

Whole Gospel Discipleship Cycle

Why Should Christians Care about Justice?

God With Us: Suffering, Compassion & Hope for a Broken World

PHASE 1: See (Cycles 1-3)

CYCLE 1: God's Broken Heart for a Broken World

Supplies Needed: video to watch (suggestions: The Stranger, Waiting for Superman, A Place at the Table, Broken on All Sides, Aaron Huey – Lakota Indian)

Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.
-Bob Pierce, Founder, World Vision

HEAR THE WORD

What breaks God's heart? Let's take a look and watch a video together.

We live in a fallen world in which all must die sooner or later. Heartbreak is inevitable. However, Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru says, "Extreme poverty, oppression, injustice is dying before your time, dying unnecessarily and unjustly." There is heartbreak that is not inevitable, that is both unnecessary and unjust. If we take seriously that God's will is for abundant life for us all, unjust suffering includes the lack of opportunity or resources needed to live up to your potential.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Where do you see unnecessary and unjust suffering in this video?
- 2) What is causing this suffering?
- 3) How did you see people trying to solve the problem and ease the suffering?
- 4) What more do you think could and should be done?
- 5) How have you personally experienced unjust and unnecessary suffering?
- 6) What are other examples of unjust suffering in our world?
- 7) What do you think stops us from doing all that we could?

Jesus' Response: Mark 1:40-44

Context: In Jesus' time, lepers were ceremonially unclean as well as physically repulsive and highly contagious. Touching a leper would put someone at risk of life-threatening disease, social isolation and spiritual exclusion.

- 1) How does Jesus respond to the leper? What motivates him? What does he do? Why?



- 2) The roots of the word compassion are the Latin words “com” (with) and “passio” (feel). When have you needed someone to feel with you? When have you felt with someone else? Of course, not all of us lead with our emotions. Compassion can also be an “attitude of the heart,” a conviction based on the truth of our common connection instead of an emotional reaction. Have you been in situations where you have known that compassion is the right and necessary response?
- 3) What keeps us from having compassion? How can we let the compassion of Christ come to us and through us?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Read the newspaper this week with the compassion and conviction of Christ. Notice how your reactions to the stories are different than usual.

CYCLE 2: Seeing through Jesus' Eyes

Supplies Needed: tea candles

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Matthew 9:35-38

Before Jesus has compassion, this passage tells us that he looks at the crowd. There is something about the way that Jesus sees that evokes his compassion. For us to be compassionate like Jesus, we have to see through his eyes. How does Jesus see?

Exercise in attaining "Jesus Eyesight"

- 1) Jesus sees people who are invisible to the rest of us. Read the story of the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Who is often "invisible" in your community? In our world? Who do you have trouble seeing? Think of the name of a person who you have met or heard about who is easily overlooked and not valued by our society. Write the name on a label and place it on a tea candle. Briefly share with each other the stories of the people whose names are written on the candles.
- 2) Jesus also sees people fully. If we only see someone as a victim, we are not seeing all that they are. Read Hebrews 13:2. The Old Testament prophets always talked about "widows, orphans, and strangers" as the people on the margins who must be intentionally remembered. The Greek word for angel does not only refer to celestial beings but to any divine messenger sent to bring a blessing. The people who we tend to overlook may be "angels," God's messengers sent to bring us a blessing. How could the person whose name is on the candle be bringing a message and blessing to you?
- 3) Jesus sees people as his brothers and sisters. We all come from one heavenly father; we don't have the option to stop being a family. We can either be a dysfunctional family or we can be responsible to and for one another. What would it mean to fully recognize this person as your brother or your sister? What responsibility would this confer on you?
- 4) Jesus sees the "crowd." We see problems and solutions differently if we only see individuals or if we also see the "crowd." If we see one child struggling in school, we tutor her. If we see 300 children struggling in the same school, we begin to ask why the school isn't doing its job. We begin to examine the roots of the problems in our communities and institutions. What "crowd" is this person part of? What is happening to that crowd that is affecting his/her life?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Practice compassion this week by participating as a group in a service project. Go farther, however, than just helping. Arrange with the organization to have one or more of the participants share their story with the group. Reflect on how their experiences are different from yours or similar to yours. List any advantages or assistance that have helped you to get where you are.

