



**THE COMPASSION**

# Collective

**A Bible study series for small groups, tackling the question,  
“How can we respond to suffering and injustice in a way God wants us to?”**



# Introducing the Compassion Collective Bible study series

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How can we respond to the pain and injustice in our world in the way God wants us to?

The inequalities in our communities, country and world have been exacerbated over the past few years. The COVID-19 pandemic has eradicated much of the progress made in the fight to end extreme poverty. Societal racism is devastating the lives of individuals and preventing so many from living in freedom. Modern-day slavery continues to keep millions imprisoned and unable to shape their own future.

In The Compassion Collective Bible study series, Tim Robertson reflects on God's character, how we should respond to issues of injustice and looks at what God is already doing and how we can join in.

Prepare to open your heart to hear from God in fresh ways.

Written by Tim Robertson and edited by Kate Sharma.

# The Justice Agenda

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Standards 1

# Study 1

## The Justice Agenda

### OPEN IN PRAYER

“Lord, we come to you with open hearts and minds. We ask you to join us as we study your word and seek your will in our lives. Help us to hear you clearly; listen to each other openly; and do your will lovingly. Amen.”



### Icebreaker

We're exploring the topic of injustice today. So, to kick things off: what makes you angry? What wrongs do you see in the world that really cause your blood to boil? It may be something happening on a local, national, or international scale.

**DISCUSS:** Take 5-10 minutes to share as a group.

### Introduction

No doubt your discussions will have highlighted many different things. Did any of these topics feature?

- **Racism:** In 2020, the unjust public killing of George Floyd sparked international anger about inherent racism in our societies.
- **Climate change:** Campaigners like David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg continue to draw attention to the negative impact our actions are having on the planet.
- **Refugees:** The plight of refugees continues to capture global attention as families flee war-torn countries, risking their lives to travel thousands of miles in search of safety.

While this is a diverse list of topics, at their core, these are all issues of injustice. They fill news desks, cause street protests, and topple statues. They also move people to fundraise, inspire humanitarian aid, and give a voice to the voiceless.

### What is justice?

We use the word justice in so many different contexts. It can be difficult to grasp. Before we jump in to explore what the Bible has to say, let's get a grip on what the term justice can mean.

**DISCUSS:** What do you understand the following terms to mean: social justice, retributive justice, legal justice, and restorative justice?

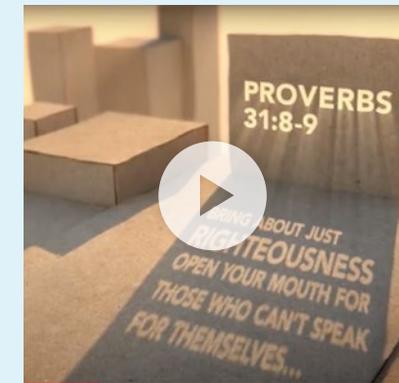
There are many slightly different definitions, but essentially this is what the terms mean:

- **Social justice** refers to the equal distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.
- **Retributive justice** is concerned with punishing or rewarding individuals for their actions.
- **Legal justice** is the restoration of fairness in the eyes of the law.

- **Restorative justice** brings those harmed and those responsible for the harm into communication to find a positive way forward.

Keep these in mind, as we'll be referring to them a little later on.

### Watch



Take a few moments to **watch this video**, exploring what the Bible has to say about injustice.

**DISCUSS:** What stood out to you from the video? Did anything surprise, confuse, challenge or encourage you?

VIDEO OWNED AND CREATED BY THE BIBLEPROJECT (WWW.BIBLEPROJECT.COM).

## Let's explore the Bible

Of course, many great people in our world spend their lives fighting injustice. However, for many of us, injustice can fleetingly capture our attention when something is particularly newsworthy or when it affects us directly.

But justice is always on God's agenda. Therefore, as Christians, it should be on ours too. Let's take a few moments to explore what the Bible has to say about our attitude toward injustice in greater depth.

### READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES:

**Deuteronomy 32:3-4:** *"I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He!"* (NIV)

**Psalms 89:14:** *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you."* (NIV)

**Isaiah 61:8:** *"For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them."* (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** What do we learn from these verses about God's character and justice?

### EXPLANATION

Injustice exists because of the fallen nature of humankind and our broken relationship with God. In seeking a relationship with us, God wants to restore what has been broken

and allow justice to flow. Justice is about God's relationship with us and the relationships we should have with those around us.

## Let's explore the Bible

### NOW READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES:

**Deuteronomy 16:18:** *"Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly."* (NIV)

**Leviticus 23:22:** *"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God."* (NIV)

**Amos 9:11-12:** *"In that day 'I will restore David's fallen shelter— I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins— and will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,' declares the LORD, who will do these things."* (NIV)

**1 John 3:17-18:** *"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."* (NIV)

**Luke 12:48:** *"But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** What kind of justice or injustice is being demonstrated here? Think about social, retributive, legal, and restorative justice.

### EXPLANATION

God is passionate about justice in all its forms: social, retributive, legal, and restorative. Throughout the Old Testament, God gives a framework of how we should live, but we also see the devastation that ensues when justice doesn't prevail.

For example, the book of Judges follows the rule of six leaders, like Deborah, but ends in devastation when the people don't follow God's law.

As it says in Judges 21:25: *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."* (NIV)

Throughout the New Testament, the theme continues. Jesus has come to reconcile us to God and mend the broken relationship we have with Him. He is the living embodiment of restorative justice. We see this demonstrated perfectly in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:6-7: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (NIV)

## Get inspired

The big question is: how can we live out justice in our day-to-day lives? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a famous German Lutheran pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, said: *"We are not simply to bandage the*

*wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke in to the wheel itself."*

**DISCUSS:** What does Bonhoeffer mean by this? And how do we respond?

## Watch



Take a look at [this short film](#) from Compassion.

### DISCUSS:

- What injustice do you see?
- How do you see God's people working to put things right?
- What could you do in response?

## Reflection

As we come to a close, read the following excerpt from the book *Just Imagine The [World] 4 God* by Danielle Strickland and Campbell Roberts and invite the group to reflect on what they say about justice.

*“Just imagine a world where every Christian and the church as a whole are passionate to live justly. Where Christians toss and turn at night because children die due to a lack of clean water, or because other children step on landmines while they play.*

*“A world where the church is restless to do something about poverty, racism, malnutrition and environmental destruction. A world where Christians all have friends who are poor, friends of another skin colour and ethnicity and friends whose hope has been extinguished.*

*“A church where our love for God is measured not by how many love songs to Jesus we can sing in an hour but by our actions to bring justice, mercy and faith to other people. Imagine such a world.”*

## Close in prayer

Close with the famous words from this prayer from American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

*God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardship as a pathway to  
peace;  
taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it;  
trusting that You will make all things right  
if I surrender to Your will;  
so that I may be reasonably happy in this  
life and supremely happy with You forever  
in the next.  
Amen.*



# The Love Dimension

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Study 2

# Study 2

## OPEN IN PRAYER

“Lord God, as we study your word today, help us to deepen our relationship with you as we experience your love in fresh ways and learn how we can demonstrate that love to those we encounter. Amen.”



# The Love Dimension

## Icebreaker

We're exploring the topic of love today, but before we jump in, we have a short quiz for you.

1. Which band sang the 2003 hit, “*Where is the Love?*”

**Answer:** Black Eyed Peas

2. What Shakespeare play includes these words “The course of true love never did run smooth?”

**Answer:** A Midsummer Night's Dream

3. What film with “love” in the title sees Hugh Grant playing the Prime Minister?

**Answer:** Love Actually

4. What New Testament book and chapter includes the words “love never fails”?

**Answer:** 1 Corinthians 13

5. Who said, “No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite”?

**Answer:** Nelson Mandela

## Introduction

Love is more than a heart emoji or a ‘like’ on someone’s social media post. It’s more than the flutters you may get in a new relationship, and it goes beyond just physical expression or even a passion you have for a sport or a hobby.

