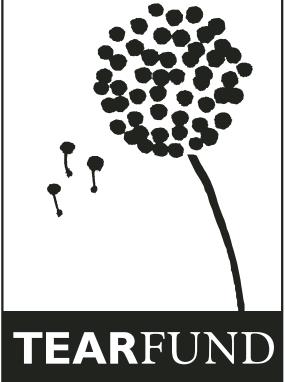


Seeking justice for all

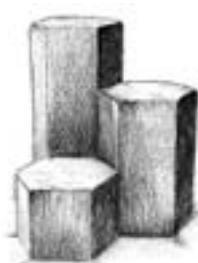


A PILLARS Guide

by Isabel Carter, Ruth Alvarado and Alfonso Wieland



Partnership In Local LAnguage ResourceS



Seeking justice for all

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by Isabel Carter, Ruth Alvarado and Alfonso Wieland

Illustration: Rod Mill

Design: Wingfinger

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ISBN 978 1 904364 67 2

Published by Tearfund. A company limited by guarantee.

Regd in England No 994339. Registered Charity No 265464.

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency
working through local partners to bring help and hope to
communities in need around the world.

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Special thanks to Victoria Wakefield, Shaha B Gurung,
Gil Barraza, Christine Kilimwapundi, Paul Cook, Mari Griffith,
Sara Shaw, Mandy Marshall, Dewi Hughes, Sheila Melot,
Rachel Blackman, Tulo Raistick and Simon Larkin for their
help and support in making this Guide as accurate and useful
as possible.

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Seeking justice for all

A PILLARS Guide

Introduction to this PILLARS Guide

Justice is one of God's characteristics. He cares deeply about the life of every individual. We read of this concern throughout the Bible and of how God sent his son Jesus to bring justice. As Christians we need to share this passion for justice. God's laws are unchanging. They are intended to ensure freedom and justice for each person – whatever their culture or situation. Churches need to share God's concern for the poor and the oppressed. This Guide begins with an understanding of biblical teaching and our calling to challenge injustice, particularly when it affects people who are poor and vulnerable.

As Christians we should be motivated by love rather than the law. We are called to actively seek justice and uphold other people's rights while at the same time we may be called to accept injustice against ourselves. This Guide seeks to help people to learn about their human rights and to discuss ways of promoting them in different local situations. Each topic includes Bible references that help us to understand God's compassion and passion for justice. Human laws are rarely perfect – they continue to be changed and improved. This Guide can help us understand how to challenge unjust laws, to become familiar with our human rights and to promote and defend the rights of others.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

After the atrocities of the Second World War, particularly the deaths of six million Jews in prison camps, the world's governments wanted to ensure these could not be repeated. They agreed that each person has rights that should always be respected and responsibilities towards others. These rights and responsibilities were set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and proclaimed by the United Nations (UN) on 10 December 1948. Governments promised that they would tell their citizens about these rights and seek to protect and promote them.

This Declaration has since been called the world's best kept secret. Few people know what it contains and even fewer people have seen a copy. Governments have not only failed to distribute the Declaration, some have even argued that it is not relevant to their country, culture or political situation.

Since then many other agreements have been made concerning human rights but this Declaration remains the standard reference on human rights. However, despite all these agreements, half of the world's countries still imprison people solely because of their religious, political or social beliefs, or their race, gender or ethnic origin, and a third of the world's governments torture their prisoners.

Agreements about human rights provide a basis for ordinary people to hold governments accountable for the way they treat people and to support the work of the thousands of human rights defenders around the world. The UN Universal Declaration and other

documents can be used as a basis for challenging policy-makers and for lobbying governments to ensure that laws benefit the poor. They can be used as a basis for legal challenges when people's human rights have been ignored.

Some situations can be transformed by community action. Some will require advocacy to encourage change to national law and policy. Some situations are so enormous that international advocacy action and co-ordination is required. The discussion questions try to bring out these different levels. This Guide presents a number of common situations of injustice based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There may be many others of local relevance.

Objectives

- To increase understanding of God's heart for justice through Bible study, reflection and discussion
- To increase the awareness of church and community leaders of their capacity to encourage a positive community response to injustice
- To develop an understanding of human rights and the content of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- For church and community group members to gain helpful understanding of the processes of advocating for human rights on behalf of, or with, those who suffer from injustice
- For church and community group members to gain confidence in standing up against corruption and the abuse of power.

Anticipated outcomes

- Church leaders teaching members and others about God's heart for justice
- Church and community leaders developing a positive community response to issues of injustices in their local, regional and national area
- Church and community leaders facilitating groups to work together to raise the issue of human rights abuses in their communities with the authorities
- Church and community group members practising advocacy on behalf of those in their communities who have suffered injustice
- Church and community group members gaining confidence in speaking out and taking action to fight corruption and the abuse of power.

Using PILLARS Guides with small groups

Welcome to PILLARS, particularly if this is the first time you have used a PILLARS Guide. Unlike most books, this is not designed to be simply read through. The full benefits and learning from this book will come only through discussing and learning from the content in small groups, using just one topic at a time. Here are some useful ideas to help you get the most out of this Guide.

Who would benefit from this learning?

Ideally any small group of people who meet regularly together. This could be a youth group, church group, women's group, farmers' group or literacy group. Between 6 to 12 people in a group is ideal. In larger groups many people will not join in the discussion so it would be better to divide people into smaller discussion groups. If you are not part of an existing group, invite a small group of friends or colleagues to use the Guide together.

Who should lead our group?

A trained leader is not required to lead the discussion. All that is needed is a group member who can read and who can facilitate discussion. This person, known as a facilitator, should not be someone who likes to provide answers and directions. It should be someone who is interested in hearing other people's views and opinions and who can help keep a balanced discussion going.

What preparation does a facilitator need?