CYCLE 3: Invitation to Incarnation

Supplies Needed: plastic wrist band with "The Heart of Jesus" engraved or written on it

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Paul did not invent the concept of the community as a body. Every Roman citizen knew the concept of the Body Politic. However, for Romans, being a member of the body meant having a lifelong and unchangeable identity. A foot was always a foot and could never aspire to be a hand. A hand was always a hand and could never aspire to be an ear. There was a clear hierarchy of value as well. You would lose a foot before you would lose a hand; you would lose a hand before an ear or an eye. Hear how startling Paul's description of the Body of Christ would sound to a Roman. Every part of the body is equally important and they need each other? If any part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts? The parts of the body that are typically considered to be less valuable must be treated with greater honor so that there may be "no dissension" in the body? Revolutionary!

A body that doesn't feel the pain in its hands and feet is a sick body, a body that may have leprosy. (One of the chief symptoms of leprosy is the loss of feeling in the extremities.) Paul's teachings on the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 is directly connected to his teaching about communion in 1 Corinthians 11. When the members of the Body come together and those with plenty of food and drink overdo while others remain hungry, the Body is disrespected and the end result is that some sicken and others even die. Jesus' multiple healing of lepers may have been a sign of his concern for his own body. For a body to be fully alive, it must be fully connected. God's will for us is abundant life (John 10:10). The world only knows that Jesus is come when his Body is united (John 17:21) and we are all more fully alive.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. once said "it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." How diverse is the worship service in the churches that you have experienced? What parts of the Body could you be more connected with (e.g. brothers and sisters of a different race, class, political orientation, denominational background, place of origin, etc.)?
- 2) How would you help the Body to be more connected? What are the biggest barriers in the way? How could those barriers be overcome? Who are the members of the Body who are less valued in your context? In our society and world? What does it look like when the "members" who have been less valued are given greater honor?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Go as a group to visit a Bible study or church service led by brothers and sisters who are less privileged than college students, less "valued" by our broader society. Arrange ahead of time with the leadership to sit down with a small group of members afterwards for a



conversation about injustice in our society. Listen deeply to their perspectives and stories. Journal about the experience and share your insights at the next meeting.

Call to Commitment: Either simply ask the students to pledge to respond to the call of Jesus to see through his eyes and respond with his heart or use the following liturgy:

L: Will you promise to do all that is in your power to see through the eyes of Jesus when you look at the world around you?

All: I will.

L: Will you respond to the call of Jesus to respond with compassion to the needs of others?

All: I will.

L: Will you do all that is in your power to be a part of the Body of Christ, respecting your need for all of the other parts of the Body?

All: I will.

Hand out a plastic wrist band with "The Heart of Jesus" written on it to everyone who has made the commitment. Pray for each other and then invite the group to continue with the next phase of the Justice Discipleship Cycle – Engage.

PHASE 2: Engage (Cycles 4-6)

CYCLE 4: God's Will for the Community

Supplies Needed: blank index cards, large piece of blank paper to serve as a mosaic wall

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Leviticus 25 and Luke 4:16-20

You may have heard that God has a wonderful plan for your life. It's true! However, God's plan for us is even grander than the destiny of every individual; the Lord of the Universe cares about the whole person, in the whole family, in the whole community, in the whole society, in the whole world. Jesus is a world changer. When he first announced his mission in Luke 4, he cast a broad and beautiful vision – the poor would receive good news, the blind would see, the captives would be freed, the oppressed would be liberated and we would all experience the Day of the Lord's Favor. To completely understand Jesus' vision, we have to know that the context of his proclamation was the reading of the Torah (Scripture) passage for the day. The passage that Jesus read was Isaiah 61. However, Jesus changed the passage in two ways. First, he inserted a line from Isaiah 58 about the liberation of the oppressed; and secondly, he omitted the last line giving emphasis to the sentence about the Day of the Lord's Favor. Why? The release of the captives can refer to personal, individual liberation, but the liberation of the oppressed refers to social transformation. Jesus clarifies the kind of social transformation that he is referring to by focusing attention on the Day of the Lord's Favor. The Day of the Lord's Favor was a phrase referring to the Jubilee year, described in Leviticus 25.

