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FOUNDATIONS

FOR JUSTICE

SELF-STUDY GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Foundations for Justice course is to inspire and help Christians to live a life of justice – as Christ has called us to do. Our hope is that after completing this short journey, you will have a deeper biblical understanding of, and motivation for, pursuing social justice. We hope too that you will better understand the context of our city and the importance of engaging with and responding to our city with gospel-fuelled hope. And, crucially, we hope that you will be empowered to identify some of the next steps you might take in your own pursuit of justice in your life.

It is difficult to live in South Africa and not be aware of the numerous social injustices that many people here experience on a daily basis. Many Christians would agree that the call to 'love our neighbours as ourselves' and address injustice is part of what it means to be a Christ-follower. Most would also agree that responding is difficult. The temptation towards self-preservation and comfort, the complexity of the issues at hand, the extent of pain, suffering and violence, and perhaps a lack of biblical motivation often results in us feeling overwhelmed, fearful, stuck, disempowered and sometimes even indifferent.

Through this journey, our hope is that you will freshly discover a biblical, gospel-fuelled response to the needs and opportunities presented where God has placed you. We also hope you will enjoy new insight, and be empowered to respond to situations in a manner that is informed and holistically beneficial.

Remember that justice is rooted in God's mission and his overflowing love for all people. Therefore, we don't need to become anxious, but rather simply listen to him and follow his Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit on this journey. Also remember that we follow him not on our own, but in community with fellow Christ-followers, where there is safety and strength. So be encouraged to share what God is doing in your heart with your fellow Christians and engage with them in dialogue and prayer as you take this journey.

This Justice Journey consists of a selection of teaching videos. These are contextualised through the use of this participant's guide that frames the sessions and provides prompts for reflection. Links to the videos are provided at the relevant place in this journal, so you will need to ensure that you have internet access in order to view the videos while you complete each session. You will find some suggested going deeper resources on Common Good's Just Church site: www.justchurch.co.za.

To get the most out of this journey - and to really grapple with what God wants to teach you - we suggest that you spend time dedicated to reflection and prayer throughout this journey. We suggest using a journal alongside this guide to record your reflections and prayers.

This journey takes place over 3 sessions, each of which will take roughly 40 – 60 minutes to complete:

SESSION ONE	SESSION TWO	SESSION THREE
A Heart for Social Justice	Social Justice in my City	Living Social Justice

SESSION 1 A HEART FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

God's love for justice is grounded in his love for the victims of injustice. As Tim Keller says: "If a person has grasped the meaning of God's grace in his heart, he will do justice. If he doesn't live justly, then he may say with his lips that he is grateful for God's grace, but in his heart he is far from him. If he doesn't care about the poor, it reveals that at best he doesn't understand the grace he has experienced, and at worst he has not really encountered the saving mercy of God. Grace should make you just."

STEP 1 DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE

REFLECT

- Write down what comes to mind when you hear the phrase "social justice"

HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT A BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION LOOKS LIKE:

Watch video: Video 1.1: 'What is Social Justice?' (5:14 mins)

REFLECT

- What stood out for you in this video?

STEP 2 UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

After exploring a clearer definition of social justice, we will now listen to Dr Brian Fikkert; CEO and Founder of the Chalmers Centre. The Centre provides excellent resources for how to do justice well. Their book, 'When Helping Hurts', is a recommended resource.

Watch video: Video 1.2: 'What is Poverty?' (3:33 mins)

REFLECT

- How does this definition of poverty differ from a traditional definition?
- What kinds of poverty do you think people in your congregation suffer from?

STEP 3 MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

REFLECT

- What are some of the motives that we may experience when trying to help someone – both useful and harmful? These may be your own or the perceived motivations of others.

Sometimes we attempt to make a difference in someone's life through reacting to injustice because of a desire to demonstrate love to our neighbour, to care for people, to glorify God, to be salt and light, to be a good steward, to point people to Jesus, or to honour God's instruction... However, if we are honest and deeply reflect on ourselves, we may become aware of some of the following reasons underpinning our more honourable motives: to look good, out of religious duty, to stop feeling awkward, to be wanted, to be liked, to feel needed, to be a hero in someone's story, out of fear, due to pitying the person, through obligation, due to guilt... These reasons are a natural human response and we can take them to God in an attitude of humble repentance. Luckily, God can redeem these flawed motivations when we recognise them and offer them to him.

The Bible gives some clear reasons for why living out a response to justice should be a natural part of following Christ.

Watch video: Video 1.3: 'Why do Justice?' (4:04 mins)

REFLECT

- We've heard the gospel motivations. And we've heard some other motives that may exist. But where are you at? Do you operate more from the gospel-inspired motivations or the self-satisfying motivations?
- Which of the motivations mentioned in the video stood out to you the most?
- What have been some of your primary motivations to do – or not do - justice?
- Having heard gospel motivations, what are some of the idolatrous motivations that you may need to repent of? What is God saying to you about your motivations?

STEP 4 PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer on the matter of what God has revealed to you through this session.

Some suggested prayer points that you may want to use:

- Thank God for his deep love for all people, and especially the vulnerable.
- Repent of the impure motives you have had.
- Ask for his forgiveness.
- Ask for his heart for justice to be your driving motivation to do justice.

NOTES

SESSION 2 SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MY CITY

It is no mistake that we are in this city. God has placed us here, and is inviting us to engage with the pain and potential in this context as participants in his grand story of redemption and restoration. As people living in a country and city steeped in division, suffering and inequality, we sometimes hide from, or are overwhelmed by, the reality of the injustices occurring around us. This session serves as an opportunity to freshly connect with our context, while inviting us into the great potential God has placed within each of us; to bring his light into this darkness by placing us here at this time. It will remind us of the hope and joy that only Christ can bring – and his desire to do this through us.