They should read through the whole guide a couple of times so they are familiar with all the topics and Bible studies. They may decide that a couple of topics are not relevant and miss them out. They may want to use the topics in a different order – though their order is carefully planned. They should do the following:

- **INTRODUCE THE TOPIC** so group members see its relevance. How does it relate to their experiences? Would it be helpful to begin with a Bible study? Group studies on related topics can be found in the back of the book, in *Guide our Steps* (see www.tearfund.org/tilz), and in *Footsteps* issues.
- **SHARE THE INFORMATION** This can simply be read out, or it can be re-worded to help people understand. Another idea would be to ask a few members to prepare a simple role-play that shows the problem or raises key issues.
- **LEAD THE DISCUSSION** Allow enough time for people to discuss each question fully. Sometimes they may need a little help to get going. Remember, this is the key way in which learning will take place as people consider how to manage change together.
- **DRAW THE MEETING TO A CONCLUSION** Summarise the learning and anything that people may do differently as a result of the learning. Are there any activities or responses the group want to make following the discussion? If so, agree on how to take these forward.

Facilitation skills

There are several tips which can help people improve their skills as facilitators:

- Be sensitive and listen carefully to what people are saying.
- Draw out the views of all group members, especially those who lack confidence in speaking out.
- Don't let the discussion get side-tracked by other issues or personal arguments. If this happens draw it back together again.
- Summarise a lengthy discussion to help people stay focused.
- At the end of the discussion time, make sure the group records any decisions that are reached or plans that are made.
- If there is one (sometimes more) very dominant person in the group who either does most of the talking or prevents others from expressing different views, you may need to take action. Here are some ideas:
 - discuss your concerns with the individual and ask for their help in encouraging others to speak.
 - suggest the individual joins a different group where their skills are more useful.
 - give the individual a role of responsibility during the meeting which ensures they miss most of the discussion (making arrangements for practical action?)
 - appoint someone to help as an additional facilitator and split the group during discussion.

Use energisers to keep the group relaxed and awake

Tearfund has published a workbook on facilitation skills. It provides training material for people who plan to use PILLARS Guides in their local communities. It seeks to improve the skills of participants so that they are equipped to lead discussions which encourage the sharing of local knowledge, experience and information. The training uses participatory methods and role-play.

Translating PILLARS

PILLARS Guides are designed so that they can be easily translated into national or local languages. The Guides have so far been produced in over 30 languages around the world. There is a workbook available, which gives guidance for organisations wanting to hold a series of translation workshops and a CD Rom with all the design files and alternative images.

Before considering translation, check the list of languages on the tilz website under 'other languages' to make sure there are none already available in your language.

Using PILLARS for workshops

Each PILLARS guide can be used as the basis for a participatory workshop. Each day could begin with a Bible study. Group work discussing different topics could be combined with practical sessions, practice in using role-play to introduce topics, learning about how to translate topics, using the ideas and illustrations for posters or leaflets and a field visit to share learning with a community group.

Glossary of difficult words

abuse	causing physical, mental, verbal or sexual harm to a person
accusation	a statement that someone has done something wrong
advocacy	seeking with, and on behalf of, poor people to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development through influencing the policies and practices of the powerful
allegation	an accusation, usually without evidence
asylum	a place of refuge and safety from persecution
atrocity	act of extreme wickedness, usually involving violence
boycott	the refusal to have anything to do with a particular organisation or its products, as a means of protest against it and in order to persuade it to change its policies
bribery	the deliberate giving of a sum of money or other gift to influence someone else's behaviour
caste	the social class and rank or position of somebody in a society, which is based on birth, or occupation
citizen	a person who belongs to a country or state
condemns	forces someone to experience something bad
consequences	the results of an action
constitution	a written statement outlining the basic laws or principles by which a country or organisation is governed
corruption	dishonest practices, like offering or accepting bribes or altering records, usually for financial gain
discrimination	to treat a particular group of people differently, usually for the worse, for example because of their race, sex or ethnic group
enforced	put into practice, not given a choice
entitled	having the right to something
environment	natural world that surrounds us
equivalent	something that is the same, or equal
ethnic (origin)	belonging to a group in society with a shared identity, history, culture and traditional home land
exploit	to take unfair advantage of people or resources for personal gain
female genital mutilation	a harmful traditional practice where flesh is cut away from the female sexual organs
human rights	the basic rights and freedoms that all human beings should have
independent (court)	not controlled by politics or money and able to decide freely

indigenous	belonging to the local area, ethnic group
inheritance	goods, money and property that a person receives from someone who has died
injustice	unfair treatment, abuse of power
interpretation	the way something is understood and used in practice
jubilee	biblical tradition of cancelling debts every 50 years
justice	fair treatment, good use of power
lawyer	a person who is professionally trained in law, whose work is to speak on behalf of people in the law courts
legal aid	legal help given free of charge to people who cannot afford to pay for lawyers
oppression	harsh or cruel treatment of the powerless by the powerful
orphans	children whose parent or parents have died
participation / participate	involvement in something / to be involved actively
prisoners of conscience	people who are sent to prison because of their political, religious or social views
reconciliation	the bringing together of people or organisations that have been in conflict, and resolving that conflict
redistribution	sharing out resources more fairly
repercussions	negative results of an action
righteousness	being in right relationship with God, other people and the creation
rights-based approach	a participatory and empowering method of development, which seeks to hold institutions and powerful people accountable for their responsibilities to those with less power
sexual exploitation	to take unfair advantage of someone for sexual purposes
significance	the importance or meaning of something
social justice	fair treatment for the community
stewardship	the responsibility to look after something
torture	deliberately and methodically causing pain to someone
universal	applying to all people
UN convention	a treaty that has been agreed and signed by member countries in the United Nations
unwittingly	without realising
vulnerable	at risk of harm
widows	women whose husbands have died
(legal) witness	someone who speaks in court about their experience of the person or event

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God's vision for our society

For very many people in our world today, life is very difficult. They may have problems in their family lives, with lack of money, food, work or housing. Poor health may be a concern. They may have lost loved ones. They may be living in fear of abuse or violence. They may have lost their homes as a result of conflict, disaster or famine.

It is helpful to remind ourselves that however difficult life may be now, God has a perfect plan for our world. We read in Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21 that God has planned a new earth and a new heaven where Jesus will live with his people as our King. He will bring comfort for the sad, healing of pain and an end to death and mourning. There will be no place in this new earth for those motivated by evil. It will be a place of wonderful beauty. There will be no need for people to build churches to worship God in, as his presence will be everywhere.

What a wonderful vision to encourage us today, whatever our situation!