What is the Jubilee year? When the people of Israel came to the Promised Land, they divided it evenly among the tribes (except for Levi who was awarded a monetary compensation equal to the worth of his portion of the land). This equal division was rooted in "familia" justice. Just as any good parent cares equally about all of his children, so God did not practice favoritism among the children of Israel, but rather wanted each to have his fair share of the inheritance. However, over time this distribution of the land changed. Some tribes may have produced more; some may have had better land; some may have been more aggressive. When one tribe produced a crop insufficient to feed their children, they had to borrow from their brothers. Then the next year, if they couldn't pay back the loan, they would have to pay in land – which would leave them even less land to produce an adequate crop. Sooner or later, some tribes had lost all of their land and had to sell their labor to pay their debts, falling into slavery in the process. God did not approve of this level of inequality. Every 50 years, God commanded the people of Israel to practice Jubilee – the redistribution of the land, the cancelling of debts and the liberation of slaves. Jesus' lifting up of Jubilee in his first announcement of his mission was a clear communication that social and economic injustice mattered to Jesus. His love for God's children led to his desire that they live in right relationship with each other, ensuring that all members of the "family" had relatively equal opportunities to care for themselves and their children. Jesus had a

dream of community justice that was even more expansive and beautiful than Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream.

The biblical prophets also had beautiful dreams of justice and peace – dreams of shalom (the peace that is about wholeness and harmony, not only the absence of conflict). Dreams and visions of shalom are necessary in order for us to incarnate and practice God's will for the community. Without a dream, the people perish. Dreams can also unite and inspire us across a wide spectrum of differences. When Preside Oscar Arias of Costa Rica was leading the behind-the-scenes peace process in Central America with the leaders of all of the sectors of the war-torn countries, he used an exercise asking them to create a dream wall, writing and sharing their dreams for their country in 20 years. When they saw the similarities in their dreams, the potential for the future came more powerful than the pain of the past, enabling them to move beyond the bitterness and rage that was keeping them from making peace.

Sometimes we have trouble believing that our dreams can come true. That's when it is important to root our dreams in God's dreams, finding the word/promise that assures us that our dreams can be realized.

Dream Exercise: What are your dreams for yourself, your family, your community? Write your dream on one index card. On another index card, write a scripture that describes one of God's dreams for our lives, communities and world – ideally one that could be connected to your dream. Do the dreams of God identified by the group members support your dream? Expand your dream? Where is God challenging you to grow your dreams? Create a dream wall, in which each member of your group shares their dreams and scriptures and then attaches the index cards to the wall, creating a dream mosaic.

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Every time you hear or read about a problem this week that disturbs or angers you, turn that problem into a dream. What would it look like if those problems were not just alleviated but magnificently solved? Keep a record of these problems/dreams and pray daily for the full restoration of these dreams. Share your insights with your group at the next session.

CYCLE 5: Overcoming the Barriers to God's Will for the Community

Supplies Needed: video of "A Force More Powerful – Part 1, Nashville Section",

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read John 8:44

At any place and time, there are deep lies that most people believe which justify the injustice that is done in that place. Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. was the trainer of Christian students who accomplished the desegregation of the city of Nashville during the civil rights movement. Rev. Lawson said that the lie that most people in Nashville believed was that some people were worth more than others. This was the lie that had justified slavery, the belief that some people were made to serve and others to be served. How do we combat that lie with divine truth? Read Genesis 1:27 – the biblical truth is that we are all made in the image of God, equally and infinitely precious. This truth has the power to destroy that lie. The actions that the students carried out were designed to reveal the truth and the lie. The video you are about to see is a documentary of the students' campaign to desegregate Nashville. At the end, you will see the power of the truth used to vanquish the deep lie.

View "A Force More Powerful – Part 1, Nashville Section"

Reflection Questions:

- 1) How did Diane Nash's question help to reveal the lie and the truth so that the Mayor could be awakened and transformed?
- 2) What are the lies that support the injustice in your context? In our broader society and world?
- 3) What are the biblical truths that can vanquish and destroy these lies?
- 4) How might you name the lies and the truths in a way that would change the injustices that surround you?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Option 1: We need to recognize the extent to which our belief in the lies has supported the injustices that surround us – even if we are victims. Read Psalm 22 prayerfully and experience the lament that comes from both suffering the lies that surround us and the injustice that they cause as well as facing our responsibility for maintaining their power. Where does your belief in the lies need to be repented and lamented?

