

# 5

## Justice

### *Isaiah 61*

I once had an opportunity to visit a small urban courtroom where my cousin, a prosecutor, was at work. The hearing involved a man who had been convicted of manslaughter (killing someone without premeditation) ten years before. He had been sent to prison. As a part of his sentence, he had been ordered to pay restitution of \$10,000 to the estate. Monthly payments were set at an amount the defendant could reasonably afford, given his income and expenses. Now the ten-year repayment period was up. The law said that his debt could be forgiven. And the court session upheld that. Yet he hadn't fulfilled his obligation because he hadn't paid off the full \$10,000.

Although we don't know who was killed or who was left behind, we can assume the family of the deceased person had suffered both emotionally and financially. Was this decision justice for the family? We know that the defendant was twenty at the time he committed the crime. In addition to serving time, he made the payments that were set for him over all those ten years. Was the decision justice for the defendant?

GROUP DISCUSSION. What do you think justice means for each of the parties in the opening story?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. When have you struggled over whether justice was being done?

Justice can be a fuzzy issue for us, as it was for Israel. Time and again the prophets reminded the people that an inner attitude of righteousness is not enough. It must show in our lives; we must also be people of just action. *Read Isaiah 61.*

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**1.** In verses 1-3 the prophet describes his call to serve. What groups are listed, and in what way do they need justice?

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**2.** What common elements do you see among these groups?

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**3.** What current situations do you know of that fit these categories of need?

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**4.** How would meeting these needs for others be a sign of God's work in you (v. 3)?

**5.** Because Israel sinned and turned away from God, God allowed them to be conquered. How might verses 4-9 be a source of joy to them?

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**6.** Notice the contrast in verse 8 between what the Lord loves and hates. What do this verse and verses 1-3 tell you about God's concerns?

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**7.** In verses 10- 11 the ruler describes God's work in him. What is God doing for him?

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**8.** Compare the actions we are called to in verses 1-3 with the physical appearance of the ruler in verse 10. What is the relationship between right actions (justice) and being a righteous person?

9. Jesus applied Isaiah 61:1-2 to himself (Luke 4:16-21). How does he also fulfill the promise of verse 11?

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10. What keeps you from pursuing justice?

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11. How can this passage be an encouragement to you?

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12. What actions can you take to bring justice to the needy?

*Pray about the injustice you see around you and around the world. Ask God to teach you how he views justice.*

**Now or Later**

Read a good book to deepen your understanding of biblical justice. One suggestion is *Good News About Injustice* by Gary Haugen (IVP).