Discussion

R1

- **Read Isaiah 65:17-25.** This is how God would like things to be now, if everyone was responsive to his will. What will happen to this present world with all its difficulties (verse 17)?
- What are the first concerns of God mentioned in verses 19 and 20? Consider our own lives now. Would these be your first concerns too?
- Verses 21 and 22 describe a situation where each person will have their own home and their own land. No-one will be exploited in working for others. What difference would this make in our own situation? How would this change life?
- What kind of stability is described in verses 23-25?
- **Read Revelation 21:1-4 and 21:22-27.** What else do these passages add to the verses in Isaiah 65?
- Reflect on these wonderful pictures and pray for their fulfilment when Christ returns. Contrast our present situation. Is there anything we could do to play a part in bringing some of this to fulfilment in the lives of those around us?

What is our reality?

When we look around our world, we see many people who are suffering. People may suffer from different kinds of injustice in their work (or in their lack of work), in their living conditions, in their access to education or healthcare, or for political reasons. People who are poor tend to suffer much more from the results of injustice.

For example, in our world:

- 800 million people (12% of the world's population) do not have enough to eat
- 1.1 billion people (17% of the world's population) lack access to safe water
- 2.6 billion people (39% of the world's population) are without basic sanitation
- Over 10 million children under 5 die each year from preventable diseases.

These figures represent great suffering for those involved. Sometimes it is hard to know what we can do to change so many difficult situations. However, God wants his church to be active in bringing justice to those who are poor or oppressed.



Discussion

R2

- Consider our own community. What people are suffering most? Are their difficulties a result of people misusing power in our community? What are the most important kinds of injustice in our community?
- **Read Jeremiah 2:7-9.** The prophet Jeremiah is looking back on what had gone wrong since the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Who were the four groups he blamed for what was going wrong? Can we identify similar groups today?
- What is the church doing to challenge injustice?
- What is the government doing to challenge injustice?
- What are we doing to challenge injustice in our community?
- What am I doing to challenge injustice?

What does it mean to bring justice?

God has a passion for justice. We read about this in many parts of the Bible. He cares deeply about the suffering of people who are poor. God's commandments, given in the Old Testament, are intended to bring freedom for all people.

Jesus simplified many of the Old Testament laws, summarising them in two commandments that sum up all of his teaching in Matthew 22:35-40. He tells us to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds and to love others as we love ourselves. Loving other people as we love ourselves does not just mean thinking good thoughts. It means ensuring they are able to live fulfilling lives, free from oppression. We should seek justice for others so that they can live life in all its fullness as God intended.

Poverty and oppression take away people's dignity. Only when people have access to the natural, economic and political resources they need, will people be able to live with dignity, and begin to establish good relationships with each other and with their natural environment.



Discussion

R3

- **Read Luke 4:18-21.** Jesus read this prophetic passage from Isaiah 61:1-2 before he began his public ministry. How much did his life reflect this prophecy?
- Jesus commands us to follow his example. How much do our lives and our work reflect this amazing example?
- Who are the prisoners in our society? Who are the blind? Who are the oppressed? What would the Lord's favour bring?
- What steps could we take to bring good news, freedom, healing and release to those whose human rights are not being met?
- What is our government doing to help those whose human rights are not being met?

How does God practise justice?

In the Old Testament in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, God established detailed laws to ensure fair practice and justice concerning property and freedom. He knew that, over time, people would probably exploit each other and the land, but he established laws to ensure that things would be restored at certain times to their original state. These laws ensured that people who were poor or slaves had the hope of future justice.

These laws are based on the principle of the Jubilee. They prevent land from becoming exhausted and infertile. They give freedom from debt and slavery every seven years and ensure the redistribution of wealth and land every 50 years (every generation). These laws are explained in three different books of the Old Testament. We don't know to what extent the principle of the Jubilee was practised in Old Testament times. However, these principles, of preventing the rich from becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer, remain at the heart of God's desire for justice.



Discussion

R4

- **Read Exodus 23:10-11, Exodus 21:2-6, Deuteronomy 15:1-18 and Leviticus 25:1-55.** These laws look at several different things: the freeing of slaves, care of the land, the forgiveness of debts and the redistribution of property and land. What would be the consequences if the Jubilee laws were still in use today?
- What can we learn from the Jubilee laws about God's plan?
- Do our national laws try to ensure that wealth is distributed more fairly in our country? How effective are the laws concerning this (for example, paying taxes)?

Our response to God's desire for justice

God's passion and plan for justice should be shared by us. As Christians we need to respond – not just to human laws, but above all to God's laws and commands to us. God is moved by compassion towards all those who suffer and we are called to respond in the same way.

We have an obligation to care for our families, both our immediate family and our wider family. Again this is based on biblical teaching (such as Ruth and Esther). This is also a strong cultural commitment in many societies.

Our approach must be to seek justice and human rights for others, rather than for ourselves. We may be called to accept injustice against ourselves while at the same time actively seeking justice and upholding other people's rights.



Discussion

R5

- **Read Ruth 1:22 to 2:23.** Naomi was an example of a caring mother who wanted the best for her family. When her husband and sons died while the family was living in a foreign country, she tried to persuade her daughters-in-law to return to their families and re-marry. However, Ruth refused to leave her. Boaz was related to the family of Naomi's dead husband. What did he do in response to Ruth's needs?
- Boaz was a wealthy relative who was responsible for the good of his immediate and wider family. Naomi knew that his first response was a limited response to their needs. How is our response often very limited when faced with examples of need or injustice?
- **Read Ruth 3:1-18.** Why do you think Naomi told Ruth to lie at the feet of Boaz, rather than to approach Boaz herself during the day for help? He could have told Ruth to leave or taken advantage of her. What was his response instead?
- **Read Ruth 4:1-22.** This chapter describes the '*Go'el*', the traditional practice of caring for the family and property of close relatives who die. Ruth apparently has a closer relative so Boaz meets him. What was his response in verses 2-4? Why did he say yes? Why does he change his mind in verses 5-8?
- What were the consequences of Naomi's persistence in seeking to restore her family inheritance? How does this story encourage us?
- Does the traditional practice of the '*Go'el*' continue in our society today in some form? If it does, what are the benefits? Are there any disadvantages?

