

Subject: Christian Manner of Justice Devotional Reading: Luke 3:7-14

Background Scripture: Exodus 1:8-14; Amos 5:6-15; Zechariah 8:16-17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:14-21; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Memory Verse: When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.
Deuteronomy 24:19 (NIV)

Lesson Aim: To understand that the God of justice expects believers to practice justice in all phases of life.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDY OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

1. Define "Biblical Justice" and "Social Justice" in simple words.

I. JUSTICE TOWARD HIRED WORKERS (DEUTERONOMY 24:14-15)

2. How were employers to treat hired workers? Deuteronomy 24:14
3. How were workers to be paid? Why? Deuteronomy 24:15ab; Leviticus 19:13
4. What recourse did the workers have if not paid? What were the consequences? Deuteronomy 24:15c

II. JUSTICE TOWARD INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY (DEUTERONOMY 24:16)

5. What law was instituted to protect parents and children with respect to their personal sins? How does this law show justice? Deuteronomy 24:16 (For more details read Ezekiel 18:1-32)

III. JUSTICE TOWARD THE NEEDY (DEUTERONOMY 24:17-19)

6. What individuals in the Promised Land were likely to be oppressed and thus needed humanitarian laws to protect them? Deuteronomy 24:17

v.17a _____ v.17b _____ v.17c _____

7. For what reason should Israel show concern for the marginalized? Deuteronomy 24:18

8. How were farmers to show compassion for the poor and needy? Deuteronomy 24:19-21

v. 19 _____

v. 20 _____

v. 21 _____

9. What are rewards of showing justice? Deuteronomy 16:20; 24:13c, 19c

v. 16:20 _____

v. 24:13c _____

v. 24:19c _____

10. What are the consequences for perpetrators of injustice? Deuteronomy 27:19; Malachi 3:5

Deut. 27:19 _____

Malachi 3:5 _____

11. What did God want the Israelites to remember? Why? Deuteronomy 24:22

12. What did Jesus teach about helping the needy and marginalized? Matthew 25:35-40

IV. SLAVES AND MASTERS (EPHESIANS 6:5-9)

In the Old Testament Laws and New Testament Epistles, passages on the institution of slavery have been controversial and misused to enslave and oppress people. Read and discuss pages three and four to see how nations and individuals under the banner of religion unjustly enslaved and mistreated people between the 1500s and 1900s.

13. Sum up Paul's admonition to slaves and masters. Ephesians 6:5-9 (See page 3 for other passages.)
14. How do you think descendants of slaves and descendants of slave owners view Paul's instructions?
15. Who will be the final judge of the institutions of slavery? Ephesians 6:9; Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10
16. Do you think slaves are obligated to stay in slavery and be subservient to their masters? Why or why not?
17. Paul often in his Epistles asked slaves to be obedient to their masters. Did Paul ever say slaves should attempt to gain their freedom from slavery? 1 Corinthians 7:20-21
18. Jesus taught that He would return to take believers to His heavenly kingdom. After Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the apostles' and fellow Christians of the first century thought Jesus would return in their life time. Biblical scholars think this caused them to write to remain in one's status and circumstances with respect to being slave/free, married/single. Discuss. 1 Corinthians 7:21-24, 25-28, 29a (The time is short.)
19. What did Paul encourage a Christian slave owner (Philemon) and his runaway slave (Onesimus) to do? Philemon 1:8-16
20. What did Jesus say about the freedom He offers? How extensive is Jesus' freedom? (Keep in mind Jesus' offer of freedom is holistic and complete. Holistic freedom is spiritual, emotional, mental and physical. It includes freedom from sin, Satan, death, guilt, spiritual blindness, all forms of slavery and demonic and human oppression.)

Luke 4:18-19

John 8:36

21. What did Jesus tell the Jews to prioritize over their hypocrisy, religiosity and rituals? Matthew 23:23
22. How were the founding authors of the USA Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Democracy agents of hypocrisy when it came to justice, "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" with respect to slavery?

V. WHAT TO COMMAND THE RICH (1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19)

20. What things are the rich not to do? Why? 1 Timothy 6:17a
21. In whom should those who are rich put their hope (trust)? Why? 1 Timothy 6:17b
22. What is the purpose of God's gifts to us? 1 Timothy 6:17c
23. What things are the rich to do? 1 Timothy 6:18
24. What are the rewards promised to a rich believer who gives generously? 1 Timothy 6:19
25. How do the rich often practice injustices toward the poor and needy in our society?

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

26. How should we view and practice justice? Why?

Isaiah 1:17

Jeremiah 22:3

Proverbs 31:8-9; Psalm 82:3-4

Isaiah 30:18c

27. What is the "Golden Rule?" How can it inspire us to practice justice toward all people? Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31
28. How does God display His justice? Are human beings expected to do the same?