STEP 1 WHERE GOD WANTS US

Very often, we look around us and see only the disparate chaos and confusion in our broken world. Sometimes the apparent randomness can get us down. This video will help us understand how we fit into God's grand plan.

Watch video: Video 2.1 A Theology of Place (5:30 mins)

REFLECT

- What stood out for you in this video?
- How is God challenging you through the message from this video?

STEP 3 UNDERSTANDING OUR CONTEXT

Sometimes we live in a bubble, where the places we live, work and play seldom overlap with the places in the city where there is great suffering as a result of poverty and injustice. We can read statistics, but numbers normally don't stir our hearts; people do. So we have brought some of the voices of people in our city into this space. The statistics in the following video are a little out of date, but the stories are still relevant.

Watch video: Video 2.2 Facing Poverty (12:31 mins)

REFLECT

- What stood out to you in this video?
- What emotions are you experiencing now?
- What was the most concerning part of what you saw and heard? What questions did this raise for you?

STEP 4 THE HOPE THAT WE HAVE

The pain that exists in our city can leave us feeling pretty hopeless. Thankfully, Christ doesn't only call us to engage with the pain, but gives us all we need to respond – including hope.

Watch video: Video 2.3 Christian Hope (6:21 mins)

REFLECT

- What stood out for you from the video?
- How can you change the way you bring hope and positivity to the world?

STEP 5 PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with regard to what God has revealed to you through this session.

Some suggested prayer points that you may want to use:

- Pray specifically for hope – that our community would be infused with Christ's hope, be purveyors of Christ's hope, and that we would make Christ's hope contagious.
- Pray that God would show our community the people He has placed on our paths that need both Christ's hope and justice.

SESSION 3 LIVING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Engaging with and responding to poverty and injustice can become something to tick off on a to-do list. However, God is calling us to consider the multitude of ways in which we either perpetuate injustice, or can pursue justice on a daily basis as a whole life affair. As we pursue social justice, the actions of well-meaning people can result in more harm than good. This harm can take the shape of the destruction of trust, and the creation of long-lasting dependence and damage to the people we are seeking to serve. This session should stimulate some helpful thinking around some of best practices and things to keep in mind when it comes to living social justice.

————— STEP 1 A LIFESTYLE RESPONSE TO SOCIAL JUSTICE —————

We talk about ‘living a life of social justice’... but what does this actually mean? In the following video, we will be looking at what ‘living social justice’ might look like in our everyday lives; within the context God has placed us. As you watch, be aware of the Holy Spirit’s whispers around the implications for your own life.

Watch video: Video 3.1: Living Social Justice (11:21 mins)

LIFESTYLE QUIZ

In order to help you reflect on the implications of this teaching for your life, we now invite you to complete the following Lifestyle Quiz. It will assist you in thinking about how living a just life needs to be personal, and permeate all aspects of our lives. Mark those areas where you would like to grow over the next few months. Maybe you have some more lifestyle statements you can add? As you fill it in – consider what God might be saying to you.

LIFESTYLE STATEMENT	YES	NO	TO SOME EXTENT	GROWTH AREA
I have a good understanding of the biblical command to act justly.				
I have an understanding of the causes and extent of poverty, injustice and division in South Africa.				
I seek to be informed about current issues in the country related to poverty, injustice and division.				
I speak with God and seek his thinking on these matters.				
I seek opportunities to listen to the stories of people who are different to me, especially people of other race groups.				
I know what I spend my money on.				
I know how much money I have to give away.				
I pray about how I use my money and give as I feel prompted by the Holy Spirit.				
I regularly think and pray about people living in poverty and suffering injustices.				
I regularly give of my time and skills to help those living in poverty and suffering injustice.				
I look for opportunities at school / university / work / home to talk about issues relating to poverty and injustice and how we can respond.				
I am friends with someone different to me.				
I try not to use more than my share of the earth’s resources.				
I am fully persuaded that responding to poverty and injustice is intrinsic to what it means to be a Christ follower.				

REFLECT

- How is God inviting you to more fully embrace a lifestyle of living social justice?
- What 2 or 3 things is he inviting you to change or participate in?

STEP 3 HOW TO HELP WITHOUT HURTING

Knowing that it is important to help others and strive for justice is not enough. It is critical that we look also at how we help in order not to unwittingly perpetuate further harm towards the people we are trying to assist. To help us understand this a little better, we invite you to watch the following video about some of the possible consequences of our good intentions.

Watch video: Video 3.2: Meet Joe (2:43 mins)

REFLECT

- What stood out for you in this video?

Helping people who are in need is complicated. There are many examples of how good intentions don't necessarily translate into doing good. This next video is focused on how we can 'do good' while minimizing potentially harmful effects.

Watch video: Video 3.3: How to help without hurting (6:18 mins)

REFLECT

- What real life examples are you familiar with where these principles have been embraced or ignored?

In reflecting on how we could potentially harm someone, the risk exists that we become so scared of doing harm that we fail to even try and follow Christ in doing good. Not trying anything is just as harmful. And it goes against what God is inviting us to do. Remember that this is a journey. God is leading each of us. As we grapple, learn, pray and risk, so we will grow.

STEP 5 REFLECTION & PRAYER

REFLECT

- Take a moment now to reflect on what God has been saying to you throughout this journey and write it down.

PRAY:

Spend some time in prayer on the matter of what God has revealed to you through this Justice Journey. Some suggested prayer points that you may want to use:

- Pray for God to reveal to you how he wants to use you to bring justice to all those that he puts in your path.
- Pray for social justice to be lived through you, your family, congregation and community.

Seeking transformed people and places, through the love of Jesus Christ, and love for one another.