The misuse of power

Most situations today where people suffer injustice, and are not allowed to live with dignity, are the result of power being used for the wrong reasons. People who are given power and authority have special demands placed upon them to use their power for the benefit of others. However, power can be used poorly or abused – either through lack of care, corruption or for personal gain. Injustice can occur when those with power neglect to carry out their responsibilities, or force others to act in certain ways.

People who are poor often feel completely without power. Yet each person can have some influence. By working together, that influence increases. People who

are poor and who suffer injustice need to be supported in gaining confidence to challenge the misuse of power. In doing so, they will gain some power and influence.

Seeking justice is a slow, often painstaking process. Sometimes it can be almost impossible within countries where deception and corruption are common. But no suffering goes unnoticed by God.



Discussion

R6

- **Read 1 Kings 21:1-16.** This is the story of Naboth's vineyard and of how power was misused with terrible consequences. Why did King Ahab want Naboth's vineyard? Why did Naboth not want to sell the vineyard?
- Why did Jezebel go to such trouble with her plans to kill Naboth? Was it legal? Was it just?
- What was God's response and judgement on these actions? (Read verses 17-24)
- How did Ahab respond to this judgement in verse 27?
- Why did God decide to postpone his sentence in verse 29?
- Can we think of times when we have been persuaded to do something we know is wrong – like Ahab in this story? If so, take time to reflect and to ask forgiveness. Is there anything we can do to put things right?
- Can we think of ways in which just laws in our own country are not put into practice? What are the consequences?
- What can we say to comfort those who have bravely tried to seek justice but have failed because of corruption?

Good laws, poor practice

The written laws and constitutions of most countries seek to provide the basis of a just society. Over time, and often in response to particular situations, changes are made to the law and constitution, usually to improve them. However, good laws are not always put into practice. This may be for all kinds of reasons:

- People may be unaware of them.
- There may be no organisation which ensures that laws are carried out. For example, indigenous people may be exploited or lose their land because there is no organisation supporting and protecting them.
- People may not speak the national language in which the law and constitution are written. They face huge difficulties in claiming their rights.
- People who are poor may have no money either for a lawyer to represent them or to take a long journey to court to claim their rights. They may also be fearful of the financial consequences if they lose a court case.



SHEET R7



Discussion

R7

- **Read Luke 11:42-46.** What was Jesus criticising – the law or the practice of the law? What specifically did he criticise?
- Who do the Pharisees represent in today's society? How do we learn about God's law today?
- What examples can we think of in our society where the law is good but not carried out. What are the consequences?
- What could we do to help enforce good laws that are not always followed in practice? What action could we take?
- Some countries may have different systems to provide poor people with legal representation. This usually involves legal aid of some kind. Do we know of any systems like this in our own country? Where could we find out more?

Understanding the law

Seeking God's justice to uphold the rights of others, particularly those who are poor and oppressed, requires more than good will. It requires some knowledge of how the law operates, and the human rights that people are entitled to. There are many long and detailed laws, constitutions and United Nations conventions that describe in great detail how the law should operate.

However, the easiest to understand is the very first UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was written in 1948 following the atrocities of the Second World War. Governments promised that they would tell their citizens about these rights and seek to promote and protect them. A summary of this Declaration is included on pages 60–63.

Appeals or letters on behalf of others could quote the relevant article from this Declaration. If more information is required, NGOs working to promote human rights could be asked to help. They could find out about the other laws and conventions that advocacy work can be based upon.



SHEET R8



Discussion

R8

- **Read Acts 22:22-29.** Paul is an example of a Christian who really knew and understood the law. Throughout Acts there are many examples of his actions when in trouble with the authorities. Sometimes he was silent. Sometimes he defended himself. Sometimes he stirred up old arguments regarding the understanding of the law. In this passage he quietly mentions his rights. What did Paul question? What was the response?
- What rights could we claim if we were imprisoned without charge? If we don't know, how could we find out more? Are there any NGOs or Christian groups in our region working to promote human rights?
- What can we learn from Paul's response to the authorities? (Read more of Paul's actions in Acts.)
- The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights has sometimes been described as a well-kept secret! Have we read it (see page 60)? Are we familiar with what it says? How could we share this information with others?
- How important is it for us to know our rights – and the rights of other people?

Advocacy work

Advocacy work involves working with, or on behalf of, other people to seek justice from those in power. Whenever possible, it is better to work alongside people, building up their confidence and knowledge to empower them to claim their human rights. Sometimes, this is too dangerous or difficult for those directly involved and others need to advocate on their behalf.

Human rights are internationally agreed and legally binding agreements. People can advocate by stating the relevant article from the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights or more recent agreements, or they can use relevant articles from their country's laws.

Advocacy can take many forms. It may involve raising local awareness about injustices, writing letters, preparing or signing petitions, demonstrating or striking. Gather detailed facts to support the arguments. Good advocacy work will always focus on just a few clear points and will also provide answers for those in power. Case studies and stories help to bring issues to life. Use local media, posters, newspapers, radio and television to gain maximum impact.



Discussion

R9

- **Read Psalm 82:2-4.** How could ignoring injustice and taking no action when bad things happen to innocent people be seen as the same as supporting injustice?
- Who in our community could be described as weak and fatherless?
- Who could be described as oppressed in our community?
- Does this psalm suggest or command that we should take action about injustice? How should we respond?
- What can we learn from other people and groups about how to campaign effectively?
- Are there people suffering injustice in our community that we could work with to advocate for change? What issues require local changes? For example, are children with HIV prevented from attending school? How could we work with them and their families to advocate for changes in attitudes and school policy?
- Are there other issues that might require advocacy work at regional level? For example, are some people unable to access public transport? How could we help them advocate for improvements and change?

Our right to a private life

A person's home should be a place of safety and security where people can enjoy family life. People should be free to practise and enjoy their own culture, faith, music and food, as long as this does not stop others from doing the same.

Each person should be able to live a private life, with the freedom to live in peace in their home. They should be able to write and receive letters, emails and telephone calls in privacy without these being monitored by the authorities. People should be able to move about freely and share in the cultural life of their community, enjoying all kinds of arts, meeting together and enjoying opportunities to learn.

The authorities do not have the right to enter and search a person's home without a legal document giving them this right. Employers should not have the right to take away a person's right to a private life. Unless a person is suspected of a crime, their lives and movements should not be watched and monitored.