Psalm 146:6-10

Jeremiah 22:3; Zechariah 7:9

BIBLE VERSES USED TO JUSTIFY AND ENFORCE SLAVERY

Various Bible passages, particularly in the Old Testament Laws and New Testament Epistles, have historically been used to support or regulate slavery. Key passages include **Leviticus 25:44-46** (allowing chattel slavery of foreigners), **Exodus 21:2-6** (regulating Hebrew servants), **Ephesians 6:5-9** and **Colossians 3:22** (urging slaves to obey masters), and **Genesis 9:25-27** (the Curse of Ham).

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

- **Leviticus 25:44-46**: Permitted Israelites to purchase male and female slaves from surrounding nations, classifying them as permanent property and inheritable possessions.
- **Exodus 21:2-6**: Outlines regulations for Hebrew servants, allowing for indentured servitude for six years and voluntary, permanent slavery signaled by ear-piercing.
- **Exodus 21:20-21**: Regulates the physical treatment of slaves, stating a master is not punished if a slave survives for a day or two after a beating.
- **Genesis 9:25-27**: Known as the "Curse of Ham," this text was used to justify the enslavement of African people by claiming they were descendants of Canaan.

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

- **Ephesians 6:5-9**: Instructs slaves to obey their earthly masters with fear and trembling, acting as if they are obeying Christ.
- **Colossians 3:22-4:1**: Tells slaves to obey their masters in all things.
- **1 Timothy 6:1-2**: Advises slaves to treat their masters with respect to avoid bringing blasphemy upon God's name.
- **Titus 2:9-10**: Encourages slaves to be well-pleasing and obedient to their masters.
- **1 Peter 2:18-20**: Commands slaves to submit to their masters, not just the good ones but also the harsh ones.
- **Philemon 1:1-22**: Paul's return of the slave Onesimus to his master Philemon was historically used to justify the return of runaway slaves.

INJUSTICES OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Discuss the injustices, cruelty and inhumanity of slavery from the 15th through the 19th centuries in the Americas (North, South, Caribbean, USA):

- "Forced slavery was against individual's free will; Slaves were considered as chattel (personal property), real estate or livestock; African slaves were stolen from their country, killed, tortured, raped, separated from their families, considered less than human beings, sold and bred like livestock; African slaves lost their identity, language, history, homeland, culture, dignity."
 - "Slave owners, founding fathers of the USA Declaration of Independence and Constitution, religious leaders, and most of the public used false Biblical, Theological and Historical justification to support slavery, their hypocrisy and brutality. It was claimed that slavery was ordained and sanctioned by God."
 - "It is estimated that over 12.5 million Africans were forced into the transatlantic slave trade with between 1.8 and 2 million deaths in the infamous "Middle Passage." Some estimate the figures are much higher. These deaths were largely due to disease, malnutrition, starvation, physical abuse, suicide and brutal conditions. Slaves were heavily shackled and confined below deck. Total fatalities, including those from slave raids and forced marches, are often estimated over 2 million. The Middle Passage could last from 1 to 6 months. Of every 100 people seized in Africa, some scholars estimate that only about 48 survived to be enslaved in the Americas."
 - "In addition to the transatlantic slave export, there were other slave transactions in other parts of the world. It is believed as many as 60 million Africans died or were enslaved as a result of these various slave trades."
 - "The slave trade caused significant population loss, destabilizing the African continent."
- **Who was Dred Scott? What was the Dred Scott decision by the 1857 Supreme Court?** "Dred Scott was an enslaved African American man who sued for his freedom in 1846 after living in free territories. The 1857 Supreme Court decision, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, ruled 7–2 that enslaved people were property, not citizens, had no standing to sue in federal court, and deemed the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional. This decision led to the Civil War. The decision was later overturned with the ratification of the 13th and 14th Amendments after the Civil War."
- **What were the Fugitive (Runaway) slave laws passed in 1793 and 1850?** "These laws allowed escaped slaves to be reclaimed by slaveholders from any U.S. state or territory, overriding all local laws. The act required that slaves be returned to their owners, even if they were in a free state. The act also made the federal government responsible for finding, returning, and trying escaped slaves. People hired to catch freedom seekers could travel north with legal support, and local officials were required to assist them. Common citizens were legally compelled to assist in catching runaway slaves in America, particularly following the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which made it a federal crime for any citizen to hide or refuse to assist in capturing fugitives. Citizens, including those in free Northern states, faced massive fines and imprisonment for aiding freedom seekers, effectively turning ordinary people into participants in the slave-catching system. The passing of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act strengthened the 1793 Act. The Fugitive Slave Act was repealed in June 1864."
- **Do you believe there is justice in enslaving and oppressing people? Discuss.**