The dictionary defines love as “*an intense feeling of deep affection*”, but what do you think love really means?

**DISCUSS:** Take five minutes to explore the question: what is love?

## Let's explore the Bible

The Greeks recognised that love had several different levels, three in particular:

1. **Philia** – brotherly love and affection
2. **Eros** – romantic, passionate love
3. **Agape** – selfless and sacrificial love

There are examples of all of these in the Bible, but we're going to be focusing on *agape* love.

## READ JOHN 3:16:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** What image of love do we get from this verse?

Love, as described in this verse, is intense and all-encompassing.

- God didn't just love: He so loved!
- God didn't just love one nation or a select few: He loved the world.
- God loved the world so much that He gave the thing most precious to Him - His Son!

This leads us to realise that love isn't just an attribute or a characteristic of God; love is who He is. And God's love for us isn't dependent on our behaviour, our beliefs, or our spirituality – it's unconditional and unchanging. God doesn't love us any less when we do wrong or anymore when we do right. He is totally consistent. God is love!

## Watch



Take a few moments to **watch this video**, which explores what the Bible has to say about love.

**DISCUSS:** What stood out from the video? Did this change your view of love and how we as Christians are supposed to behave toward each other?

VIDEO OWNED AND CREATED BY THE BIBLEPROJECT (WWW.BIBLEPROJECT.COM).

## Let's explore the Bible

### READ 1 JOHN 4:7-11:

*"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is*

*love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* (NIV)

The sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross brought forgiveness, reconciliation, freedom, and eternity with God. The righteousness of Jesus cancelled out our unrighteousness because the justice we deserved was served upon Jesus who paid the price of our sin. Because God loved us so much with that agape love, we also should love one another – not just in words, but in deeds!

### READ MARK 12:30-31:

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."* (NIV)

Later in Luke 10:29, an expert in the law asks Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" which prompts Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. The point of the story is to demonstrate that your neighbour isn't just the person who lives next door, nor is it your friend a few streets over. Your neighbour is anyone you encounter who's in need, including people from different cultures, faiths, and backgrounds. When it came to demonstrating love, Jesus was a real radical.

### READ MATTHEW 5:43-47:

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."* (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** How do these verses challenge and inspire you?

## Get inspired



**Watch this short video** where eight-year-old Shaniz shares her experiences of living through COVID-19 in Mathare slum in Kenya.

### DISCUSS:

- Did Shaniz's story stir you?
- Did it widen your perspective about the impact of COVID-19?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your perception of who your neighbour is?
- How can we practically demonstrate God's love to our neighbours?

## Reflection

Take a moment to listen to a worship song and ask the group to contemplate what they've learnt about God's love for them and others.

You might want to consider the following:

- ▶ ***You keep coming after me***  
by Austin Stone Worship
- ▶ ***As I am***  
by Hillsong Young & Free
- ▶ ***Good, good father***  
by Chris Tomlin
- ▶ ***Goodness of God***  
by Bethel Music & Jenn Johnson

## Close in prayer

Finish with the beautiful words from this famous prayer by the English preacher, theologian and Evangelist, John Wesley.

*"Now, to God the Father, who first loved us, and made us accepted in the Beloved; to God the Son, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to God the Holy Ghost, who sheddeth the love of God abroad in our hearts, be all love and all glory in time and to all eternity. Amen."*

# The Call to Compassion

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Study 3

# Study 3

## The Call to Compassion

### OPEN IN PRAYER

“Lord God, as we take time to study your word today, we pray that you’ll help us to do so with our eyes open to the needs of your world. We pray that as you reveal more about your love, you’ll also show us how we can demonstrate that love to others. Amen.”

### Icebreaker

Write the following words on a piece of paper and ask the group to call out the first thing that springs to mind when they think of them.