Options 2: Speak to an elder this week – someone who has experienced the struggle for justice in their life. How did they see the exposing and overcoming of lies in the struggle that they were apart of? What was the role of faith and truth in their capacity to survive and overcome? Did they experience and practice lament?

CYCLE 6: Justice in the Process

Supplies Needed: plastic wrist bands with "The Jesus Connection" written or engraved on it

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 6

The early church understood what it meant to be the Body. They knew that they would never be able to make God's dream a reality for a just community if they did not practice "familia" justice among themselves. Acts 2 tells the story of a community in which everyone was treated as vitally important. The early church went even farther though than just practicing concern for all. The "anawim" is the Hebrew word for the people who are at the bottom and on the margins. The "anawim" include the economically poor but may also include other people as well. The early church followed Jesus' example of placing the awawim at the center of their concern. They took the command to give extra value to the normally dishonored parts of the Body very seriously. In Acts 6, the Greek Jews complained because their widows were receiving less in the daily distribution of food. The Apostles (who were all Hebrew Jews – a higher status group) could have denied the legitimacy of their request or they could have taken steps to be more generous and ensure greater equality. Those would have been the typical modern approaches to the problem. Instead, they formed a special committee called the Deacons to decide all the distribution of the food – to Greek and Hebrew widows. The startling part of this story is that all the Deacons have Greek last names. The Apostles have surrendered the power to the leaders of the less powerful group. This led to one of the Deacon's becoming a leader of such spiritual power (Stephan) that his preaching led to the first martyrdom.

True peace and reconciliation requires justice, the real shifting of power. How do you know if power has shifted in your community? The following discussion questions may give you some clues.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Think about the communities, Christian and secular, that you participate in most regularly. Where would you fit in the story? Are you more like the Hebrew Jews or the Hellenists? Do you need to step up or step back?
- 2) In those communities, who typically makes the decisions? Do most of them share common racial/ethnic/gender/class characteristics? How could you share that power and responsibility more fully?
- 3) When are people brought into the decision-making process? Are the people who make the first decisions from a relatively homogeneous group? How could you bring in the others earlier on?
- 4) Who talks in the group discussions? If you were clocking air time, who would amass the most? What would it take to change that?
- 5) How deep do the relationships go across the lines? How many really close friends do you have that come from social groups that are different from you? How could that change?

- 6) Have you experienced the daily lives of people in your community who are different from you? Have you walked with them in moments of pain, struggle, injustice, joy? How could that happen?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Eat a meal with a Christian brother or sister who is very different from you – in a place that is more comfortable for them than for you. In the context of that meal, take the time to have a deep conversation with them about the way that God has worked in each of your lives to move you to participate in his kingdom work. You can use the following list of questions to help you both articulate these deep motivations, the flames that the Holy Spirit has lit and fanned in our hearts. Set aside about an hour for your time together, in a place where you can really listen. In the process, notice how truly understanding another person's heart creates compassion and connection.

Questions to Ask:

- 1) Whose pain moves you most? Sometimes it is our own pain that propels us forward. Other times, someone else's pain actually touches us more deeply, moving us to action.
- 2) What makes your heart sing? In several African countries, pregnant women go to the wilderness to sit beneath the singing tree and discern the song of the baby to be born. The other women sing that song during the birth. Every person learns their song, singing it in times of trial or triumph. When the person is dying, the whole community sings their song. If the person commits a crime, they are placed in the center of the community and everyone sings their song to remind them of who they are. Throughout our lives, there are places, people and activities that make our hearts sing, that give us joy. What have those been for you?
- 3) What is the intersection between that which gives you joy and helping others or making a difference in the world? Rev. Frederick Buechner says that vocation is the intersection between "the world's deep hunger and our own deep gladness." Where are those intersections in your life?
- 4) What do you hope for? (for you, for your family and for the larger society)
- 5) Have you received a spiritual legacy? Our society tends to see us as merely individuals, but Biblical societies had a more collective perspective. We are not just individuals. For many of us, there was an elder that passed us a torch, inspiring us to carry on important work. Sometimes that torch was not personally and directly passed but rather as inspiration at a distance. Sometimes, there is a "negative legacy" – we are committed to be different than an elder who fails us. Are you carrying a legacy?

