



# Justice as an Act of Worship

## A five-day devotional guide for The Mobilization to End Poverty

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### Introduction

Doing justice is not an optional part of discipleship; it is the natural fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Doing justice is an act of worship.

Worship is much more than the music we sing during church gatherings. Worship is what we do with our lives seven days a week. If worshiping God just meant singing songs, our world would be in trouble. But thankfully true worship propels us out into the world to tackle specific injustices. Furthermore, as we engage in these acts of justice we are able to see Christ in the faces we serve and worship God as we engage in mission.

Our theme of justice as an act of worship for The Mobilization to End Poverty comes from the repeated call the prophets give to us in scripture that when we neglect the worship of God, this also leads us to neglect the poor in our midst. Our theme passage from Isaiah 42

teaches that the Lord is the one who brings justice on earth. In response we have the opportunity to follow Christ's example of bringing light to the darkness, sight for the blind, and freedom for the captives!

This five-day devotional guide is designed to give you the opportunity to worship for a few minutes each day leading up to The Mobilization to End Poverty. The topics from each day coincide with certain scriptures and themes you will hear throughout The Mobilization. We pray God will meet you in a very special way through these personal times of worship.

--The Mobilization to End Poverty Worship Team

### **Prayer for The Mobilization to End Poverty**

We invite you to pray this prayer often, united in one voice with other Mobilization attendees, to prepare our hearts for all that will take place during The Mobilization and beyond.



*Dear Lord,*

*We bless you today. We thank you for your love and faithfulness to us.*

*We ask you to break our hearts, Lord, for the things that break your heart. For the 30,000 children who will die today from preventable disease and poverty, break our hearts. For the little girl who will go to bed hungry in a land of such prosperity, break our hearts. For the ways we have allowed race, class, and denominational ties to divide us, break our hearts.*

*Oh Lord, we sense we are standing at the edge of history. We sense you want to send revival to the church and a fresh awakening to our land. We know we are facing unprecedented challenges in our day. But we know you are bigger than these challenges. Forgive us for our complacency and fear, and empower us to be the history makers in our land.*

*We believe this awakening will bring revival to your church and justice for the poor. We believe this awakening will raise up a whole new generation of abolitionists. And we believe this awakening will bring forth a harvest of millions of Your followers who will wholeheartedly commit to ending extreme poverty in our nation and world.*

*Oh God, help us to believe. Help us to prepare. And help us not to miss this movement of your Spirit. In your precious name we pray,  
Amen.*

# Justice as an Act of Worship: Five-Day Devotional

## Day 1

### Social Justice or Biblical Justice



**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-9

*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.*

A worldly understanding of social justice starts and ends with us, but a biblical understanding of justice starts and ends with God’s redeeming love. Isaiah 42 describes a Servant who “will bring justice to the nations.” While social justice may bring necessary equity and fairness to an individual or system, it doesn’t answer the ultimate question of “to whom do we belong?”

Thankfully, God sent Jesus to bring us the justice we did not deserve; namely, rebirth and the forgiveness of sins through his victory over death. God then calls us out to bring justice to others.

Biblical justice is lasting justice because it’s from God, through God, and to God. It all starts and ends with God, but God invites our participation at every stage in between. Biblical justice asks what is right and fair by first capturing a vision of heaven and then working to bring that forth on earth. This vision of heaven happens through worshiping the Just One, Jesus Christ. And as we truly worship we give Christ the opportunity to call us out of our comfort zones to engage a suffering world.

**Meditation:** How can I work toward social justice with a biblical mindset?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for what you have already accomplished on the cross for me. Help me to worship you continually and live in your victory, as I seek to work for your justice in the world.

# Justice as an Act of Worship: Five-Day Devotional

## Day 2

### And the Lord Heard Their Cry



**Scripture:** Exodus 3:7-12

*Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey....*

The Exodus story begins with the suffering of the Israelites at the hands of their Egyptian oppressors. By the time we get to chapter 3, after 400 years of oppression, God is finally ready to act. Why did God wait for more than 400 years to answer the Israelites' prayers for justice?

