

Connecting with God through Our Desire for Justice

Series: Connecting with God

Life Group Discussion

Welcome to another opportunity to connect with God and one another.

I. Getting to know one another...

Share one thing that you have felt was unjust in the world... something that you felt was wrong about how you or someone else was treated. Enjoy the freedom to choose a simple and possibly light observation of an incident...to a cause you feel strongly about.

II. Centering...

Take a quiet moment to center your soul on God's presence. Have everyone close their eyes... take a deep breath...and prayerfully listen as one member reads the following Scripture... slowly ...THREE times...after which they may lead in an opening prayer for the group time.

Psalms 11:7

The LORD is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.

III. Exploring...

This week we are continuing in our focus on connections with God... allowing God to speak to us about how our nature provides connections to God. In this time together our focus is on our desire for justice. Whether we refer to it as justice ...or moral order... or simply the way things should be, it is a profound part of our human nature. As N.T. Wright describes, "All people know, in cooler moments, that this strange thing we call justice, this longing for things to be put right, remains one of the greatest human goals and dreams."

While the topic of justice is wide in it's scope, our focus is that of seeing that our desires for justice reflect God's nature echoing within us....to which Jesus becomes the voice that truly connects us to the source and fulfillment of ultimate justice. Towards that end, we will identify three ways in which Jesus provides that connection: what he uniquely teaches that justice is, how he becomes God's provision of mercy from the consequences of justice, and what he reveals about the how justice prevails.

1. Have someone read aloud the prophetic revelation which God gives regarding the Messiah servant he will send... which would later be quoted as fulfilled in Jesus.

Isaiah 42:1-4

*"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;*

*I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.*

³ ...In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

*⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.*

And have another read aloud, this portion of John's Gospel which explains the unique role of Jesus.

John 1:1-5, 14, 17-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

How do these passages describe what Jesus brings to this world?

2. From what you know, how did Jesus uniquely proclaim and “bring justice to the nations”? How did his teaching proclaim a different understanding about who was valued and blessed by God?

3. In the passage read from the Gospel of John, according to verse 1:17, what was unique in what Jesus brought to us?

*4. Our desire for justice may presume that we should want everyone to “get what they deserve.” However, this would lead to our being judged as well. As such, our desire for justice can tend to judge others harshly while avoiding our own sin... even raising up a wall of self-righteousness.

Have you ever experienced anger at being wronged... or against injustice... in which you recognized pride and self-righteousness at work? If so, how do you think this affected your connection with God?

5. The only way to genuinely love justice, is when we also see the need for grace ... beginning with ourselves. Jesus is the very provision of such grace. Have someone read aloud Romans 3:23-26 (NCV)

“Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious standard,²⁴ and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They need to be made free from sin through Jesus Christ.²⁵ God sent him to die in our place to take away our sins. We receive forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus’ death. This showed that God always does what is right and fair, as in the past when he was patient and did not punish people for their sins.²⁶ And God gave Jesus to show today that he does what is right. God did this so he could judge rightly and so he could make right any person who has faith in Jesus.”

How does God’s provision of grace through Christ change how we seek justice?

6. Jesus reveals that justice already reigns over eternity. The central proclamation of Jesus is that the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of heaven), which already exists, will ultimately redeem creation. How do you think this may have given Jesus the potential to be resolute regardless of the injustice all around him? How does this change our pursuit of justice?

*7. What difference do you think it would make if our desire for justice shifted from primarily the premise ‘they deserve it’ to that of ‘this is the way God’s world should and will be’?

* These questions may serve in a more “optional” manner if time is short or the group is large.