Call to Commitment: Ask the group members to pledge to imitate and follow Jesus in his engagement with the world. Hand out another plastic wrist band with the words "The Jesus Connection" written on it. Pray for each other. Invite the group to enter into the final phase of the Discipleship Cycles – Be Equipped to Act.

PHASE 3: Be Equipped to Act (Cycles 7-10)

CYCLE 7: Seeking the Peace of the City

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Jeremiah 29:7

Our natural impulse is to focus on the well-being of ourselves and our loved ones. We then assure ourselves that if we are doing well that our community will benefit. The prophet Jeremiah doesn't see it that way. He says that if we seek the peace and well-being of our community or society, that we and our loved ones will experience peace and well-being. In Matthew 9:35-36, Jesus did not see into the heart of individuals; he saw the "crowds." We see the problems and solutions differently when we merely see individuals or we also see the crowds. When we see one little girl who is struggling in school, we naturally move to tutor her. When we see 100 children struggling in the same school, we begin to ask why the school is not doing its job well – and what we can do about it.

How do we seek the peace and well-being of our communities? Most churches do "direct service" for those in need, giving out food or clothing, providing assistance. However, as we read in Luke 19:11-27, stewardship demands that we do more. We have to use all the gifts we have for God's kingdom – not burying any of our gifts in the ground.

When Jesus had compassion for the crowds, he responded by giving his life. He gave all he had; he held nothing back. It is not enough to love with our hearts; we have to love with our minds as well. We have to love as intelligently and effectively as we can. It is love that makes us "give a fish" to a hungry person. It may be more intelligent or effective love to "teach that person to fish." It may be even more intelligent or effective to set up a "fishing cooperative" which can provide ongoing opportunities to fish to the whole community. Christian community development means practicing the most intelligent and effective strategies for contributing to the well-being of the community as part of our ministries.

Here's a few examples:

Direct Service

Soup Kitchen
Tutoring
Job Training
Shelter
Parish Nurse

Community Development

Community Garden
Charter School
Cooperative Business or Small Business Incubator
Developing more affordable housing
Community Health Clinic

The first step in moving from direct service to community development is often to practice “justice in the process” by recognizing the potential contributions that the recipients can offer to the project. Families in need of food can volunteer for the food bank, distributing food as well as participating in a committee to figure out how to go beyond a food bank and start a community garden.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What do you think it means in your context to seek the shalom of the city?
- 2) What experiences have you had of direct service? Community development?
- 3) As you think of the direct service project that you have experienced, how could you imagine engaging recipients of direct service as volunteer leaders in expanding the project to include community development?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Visit a community development project, ideally a Christian community development project, in your area. Interview the staff and, if possible, one of the participants who has benefitted from the project.

CYCLE 8: Taking the Wall Down around the Fish Pond – Biblically-based Public Policy Advocacy (Wise as Serpents and Innocent as Doves)

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Matthew 10:16

When you have “taught someone to fish” and they take their fishing pole down to the pond, they can find that there is a wall around the pond – and then knowing how to fish is not enough to feed their family. In that case, intelligent and effective love might require taking down the wall. Sometimes in the midst of community development, we hit a wall. For example, you might find that some of the best graduates from your charter school can’t go to college because they were brought to this country as babies from another country and they don’t have legal status. Or you find that the small business that emerge from your incubator can’t get loans because the small business owners are ex-offenders or because banks have decided not to make loans in the low-income area that they live in.

These barriers can often be removed by changing “public decisions.” Private decisions affect the person making the decision and their immediate circle. A public decision affects a large number of people. Public decisions create laws and policies that can affect who is allowed to become a legal immigrant or the conditions under which the banks can operate. A democracy is a system where everyone has the right to participate in the process of public decision-making. Even in people don’t have the vote, they can affect public decisions through their voice. In a democracy, we can all influence our legislative representatives to make decisions that benefit our communities. In fact, a democracy doesn’t work if the people don’t participate! How are we stewarding the gifts of

democracy? Are we using them for the benefit of our community or are we burying them in the ground? Advocacy is the process of influencing our representatives. Biblically-based advocacy means calling our leaders to do what God has called them to do, to fulfill the divine purpose of government. Read Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14 to get a picture of God’s calling for our public decision-makers.