Perhaps the most honest answer is that we just don't know; yet scripture shows us that God wishes to work through God's creatures. Today's reflection comes explicitly from the call of Moses. Dare we say that Moses was the key ingredient God was waiting for to complete God's plan? That the long period of suffering was one of preparation and waiting? Again, we do not know for sure, but we can draw hope from this account for ourselves. No matter how much suffering and affliction God's children have suffered in the past, we need never despair of God's deliverance. We are at a moment in history when awareness of racial, economic, and gender oppression has rarely been higher. Are we living in a day when God has "seen the misery of his people"? Let us hope so, and let us be ready to approach the pharaohs of the world and challenge them to relieve the suffering of "the least of these."

**Meditation:** How can I apply the story of Exodus to my life? How can I, like Moses, become the key ingredient to God's plan of justice for God's people?

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to trust in you as deliverer and liberator. Give me faith in your timing and in your call to allow you to work through me.

# Justice as an Act of Worship: Five-Day Devotional

## Day 3

### Worship with Our Lives



**Scripture:** Romans 12:1-2

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

We are called to worship with our whole lives – with our whole minds, bodies, and spirits. Paul links this call to worship with a command to avoid conformity with the world. We live out our worship through being radically different than the world around us. Worship is not just about singing, dancing, or praying, though it includes those things. It is about living lives that are transformed.

When our relationship with God is our foundation, every moment becomes an opportunity for worship. There is space in the ordinary for prayer, intentionality, reflection, rejoicing, and praise. When God is our foundation, we develop an attitude that is not of this world. Our faith gives us hope that enables us to worship even in our darkest hours. It is our faith that leads us to rejoice in the blessings of our lives, to see the image of God in each person, and to stand up for justice for those around us.

**Meditation:** In what ways is my life conformed to the pattern of this world? How can I transform the parts of my life that are not filled with worship?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the transformation you have brought about in my life. Help me to live worship with my whole life and to no longer conform to this world.

# Justice as an Act of Worship: Five-Day Devotional

## Day 4

### A New Era: Love has Defeated Death



**Scripture:** *Matthew 28:18-20*

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

The parting words of Jesus in Matthew leave his followers with a vision of the world's beautiful new reality: life in the light of the resurrected Christ.

This life is lived against the background of Christ's willing and innocent death, vindicated by the power, symbol, and beauty of the resurrection. A new era has begun in God's salvation of the world, when all authority has been given to Christ. In this new era, Christ calls his followers to recognize his primacy over the world, and live in the power of the life that conquered death.

Christian discipleship – learning from and following the teacher – must have this dimension. It is the practice of knowing the deepest truth of the new era: that death has lost its sting, that love has been justified as the highest power, and that Christ has already won the victory.

The saying, “to make disciples of all nations,” then, conjures images less of a doctrinal “conversion” as is usually imagined, and more of a growing group that recognizes the primacy of the risen Jesus over the powers and lives in the commitment to loving obedience that characterized his life, death, and teaching. They live in continued spiritual communion with Christ, as he promised, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Meditation:** Do I live truly knowing that “all authority” has been given to Jesus, that death has been defeated, and that evil has no future?

**Prayer:** Jesus, help me to daily remember that love is your tool for change – not politics, violence, or money. Thank you that you are with us always.

# Justice as an Act of Worship: Five-Day Devotional

## Day 5

### A Harvest of Justice, a Shortage of Workers



**Scripture:** Matthew 9:35-38

*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

Jesus spent his ministry on earth doing two primary things: proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand, and healing those in need. He empowered his intimate friends, the disciples, to preach God’s coming reign, and bring God’s healing to the world as well. These disciples were not religious “professionals” and seemed unlikely vessels to share God’s transforming power. We, like the original disciples, are also called and commissioned to proclaim that God’s presence is in us and around us, and that God wants compassion and justice to rule this world.

In our time, like in Christ’s time, those in need of healing and justice are many – immigrants who face discrimination, the homeless who are demonized, victims of war whose communities have been ravaged, and people who face chronic illnesses without health care, among countless others. Sometimes the need can seem overwhelming, and fear, doubt, or burnout can leave us lifeless. But through Christ’s life, we can be inspired to follow the call of Christ – a calling to boldly confront the structures of death and darkness around us, and to reach out to all in need of his love.

**Meditation:** What is Christ’s calling for me? What can I learn from Christ’s ministry on this earth, and how can I apply these lessons to my life and ministry?

**Prayer:** Lord, show me the places in my community ready for a harvest of justice. Make my heart and hands ready to follow you and to bring your love, in word and deed, to the harassed and helpless in our world.