- Justice
- Mercy
- Compassion

### Introduction

The words we explored above are used throughout the Bible to describe God and His relationship with us. We often use them together, which means we sometimes fail to see the nuanced, but important, differences between them.

In his book ‘Can you hear me? Tuning into a God who speaks,’ Canadian author and pastor, Brad Jersak, describes mercy and justice like this:

“**Mercy** is like the ambulance at the bottom of a cliff ready to help those who fall. **Justice** builds a fence at the top of the cliff to protect them from falling in the first place. **Mercy** wipes the tears from their eyes. **Justice** asks, ‘Why are you crying?’

“**Mercy** welcomes the hungry to gather around God’s banquet table. **Justice** addresses why some are under the table aching of hunger while others are sitting on top of the table aching from gluttony.

“**Mercy** seeks and saves those lost in the darkness. **Justice** asks, ‘Why is it dark? Who is keeping it dark? Who is benefitting from this darkness? Is it I Lord?’

We’ll be exploring what the word compassion means shortly – so hold onto your thoughts on that for now.

### Let’s explore the Bible

#### READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES:

**Micah 6:8:** “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (NIV)

**Exodus 34:6:** “...The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” (NIV)

**Zechariah 7:9:** “This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’” (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** How do these verses influence our view of God?

These verses reveal a lot about God’s character and our responsibility as His sons and daughters. From this scripture, it seems very clear that God wants us to live a life of love rather than simply take part in random acts of kindness to tick a box.

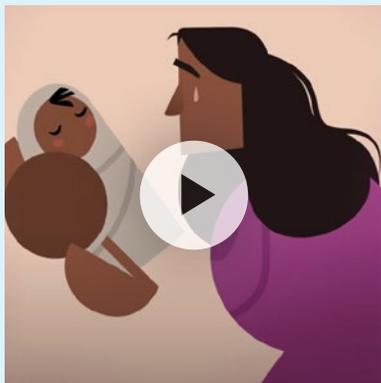
When you walk in humility, you leave your pride behind and your attitude to other people changes. When we’re humble, we don’t see ourselves as better, more worthy, more important, more valuable or more entitled than anyone else.

C.S. Lewis, the British writer and theologian, famously said, “Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”

When we behave with humility, our eyes are opened to the injustice of others and our hearts are opened to respond. The fact that we’ve received justice, mercy and compassion in our own lives should create both a sense of desire and responsibility to extend that to others.



## Watch



Take a few moments to **watch this video**, which explores God's compassionate nature.

**DISCUSS:** What stood out to you from the video? Did anything surprise you about God's compassion?

VIDEO OWNED AND CREATED BY THE BIBLEPROJECT (WWW.BIBLEPROJECT.COM).

## Let's explore the Bible

The word compassion appears 12 times in the New Testament: once in the story of the Good Samaritan, twice in reference to God's character, and nine times to describe Jesus' actions.

When translated in the original Greek, the word compassion is *splagchnizomai* (pronounced SPLAGNITZOMY), which literally means "to be moved in the

bowels or inward parts." When we hear that something was done "with compassion", it means much more than a response generated by pity - it means "that took guts."

Pity can move your heart for a moment, but compassion goes deeper. It makes you feel so uncomfortable that you can't help but respond.

Let's dig a little deeper. If you break the word down, you have passion, which refers to the passion of Jesus: the anguish, the sorrow, the pain, the brokenness. The prefix *com* actually means with! Put the two words together, and it means *with passion*.

So, when you have compassion, you're sharing with Jesus in His sufferings. It means you are moved to act. It brings together justice, mercy, grace and love. The Compassion Collective!

In his book, *The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy*, Timothy Keller, American pastor, theologian, and Christian apologist, demonstrates how Jesus' life was synonymous with compassion.