Read Luke 18:1-8

This parable tells the story of a widow who has experienced injustice and needs a public decision-maker to set things right. Widows are not often powerful people in their societies. If a widow who has experienced injustice knows that the only authority who can give her justice neither fears God or respects people, her logical course of action would be to give up. However, Jesus holds up the widow in this parable as an example of faith because she believes so deeply that God will give her justice that she attempts to influence the decision of the unjust judge even though it is highly unlikely that he will change. In fact, he doesn’t change! He gives her justice because her constant, faithful seeking of justice begins to annoy him so much that it’s more trouble to not respond than to respond. He responds to a critical mass of pressure.

When we have the wisdom of a serpent, we see that people are sinners and that it is unlikely that people in power will make just decisions. It is more likely that they will pursue their narrow self-interest and abuse their power. However, we can see that a critical mass of pressure may help them to make fairer decisions which benefit the whole community.

However, to have the innocence of a dove means that you trust that "serpent vision" doesn't see everything. We know that the Holy Spirit, the source of "dove power", is alive and active, working in all situations. When we go to a public decision-maker seeking justice, the Holy Spirit is working on them to move them to make a decision that pleases God. Everyone made in God's image is capable of amazing and unexpected acts of sacrificial love and moral courage.

Read 2 Samuel 22:1-13

King David was a leader who feared God and respected people. However, at one point in his life, he fell into a graven sin, committing adultery and arranging for the murder of the husband of his lover (who was also his chief military general). Like the widow, the prophet Nathan comes before David to call him to be a just leader. However, instead of applying a critical mass of pressure, Nathan uses creative storytelling to evoke David's own sense of justice and to awaken his conscience. David repents. To exercise "dove power" is to minister to a public decision-maker, inspiring them to obey God in their decisions and actions.

Exercising "dove power" includes:

- Praying as fervently for our public leaders as we would pray for a sick friend
- Praying with and over our public leaders
- Encouraging our public leaders (enabling them to overcome fear with faith so that they can make decisions which require moral courage)
- Carrying out prophetic tasks of re-remembering the poor (enabling leaders to realize that our common well-being is linked to that of the marginalized), casting a vision (turning problems into dreams and identifying common dreams), exposing and combatting deep lies with divine truth and speaking to both sides of the brain (using stories and symbols that communicate powerfully—such as Nathan's story before David, Jesus' use of foot-washing to teach servanthood or Jeremiah's breaking of a pot to communicate God's wrath)

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Who are the decision-makers on your campus? Do you think that they have made some decisions that are not as fair as they could be and/or do not promote justice as much as they could?
- 2) Do you know of any campaigns to advocate for authorities on your campus to make more just decisions?
- 3) How might you contribute serpent wisdom and dove power to these campaigns?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Attend an activity organized by an advocacy group. Notice the strategies that they are using to create change. How are they wise as serpents and/or innocents as doves? How could you imagine contributing your unique gifts as a Christian to this campaign?

CYCLE 9: Finding Your Calling

Supplies Needed: large picture of a body outline

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Ephesians 4:1-10

Every Christian has spiritual gifts. These gifts are not created merely to enable individual Christians to fulfill their mission to the world. They are also for the purpose of the upbuilding of the Body of Christ. We are meant to work as a team in carrying out our Lord's full mission of individual and social transformation.

Paul's list of spiritual gifts was not meant to be complete and closed. Music isn't mentioned – but music is clearly a gift that contributes to God's mission and builds up the Body. In the same way, the gift of "justice" is not explicitly mentioned but it can also help enable the Body to carry out the fullness of our mission. Paul talked about his gift of evangelism as an experience of inner compulsion, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel." Spiritual gifts are often experienced in this way, as an inner drive that makes us want to pour ourselves into the activity that embodies the gift. We may say that someone has the gift of injustice when that person carries the pain of those who experience injustice in their own body – even if they don't have a personal relationship with the victim – and when they cannot rest until justice is done.