Discussion

R10

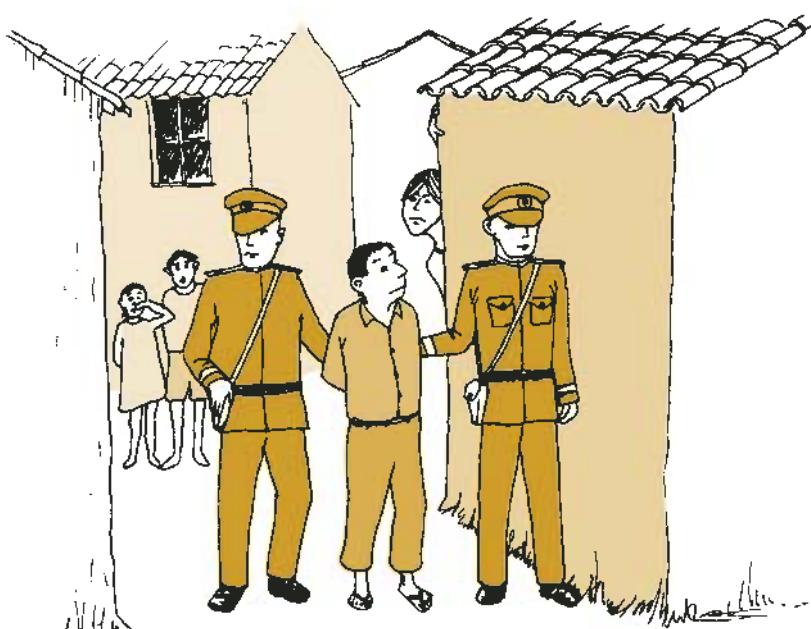
- **Read Matthew 22:35-40.** Jesus gave us two commandments that sum up the whole of his teaching. Here the Pharisees are trying to trick Jesus by asking him to pick out one of God's commandments as the most important. However, Jesus cleverly summarises the first four commandments into one and the remaining six commandments into the second.
 - How do we show our love for God?
 - Do we love ourselves and value our character and gifts? Do we have a sense of peace about where God has placed us?
 - Who are our neighbours? Does this just mean people who live nearby or do this mean all other people we have some awareness of or contact with?
 - How do we show our love for our neighbours?
 - How do we treat others in our community? How do we respect their right to live their lives the way they choose?
 - We often treat people of different races, castes or religions differently and lack respect for them. How do we respond when people of other cultures celebrate in different ways? Do we enjoy the variety of cultures in our world or do we resent these differences?
 - What rights do parents have to monitor their children's activities? How difficult is it to find the right balances between caring and interfering in their right to privacy?
 - In what ways may people's right to privacy be restricted? What examples are we aware of?
 - What action could we take to prevent unnecessary interference in people's privacy in our country?

Our right to security

Unless someone is arrested and charged with a crime, they should not be held in detention against their will. People have the right not to suffer punishment, ill-treatment and, in particular, torture while they are awaiting judgement or while in prison. Torture occurs when someone deliberately inflicts severe pain, either mental or physical, on another person, often on official orders or with official knowledge. This is done either to obtain information, as punishment or to force people to do something against their will.

Anyone who is detained or arrested has the right to legal advice and a lawyer. Many people who are poor do not have money to pay a lawyer. However, there are some legal organisations willing to provide free legal help. People who are taken away by the authorities may be powerless to request legal help. However, their family and friends can seek help on their behalf.

Sometimes people's work conditions are so difficult that their whole life experience may feel like torture. This is often the case for child slaves, sex slaves or bonded labourers. These people are usually powerless to seek help and depend on others to advocate on their behalf.



Discussion

R11

- **Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-3.** One of the worst aspects of torture is that people often feel no-one else is aware of their suffering. How can we act as comforters to the oppressed (verse 1)?
- Do we think that our lives are more difficult than those of our parents and grandparents (verse 2)? What are the reasons for this?
- Does torture take place in our country? What evidence do we have of this? What would happen if ordinary people raised concerns about it with our government?
- What would it mean to love our enemies in our everyday lives? Who are the people who make our lives really difficult? What would it mean to love them?
- Can we think of examples of countries or people that have tried to deal with people who have been ‘enemies’ through reconciliation and forgiveness? What have been the outcomes?
- How does our community or society deal with people who treat others badly? Consider some recent examples.
- Are there groups of people whose lives are unbearable in our country? Who are these groups? How can we find out more about their situation? What action could we take to raise awareness of their situation?

Political participation

Each person should be able to participate freely in the social and political life of their country. According to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, men and women have the same rights and responsibilities. We read in the Bible that in God's eyes we are all equal. We should also be equal with regard to the law and political expression.

Each adult should have freedom to choose their political leaders at regional and national level. However, in many countries people are denied this choice. In countries where people are allowed to vote and choose their leaders, their choice may be limited, particularly if a government is unpopular. This can be subtle – making registration complicated, restricting polling stations, forcing people to return to their home areas to vote or making threats if they support the opposition. It can also be more open – preventing or delaying elections, limiting the choice of candidates, falsifying results, restricting access to UN observers, closing polling stations in areas where most opposition supporters live, preventing opposition parties from forming or meeting and sometimes even arresting or killing key opponents.



