table that spans space and time, where Jesus is the host, and each of God's children finds a safe place where justice abounds. May we each ask of ourselves: "What does the Lord require of me?" May each of us do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

What Does the Lord Require of Me?

Invite those gathered to hear again these words from the "Conclusion" of the Justice Primer, "We proclaim the Good News that Love truly does drive out fear, and that we will make it through the tyranny of Good Friday injustice and arise on Easter, awe-struck at the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord to resurrect and transform." As you share at the table, remember the grace of God represented in our lives and the meaning of all the tables around which we gather.

As you serve one another the bread and the cup, pray for those who lack the basic necessities of bread and clean water. (15 minutes)