Gifts, however, can easily become idols – when we judge others for not sharing our level of passion and commitment. Instead, the experience/expertise of the person with the spiritual gift should enable them to inspire and guide others to participate in small ways which add up to a full spiritual life. The purpose of the gift of music is to inspire everyone to make a joyful noise in the church, not so that everyone becomes a musician. The purpose of the gift of justice is to inspire the whole church to participate in the transformation of the community, not to turn everyone into full-time organizers and advocates. When the members who do not have the gift of justice participate in a justice activity, they bring their own gifts along. The musician sings at the public action; the prayer warrior sits quietly in the meeting with the legislator and prays for a just outcome; the evangelist looks for ways that the demonstration of the love of Christ and the proclamation of that love can go hand in hand.

Body of Christ Exercise:

One way to understand how your spiritual gifts can be used as a coordinated team is for the leader to draw a big picture of a body and for the members of the group to each write their initials on two parts of the body that they identify as (e.g. some people will be ears and hearts; others may be brains and mouths). Each member of the group shares why they chose those two body parts. The leader can then help the group to imagine how each of the members might use their gifts in the context of a common activity such as a meeting with a public decision-maker on campus.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Do you have the spiritual gift of justice? If so, how could you develop and utilize that gift? If not, how can your spiritual gifts be best used in the mission of justice?
- 4) Jesus never called for general volunteers. He called people by name. Sometimes there are specific issues that move us more than others. Rev. Frederick Buechner says that "vocation is where the world's deep hunger and your own deep gladness meet." Are there particular issues that call your name? Issues that would give you a sense of joy and satisfaction to take on?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Life Journey Map: Do a simple drawing of the history of your life with words or symbols at key moments where God has met you. List also all the ways that God has been preparing you to serve and transform the world – every skills, capacity or connections that you have gained.

Community Walk: A community walk is a tool for discovering opportunities to identify the way that the Holy Spirit is working for justice in your community through many of its members. A community walk involves quietly walking through your neighborhood and noticing needs, assets and opportunities. Try a community walk around your neighborhood and/or campus. Where do you see things that break God's heart? Where do you see beauty and goodness? Where do you see the Holy Spirit moving through people to create healing, reconciliation, new life – shalom?

CYCLE 10: Kairos Moment

Supplies Needed:

DEBRIEF

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Direct the group to share the insights that have come to them during the week as a result of the Respond Actively assignment. Pray for each other.

HEAR THE WORD

Read Esther 4

The book of Esther is the story of a young Jewish woman who saves the Jewish people by risking her life to convince her husband (a pagan king) to change an edict which would have led to their slaughter. Esther's uncle Mordecai, a man of deep faith, reminds her in this passage that she might have come to her position just for the purpose of taking a specific action at a specific moment.

There are two words for time in New Testament Greek, Chronos (meaning chronological time) and Kairos (meaning a time when God intervened in human history). The civil rights movement took a leap forward at a particular moment when Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus. If you had been in Montgomery, Alabama at the time and had not joined the bus boycott that followed her arrest, you would have missed a Kairos opportunity to participate in bringing God's justice to a community contaminated by the injustice of segregation.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Do you see any issues on your campus or in your community where there might be an opportunity for a Kairos moment?
- 2) What do you imagine that your chapter might do to respond to this opportunity in a way that is faithful to the Word of God, incarnates the love of God, uses all the lessons that you have learned in these whole gospel discipleship cycles, and helps you to give the testimony of being salt and light on your campus?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

- Invite an expert(s) on one or more of these issues to speak to your chapter to learn the background and context of current needs and opportunities. Include Christian leader(s) who can give the biblical basis which should guide our response.
- Interview leaders of projects/campaigns dealing with these issues to explore collaboration possibilities.
- What is that Esther moment for you? Will you say yes? How will you plan to engage in ongoing action that transforms the world – as individuals and as a group? If your chapter or broader InterVarsity organization has not participated in the Justice Discipleship Cycles, are there ways you could lead a group through Phase 1?

Call to Commitment: Ask the students to pledge to become world-changers. Hand out a plastic wrist band with "Jesus Transforms the World" written on it. Pray for each other, your campus, your community and the world.