Discussion

R12

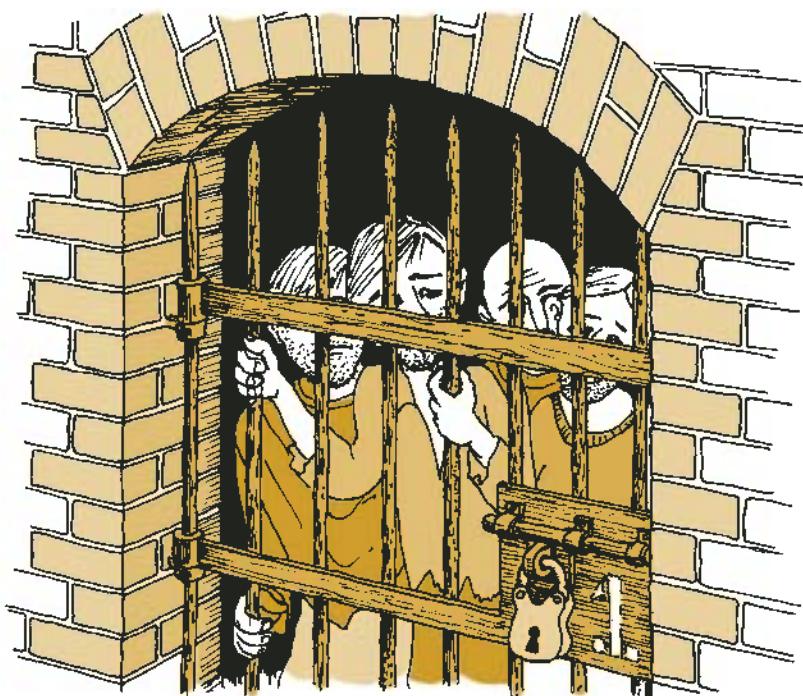
- **Read Isaiah 52:7-10.** How does this passage describe those people who seek to bring good news and peace in verse 7?
- This passage describes such people as coming on foot. Often the walk to bring about peace and justice is a long hard one. How can we share in this walk to freedom?
- Who identifies and encourages possible future leaders? Can we play more of a part in this?
- Do we have leaders like this who give people hope and encouragement? Are they political or religious leaders?
- Does verse 10 give us hope for the future? Is our church playing a role in bringing this about?
- Are all adult men and women allowed to choose the political leaders in our country? If not, what prevents this? What could improve the process of choosing political leaders in our country? What role does the church play in encouraging and enabling people to choose political leaders?
- If people in our country are able to vote, are there any factors that make it difficult for people to go against the policies of the ruling government?
- Does our country have free and accountable opposition parties?
- What access do people with disabilities have to polling stations? Are there other systems to help them to vote?
- Are UN observers given free and open access to observe election procedures in our country?

The right to live in freedom

All societies need to protect innocent people from those who seek to do them harm. This usually means a legal system with prison as a punishment. When justice is practised fairly, this system can be an effective way of protecting ordinary people from harm. However, it can be abused in a number of ways.

Someone accused of a crime should not be imprisoned unless there is enough evidence. Witness evidence or other kinds of proof are required and the matter should be brought before an independent court. Anyone accused of a crime should be considered innocent until they are proved guilty in a court of law. However, poor people may have no access to legal representation in court.

People may be falsely accused of crimes and be unable to defend themselves. Prison can be used as a way of silencing people with opposing political, social or religious views (often called prisoners of conscience). Courts may not always uphold justice if officials are open to bribery. Sentences may be unfairly long and, once in prison, prisoners can be forgotten by officials and remain there for many years.



In an ideal situation, prison can provide a time to reflect, a time to learn new skills and ways of thinking so that prisoners can change their lives for the better. In the Bible we are told to visit those in prison. This would encourage prisoners and help to ensure they are well treated.



Discussion

R13

- **Read Acts 16:16-39.** This story describes in verses 16-24 how Paul and Silas suffered when they were falsely accused, beaten and imprisoned unjustly. What was Paul and Silas's response to this treatment (verse 25)? How do we respond to difficulties?
- What was God's response (in verse 26)? Have we ever experienced God's intervention in difficult circumstances?
- Imagine the situation in the prison just after the earthquake. Why do you think none of the prisoners escaped?
- Read verses 27-34. What were the reactions of the jailer in response to the earthquake and on discovering that the prisoners had not escaped? How did he respond to Paul's teaching?
- Paul knew his rights. He and Silas could have escaped when they had the opportunity. But he knew they had been falsely mistreated and imprisoned. Why did he not want to leave at the first opportunity (verses 35-37)?
- Paul wanted to highlight and make public the injustice done to them. Did he succeed (verses 38-39)?
- Do we do enough to raise awareness of injustices of all kinds? What injustices are we aware of in our community? Why could we do to highlight them more?
- Are we confident in the justice of our legal system?
- What support is there in our country for the victims of crime?
- What provision is there for visiting those in prison?
- What action could we take to support people we believe have been unjustly imprisoned?
- What legal support is available to people who have been unjustly imprisoned for crimes they did not commit?

Citizenship

Each person has the right to a nationality and to all the social and political rights and responsibilities which that brings within that country. This right of citizenship is usually, but not always, by birth. Each country has its own laws regarding citizenship.

Each person, whatever their background, should have the right to choose where in the country they want to live and work. People may want to move to another country, either through choice or as refugees claiming asylum because of persecution. In time, they may be able to claim citizenship of that country if they meet the legal requirements.

People fleeing from war, disaster situations or economic difficulties, however, do not have the same rights and will be dependant on government policy in the country of their destination. They may find it difficult or impossible to claim citizenship in their new country, making their lives very insecure.



Discussion

R14

- **Read Galatians 3:28.** This is such a challenging statement from the apostle Paul. He was telling the Jews in Galatia that their Jewish background does not give them the right to special status and privilege over other non-Jewish people. In God's eyes each person is equal. In Paul's time, tensions between the resident Jewish people and the occupying Romans were often high. What tensions exist between different ethnic groups in our society?
- What opportunities do people have to seek work in other countries? Do we know of people who have done that? What have been their experiences?
- What happens when people flee to neighbouring countries as refugees? Do they gain legal protection? Do we know of such people? Why did they leave and what has their experience been?
- As Christians we look forward to the time when we will become citizens of heaven, not by right but by grace. How can we help others from difficult situations to become citizens of our country?

Social rights and responsibilities

Each person, however poor, has a right to live with dignity and to have their basic social and economic needs met. People should have access to water, sanitation, housing and food, however basic. Our governments have a responsibility to ensure that these basic human rights are available to all their people.

As community members, we have a joint responsibility to make sure that certain people or groups of people are not ignored. People with disabilities, those with serious illnesses or very old people are often easy to overlook, but their need for support is very considerable.

Jesus encouraged the sharing of material possessions to ensure that each person had enough to live. In the book of Acts, we see this happening in wonderful ways in the early church, as people shared what they had. Often one person's generosity will encourage others to share.



