

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION 3

JUSTICE



PREPARATION

The following could be useful to help you with this discussion:

- Bible
- Candle
- Post-it notes
- Pens

OVERVIEW

Penny got involved in campaigning for change after she found herself in crisis. She describes the impact of what happened to her:

“I went from having a comfortable life to not having a comfortable life, to having to work 70 hours a week on three different shifts, just to make ends meet, just to keep a roof over our head, to feed a family.

“It’s horrible – when you don’t have enough money to heat your house, feed your kids, exist. It’s not nice, not being able to exist, you are just a nothing.”

She wanted to speak up about injustice, as she explains:

“We are the voice of the people who can’t speak up, people who are too afraid, too stigmatised, they don’t want people to know they’re in poverty,” she says.

“If you have to use a food bank, you are so ashamed of yourself. We’re a country that has massive amounts of money. Why do people have to go to a food bank? We shouldn’t have to have food banks.”

Proverbs 31: 8-9 calls Christians to speak up for people who may not be able to make their voices heard.

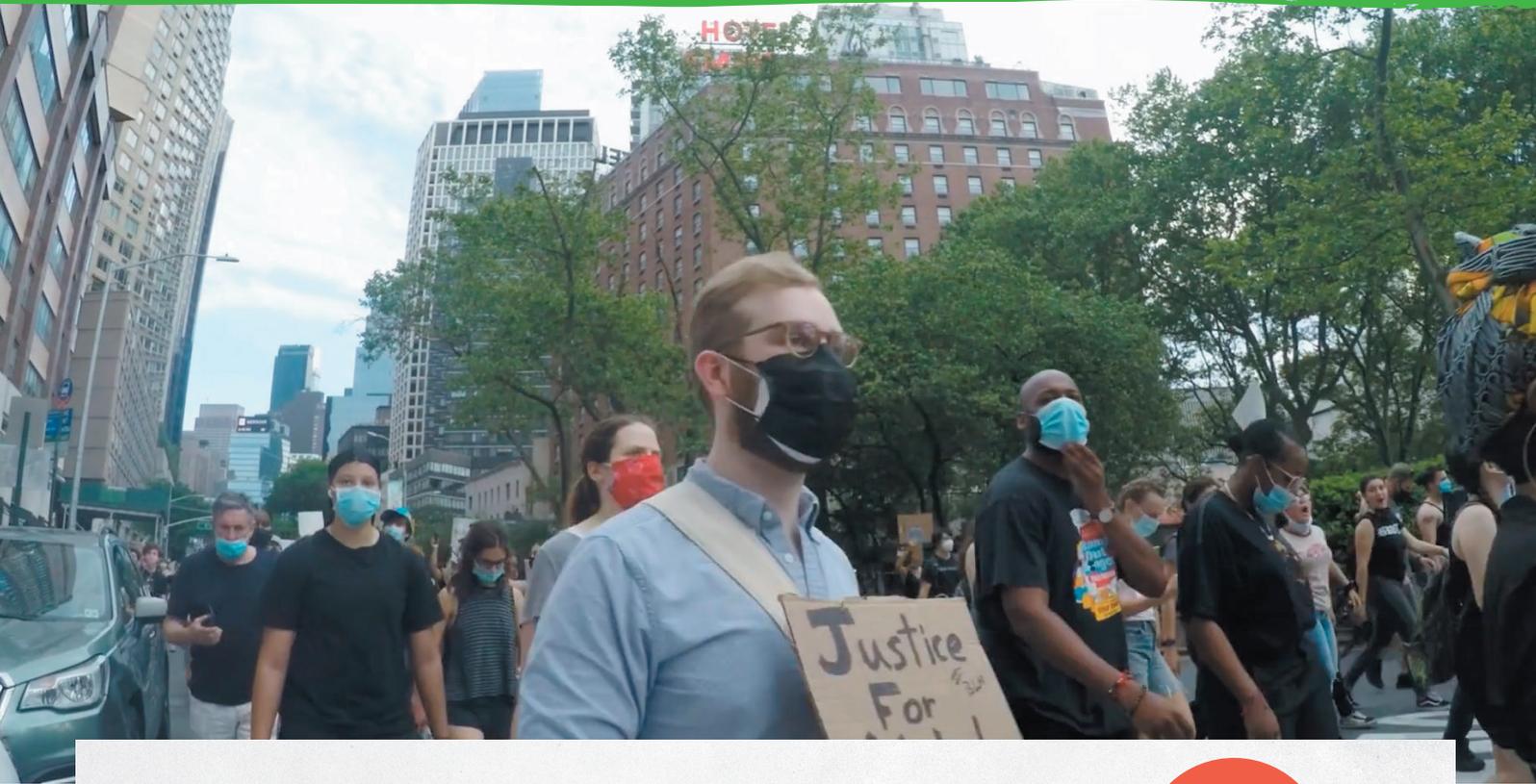
Scripture also encourages us to seek justice, and by doing this we can help ensure that the systems and structures of our society better protect people from reaching crisis point.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it: “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

Justice can sometimes sound like the opposite of compassion, but if people are going to be able to flourish, our society needs to be organised in a way that is just, or fair, as well as kind. Indeed, having just systems and structures in place can be an expression of compassion.

Justice is central to the Christian message. Jesus began his ministry by reading from the book of Isaiah. He said the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to proclaim good news to the poor, bring freedom to prisoners and to set the oppressed free.

Throughout the Old Testament, we aren’t just challenged to act justly: we also learn that justice is part of God’s nature. “All his ways are just,” says Deuteronomy 32:4, while the Psalmist writes that ‘righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne’ (**Psalm 89:14**).



READ

Let's reflect on some key Bible verses about justice. Take a few moments of quiet as we ponder God's Word and ask Him to guide us and speak to us through our time together.

TIP

You could light a candle or play some gentle worship music in the background. This could aid your reflective time in God's presence.



PROVERBS 31:8-9

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."



ISAIAH 1:17

"Learn to do right, seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."



LUKE 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

DISCUSS

- 1** Do you recall a time when you experienced injustice? If you feel comfortable doing so, share your experiences with the group.
- 2** What are some of the ways you are affected by structural systems in our nation? Can systems such as education and public services bring about justice or injustice? How have you helped contribute to some of these systems?
- 3** In 2018, Archbishop Justin Welby said this in a speech:
“I dream of empty night shelters. I dream of debt advice charities without clients. When justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, the food banks close, the night shelters are empty, families and households are hopeful of better lives for themselves and their children, money is not a tyrant, and justice is seen.”
What do you think about this dream? Is it one you share? How do you think Christians could be part of making this dream a reality?
- 4** Have you ever responded to an injustice, or something you believed was wrong, and seen things change?
What did you do, and what happened as a result?

TIP

You could split your group into smaller groups if that dynamic would work best. Perhaps appoint a spokesperson in each group to report back to the larger group for feedback afterwards.

PRAY

We are going to close today's session with a time of prayer.

This is a chance to pray for areas of injustice in society and ask God to bring change. Ask him to show you how you can get involved, as well as how to pray for these issues and the people involved.

Pray that our society would increasingly be characterised by justice, compassion, and dignity.

TIP

Sometimes praying out loud can be awkward. Depending on your group's preferences, you could ask everyone to write down their prayer needs on Post-it notes and then the group could collectively pray for everyone's needs and suggestions.