*"Over a century ago the great Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield wrote a remarkable scholarly essay called "The Emotional Life of Our Lord," where he considered every recorded instance in the gospels that described the emotions of Christ. He concluded that by far the most typical statement of Jesus's emotional life was the phrase "He was moved from the depths of his being."*

*"The Bible records Jesus Christ weeping twenty times for every one time it notes*

*that He was naturally depressive. No, he had enormous joy in the Holy Spirit and in his Father (Luke 10:21), and yet his compassion connected him with us. Our sadness makes him sad; our pain brings him pain."*

## Get inspired



**Watch Tony's story** to see how compassion can change lives

### DISCUSS:

- How has compassion been a feature of Tony's life, through the people God brought to him and his response?
- How have you been moved to practically respond to those things that stir you?
- Is there anything more you feel led to do considering what we've been studying?

## Reflection

Reflect on these words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African theologian and cleric: *"To be neutral in a situation of injustice is to have chosen sides already. It is to support the status quo."*

Choose a worship song to play and close the session by directing the group through the following active prayer.

### Lay a hand on your head and pray:

*"Renew our minds, give us a fresh revelation of who you are, of who we are and the value of others."*

### Lay a hand on your heart and pray:

*"Break our hearts for what breaks yours, everything I am for Your Kingdom's cause."*

### Hold up your hands and pray:

*"Take these hands and use them to reach out and bring healing, to comfort, to give resources, to write letters, to hold the hands of the poor and connect them with the hands of Jesus!"*

# The Worship Directive

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Study 4

# Study 4

## The Worship Directive

### OPEN IN PRAYER

“Dear Heavenly Father, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth. As we explore true worship, we ask you to help us keep our eyes on you God and show us how we can live our whole life for you. Amen.”



### Icebreaker

We're going to be looking at what worship is really all about today. What was your experience of worship during the COVID-19 lockdowns? Did you find ways to worship at home, or did you struggle?

**DISCUSS:** Take 5-10 minutes to share as a group.

### Introduction

Whilst restrictions prevented us from gathering to sing, we had the opportunity to think more broadly about what worship really means. Our worship needs to be founded and focused on God; if not, we become worshippers of worship itself. It can be all too easy to measure worship by the intensity of feeling we have or the quality of the music, but authentic worship isn't about us at all.

### Watch



Take a few moments to **watch this video**, which explores what the Bible has to say about worship.

**DISCUSS:** What stood out to you from the video? Has your opinion about worship changed?

VIDEO OWNED AND CREATED BY THE BIBLEPROJECT (WWW.BIBLEPROJECT.COM).

### Let's explore the Bible

In Isaiah 58 we read about fasting, an act of worship and adoration that brings glory and honour to God. But it's clear from the outset that there's a problem.

### READ ISAIAH 58:1-5:

*“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.*

*‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.*

*“Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?” (NIV)*

**DISCUSS:** Why is God angry in these verses?

From the very first words of Isaiah 58 we see that God wants our attention. He is shouting! But we see two levels of anger here. The people are angry because they don't think God is recognising their worship, and God is angry because their worship is hypocritical.

God calls out those who believe they're being righteous by fasting, but they're way off the mark. In their fasting, their focus is on themselves and what they have to gain, rather than on God.

Our own worship can easily be self-centred rather than God-centred. While the people participate in religious acts, this has no bearing on their day-to-day behaviour. They bow their heads and then go about their business as usual. Being a Christian isn't about doing religious acts on a Sunday, but rather seeking a relationship with God that impacts our behaviour.

Even today, it's so easy for us to talk the talk but not walk the walk! We raise our hands in worship and come home and run people down in our conversations. We declare that Jesus is Lord of our lives yet so quickly buy into the consumer mentality and acquire things we don't need when we could be giving to those who have need.

If we're to have integrity in our faith, then our words and actions need to align.

Word + actions = integrity

In Matthew 15:8, we hear Jesus reiterate his concern with the words, *"These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."* (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** Ask yourself if there are times when you could be guilty of religiosity?