Discussion

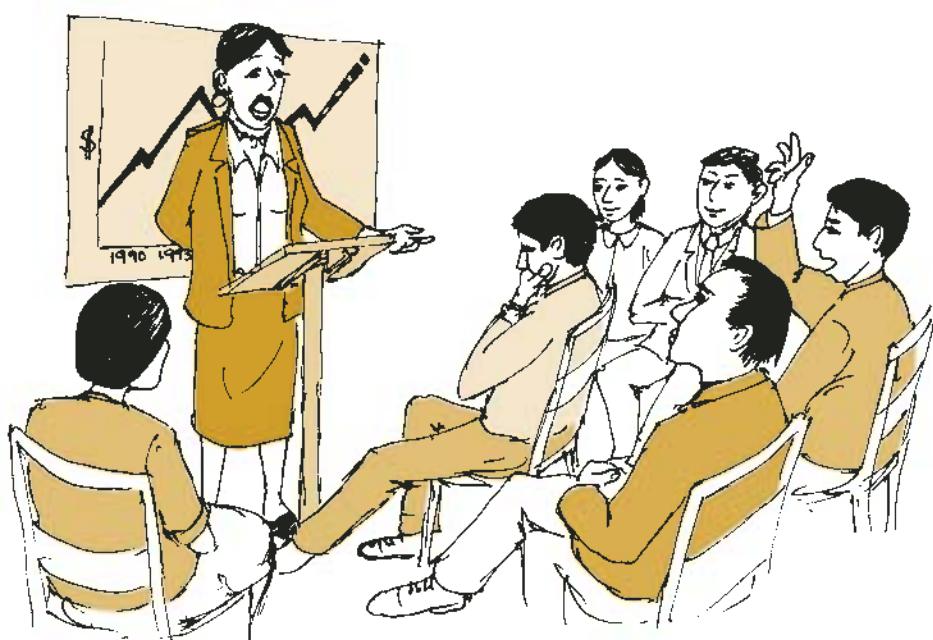
R15

- **Read John 6:1-15.** This is a very well known Bible story of an amazing miracle that Jesus did to provide enough food for 5000 people. What were the concerns that the disciples raised with Jesus? Were the people who had followed Jesus concerned?
- We read about the boy who had brought his own food in verse 9. Discuss what might have encouraged him to let Jesus take his food?
- The willingness of the young boy to let Jesus take his food meant that 5,000 other people were fed. We are often overwhelmed by the size of the needs around us. This story is a wonderful reminder of how God can use a little faith to bring huge results. When we share the little we have with others, God may bless this beyond our expectations. Are there ways in which we could put this into practice in our own lives?
- How effective is our government in meeting the needs of the poorest groups in our country? Are there minorities who lack support? Can we put pressure on organisations or the government to help meet their needs?

Women's right to equality

God has created all people in his own likeness. In God's eyes each person is of equal worth and importance. Jesus treated everyone – women, people with disabilities and infectious diseases, people of other races, people practising sex work or people committing fraud – with equal love and respect. He tells us to love and respect other people.

God created men and women to work alongside each other. It is really important that women have equal rights to education, healthcare and work. They should have equal opportunities to participate in how their communities are run and in choosing their political leaders. However, the situation in many countries prevents women from having equal rights. Although women carry out 2/3 of the world's work, they earn only 1/10 of the world's income and own only 1/100 of the world's property (United Nations). Two thirds of the people unable to read and write are women. These inequalities make it very difficult for women to participate fully in society and in politics. This means that the church and the wider community, do not benefit from the many gifts and abilities that God has given women.



Discussion

R16

- **Read Genesis 1:26-2:1.** In this first story of creation in Genesis, we read of how both men and women were created in God's image. Men and women were created differently in order to reproduce and fill the earth. Both were given equal stewardship of the earth's gifts.
- How easy is it to consider God as having both male and female characteristics?
- Was there any difference between the stewardship roles that God gave to men and to women? Why are they so different today?
- What roles do women play in our church? Could they be given more responsibility?
- Men own 99% of the earth's property. Why is this? Can we do anything in our own community to improve the balance?

The relationship of marriage

The biblical relationship of marriage is intended to be between two people and God. However, they are subject to many influences and pressures – from family, from church, from culture and social expectations. These can be particularly strong if the couple marrying are from different cultures, religions or countries. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states clearly that people can choose to marry regardless of race, country or religion.

In some cultures, parents traditionally choose and arrange marriage partners for their children. This can have advantages in ensuring their children are similar in social, cultural and educational backgrounds. However, the practice can also result in forced marriages, where huge pressure can be put upon the young people concerned, particularly girls, to marry against their will.

In many countries, women are regarded as the property of their husbands. This makes it difficult for them to share their views openly, and to work or take action without their husband's permission. It also means they are more vulnerable to domestic violence.



Within marriage each partner is equal and should love and respect the other partner and accept their differences. Stable marriages are vital to the well-being of our communities.



Discussion

R17

- **Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.** How do you respond to Paul's comment in verses 1 and 2 about marriage?
- In verse 4 Paul's teaching is quite radical. At the time of writing this would have been seen as an extraordinary statement! The accepted view would be for the husband to have authority over his wife. But Paul does not say this! What is unusual about this teaching? What can we learn from it? How would it benefit a marriage?
- Does our church help to prepare couples for marriage? Would this be helpful? If so, how could this be done?
- When marriage partners in our community are having problems with their relationship, who can they turn to for wise support and advice?
- Who could a wife turn to for advice in our culture, if she is experiencing domestic violence and fears for her own life and the life of her children?
- What laws are there in our country concerning divorce? What is the biblical teaching about divorce? How can we support people dealing with the pain of divorce?
- How does our government support Christian marriage? Are there any laws which we think could be changed to strengthen the relationship of marriage?

Healthcare

Our health depends on many things. We may be born with disabilities or health problems. We may suffer serious long-term health concerns through illness, poor diet or accidents. We may not care properly for our bodies. During war and conflict women may suffer sexual abuse and violence and need special support.

Governments should provide access to affordable health care for all their people, though this often does not happen. But the church also has a responsibility to help maintain good health, often through clear teaching about difficult issues such as sexual health and female genital mutilation. The church is too often silent about these difficult issues. The spread of HIV and AIDS threatens the future of whole communities. In some situations the church could help to provide practical help through providing health centres and training health workers and counsellors. The church can also advocate for the government to provide effective healthcare.



One of Jesus's priorities was to bring healing – not just spiritual healing but physical healing too. The church should see healing and good health as a priority, both through prayer and in practice.