## What is true worship?

### READ ISAIAH 58:6-7:

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"* (NIV)

**DISCUSS:** How does God want us to worship Him?

True worship reflects a godly life. Worship must be linked to justice, or it's not true worship. The righteousness that we've received from God through Jesus is not just about our right standing with God but also about our right standing with others.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's character and, as we seek to build a relationship with Him through worship, we too need to demonstrate these characteristics.

God wants us to follow a life of humility. He wants us to walk humbly with Him, recognising our need for Him, discovering that we can do nothing without Him. As

we acknowledge His greatness, it'll cause us to remember that we all stand equal at the foot of the cross.

Secondly, it leads us to act justly. That means doing what's right and speaking up for others. It's about standing up for justice, demonstrating it in our respect for all people and their wellbeing.

## Seeing God's glory

### READ ISAIAH 58:8-14:

*"Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.*

*Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."* (NIV)

"Then" is a key word in this passage because what follows the word "then" can only come if what precedes it is fulfilled.

So often, we expect God to work on our behalf but fail to obey His word. Perhaps instead of putting our desires first, we should seek to do the will of the One who created all things. While our salvation is not based on the "good things" we do, if we want light, healing, righteousness, and the glory of the Lord that verse 8 talks about, then we need to be living out verses 6-7.

## Get inspired

**DISCUSS:** Can you name any famous Christian activists who have really stood up for justice? (William Wilberforce, Florence Nightingale, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Jackie Pullinger)

It's important to remember that these incredible Christian leaders all started somewhere. Their ministries took time to build. The key is to start where you can; start small and think big! As Mother Teresa said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, feed one."

For too long the Church has quibbled about whether we should focus on getting involved in social action or sharing the gospel. It's not "either-or", it's "both-and". The book of James makes it very clear that we need to actively live our faith through our actions, not just our words.

### READ JAMES 2:15-16:

*"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?"* (NIV)

The English writer Walter Savage Landor said: *"Delay of justice is injustice"*. Sometimes we spend so much time debating what to do, that we do nothing.

Actions + love = compassion. Get involved!

## Watch



**Watch this short video** to see worship leader Matt Redman sum up what true worship is all about.

## Reflection

Reread the words of Isaiah 58:6-7, contemplate how we can bring justice, mercy, and faith to others. Play one of the following worship tracks while the group reflects.

 **True Praise**  
by Tim and Mairi Neeves

 **God of the poor**  
by Graham Kendrick

## Close in prayer

**READ THIS FAMOUS PRAYER BY ST. FRANCIS ASSISI:**

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love,  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith,  
Where there is despair, hope,  
Where there is darkness, light,  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,  
not so much to be understood as to understand,  
not so much to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.*



# The Church's Manifesto

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Study 5

# Study 5

# The Church's Manifesto

## OPEN IN PRAYER

“Lord God, we praise you and thank you for the way you love and care for us as unique individuals. As we come to you today, we recognise that our skills, gifts, and talents are multiplied when we use them as part of the Body of Christ. We pray you'll open our eyes and hearts as we consider how we can serve you as your Church. Amen”



## Icebreaker

As we come to the last session of this series, we're going to think about our collective responsibility as a Church. The beauty of the Church is that it's filled with different people with a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and talents. It's the Body of Christ here on earth.

If you've ever been involved with coordinating a group of people – be it for a coffee rota or a department at work – you'll know how difficult it can be to focus so many different people around a single goal or aim. Many churches have mission statements or manifestos to help them focus.

Here are some dictionary definitions of what a manifesto is:

- *A statement published by a person or a group of people in which they say what their aims and policies are.* – Collins Dictionary
- *A public declaration of intentions, opinions, or purposes* – Thesaurus
- *To pledge something, to promise something, to call for something* – Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

**DISCUSS:** Before we discuss what our mission or manifesto is as a Church, think about what your personal manifesto might be.

## Watch



Watch [this short video](#) to explore what the mission of the Church is.

**DISCUSS:** What does Church mean to you, and does this video challenge or support those beliefs?

## Let's explore the Bible

### READ LUKE 4:16-19:

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to*

*Him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” (NIV)*

**DISCUSS:** What is Jesus' manifesto, as shared in these verses?

When Jesus stood up in the temple and read from the scroll at the start of His ministry, he was laying out his manifesto – the purpose of his mission. And it's good news!

Since this is Jesus' manifesto, it should be ours too. So, what are the key points?

### • It's about release

Physical, spiritual and emotional release from fear, addiction, slavery, poverty, and captivity.

### • It's about comfort

For the broken-hearted, for those in darkness, for those who mourn and grieve, and for those in despair.

### • It's about restoration

Favour, beauty, gladness, praise, regeneration, and rebuilding.

What a great message of encouragement to the people of God then, and what a message of hope for our world today! And it's through us, God's people, that He wants to share it.

You may have heard of the term *Missio Dei*, a Latin theological term that can be translated as "Mission of God". It refers to how the Church is part of God's work, not an independent activity, but an extension. Perhaps this definition is helpful "The Church of God is the instrument of God in the hand of God to extend the Kingdom of God!"

We see this idea clearly through Jesus' words in John 17:20-21 when he says: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (NIV)

## Get inspired

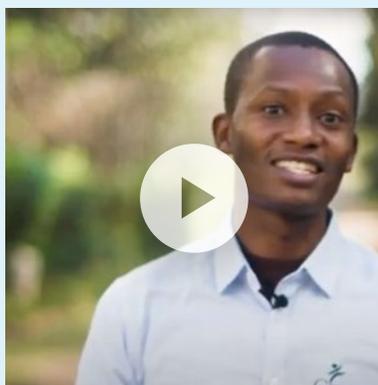
The question is, how do we turn this knowledge into action? God gave us Jesus not only as our saviour, but also as our mentor. Throughout the Bible we see His compassion and love, His anger against injustice, and the way He sought to reach and include people from different nations and backgrounds.

Jesus was the example for His disciples, and that includes us. So, the mission of the Church is not just to preach Good News but to demonstrate Good News.

### DISCUSS:

- In groups, take a look at how the early Church lived out God's mission in sharing the good news by reaching out to the poor, fighting injustice and seeking freedom.
- If you want inspiration, try looking at the following and sharing what you see. Galatians 2:10, Acts 2:45, Acts 4:34, Acts 6:1, James 1:27.
- How is the Church in 2021 living out God's mission right now?

## Watch



Watch [this short video](#) and be inspired by the global difference we can make when we unite as a worldwide Church with a mission to seek justice and show compassion.

## Reflection

If we consider all the passages we've been reviewing over the past few weeks, a clear theme runs through them all.

### READ ISAIAH 58:6-7:

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"*

*Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"* (NIV)

Later Jesus paraphrases these words and says in Matthew 25:40:

*'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

What a mandate! What a great purpose! Something to live for - loving God and loving others.

As we reflect on these thoughts today, ask yourself: how can I make a difference to the poor as a part of this Church?

### DISCUSS:

- What is your church doing corporately to respond to this - are you supporting the homeless, helping those in debt, reaching out to prisoners or serving the poor overseas?
- How can you get involved? Could you serve, make a financial donation, or sponsor a child?

## Close in prayer

Close using these words from a prayer attributed to a 16th century adventurer and seafarer.

*Disturb us, O Lord,  
When we are too pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.*

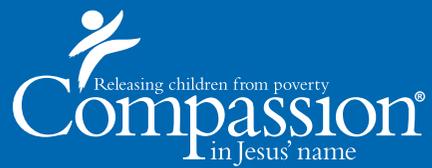
*Disturb us, O Lord,  
When with the abundance of  
things we possess  
We have lost our thirst for  
the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision of the new  
Heaven to dim.*

*Disturb us, O Lord,  
To dare more boldly,  
To venture on wilder seas,  
Where storms will show Your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.*

*We ask you to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push back the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.*

*This we ask in the name of our Captain,  
Who is Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*



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