Discussion

R18

- **Read Mark 5:21-34.** While Jesus was surrounded by a large crowd, an important man, Jairus, leader of the synagogue, came and asked him to come urgently and heal his dying daughter. As Jesus hurried to respond, another story unfolds. How do you think the woman in verses 25 to 26 felt about herself? Can you imagine what her life was like?
- The Jews believed that a woman was considered unclean during her regular monthly flow of blood. By touching Jesus, she would therefore have made him unclean. What risks did she take in being in the crowd and in touching him? Why did she do this?
- Verse 30 is very interesting. How did Jesus know that power had gone out from him? Do we know anyone with the gift of healing who can describe this feeling? Despite the fact that Jesus was in a hurry, why did he stop? Why was it so important to know who had been healed?
- When the woman came to him, what was Jesus's response? How did he meet all her needs?
- Think of other stories of healing in the Bible? Are they done in private or before witnesses. Do we have faith to use the gift of healing? What can we learn from Jesus about how he used the gift of healing?
- Do women in our country have special health needs?
- Female genital mutilation is practised in a number of cultures, even though forbidden by law. The consequences include severe infections, pain and great difficulties during childbirth. What can the church do to support girls who do not want to undergo female genital mutilation? How can the church speak out in this sensitive situation?

The right to education and information

All children should have the opportunity to complete primary education. This should enable children to read, write, count, learn their national language (if their mother tongue is different) and gain some understanding of the wider world. Children may face many barriers to gaining primary education. These include fees, other payments for equipment and uniform, language, the stigma of HIV and AIDS and disabilities.

Education and literacy should open the door for people to gain access to information. They also bring confidence to understand and use information. Relevant information is a source of power. Practical information may enable people to make changes to their lives. This may be through taking action, networking with others or by understanding issues concerning health and education. Legal information may help people to challenge abuses of human rights.

There are many ways of sharing information. Walls can be used to display notices and information. Simple news sheets could be produced, photocopied and distributed. Community radio, particularly in local languages, can have a very wide impact. It enables people to tell their stories, to share timely information, hints on childcare and health, and news of meetings and events.



Discussion

R19

- **Read Nehemiah 8:1-18.** The King of Babylon invaded Judah, destroying the temple and taking most of the people of Israel into exile. The exile lasted 70 years. Nehemiah then obeyed God's direction and rebuilt the city walls. The people then gathered together to listen to Ezra read from the word of God, which had not been read for 70 years. What preparations did they make to listen to God's word in verses 1-6? What can we learn from this?
- What was the role of the Levites or Priests (verses 7-9)? Who helps us to understand God's word today?
- How did the people respond once they understood the meaning of the teaching (verse 9)? Is this ever our response?
- How did Nehemiah and the Levites encourage them to respond in verses 10-12?
- Verses 13-17 describe how people responded to the teaching about the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43) by building shelters made from branches in which they lived for seven days. What was their response to this celebration? Do we have any opportunity to celebrate, study and worship together as Christians in this way? If not, could we plan to do this?
- This time of teaching enabled those who could not read to benefit fully. How can we ensure that people who are unable to read benefit fully from Christian teaching and from practical information? How can people gain literacy skills in our community?
- What barriers may children face within our community that prevent them from attending or completing primary schooling?
- Poorly trained teachers, lack of equipment and books, and large classes can all make education less effective. In what ways can parents and community leaders support and influence the quality of education in our schools?
- What barriers do people in our community face in obtaining information?

Care for the environment

The environment belongs to God but is shared with each living person. We have joint stewardship to care for the environment. However, certain companies and countries regard the environment as theirs and seek to make short-term gains from it, rather than caring for the long-term future of our world.

Caring for the environment is often seen as a luxury for people with money, rather than as a concern for people who are poor. The poor suffer most when our environment is damaged. They have few choices and are often forced to live in areas at most risk of environmental damage – steep slopes at risk of collapse, areas likely to flood or where water or land may be polluted.

Extracting the world's resources, such as oil, coal, minerals or timber, is often done to make maximum profit for those involved, with minimal protection against any damage done.



Discussion

R20

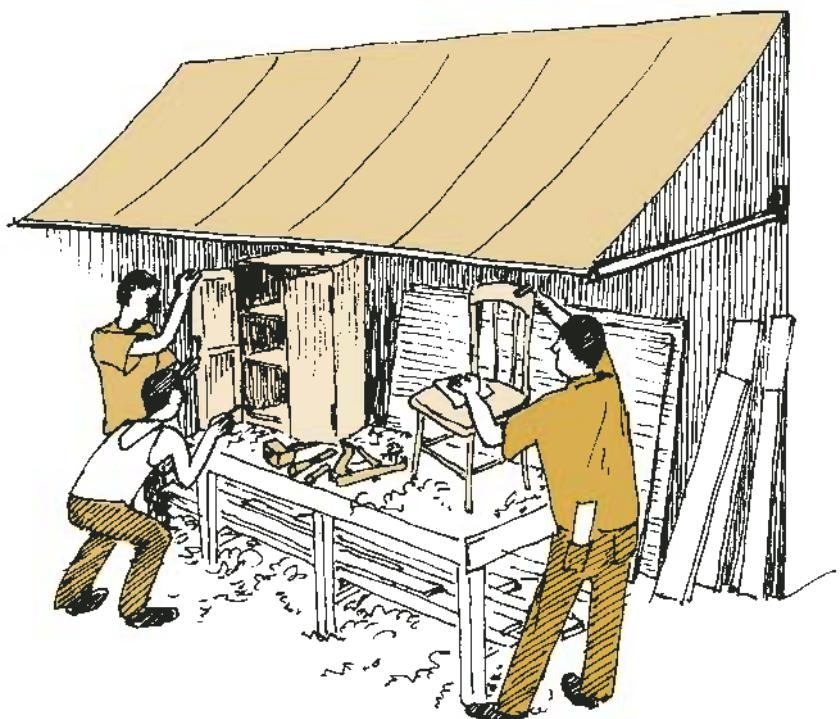
- **Read Psalm 104.** This psalm contains some amazing images. Consider the images in verses 2, 3 and 4 and use your imaginations. How do these images help you to understand God's greatness?
- Verses 5 to 9 describe a little of how God created our world. Do we take enough time to marvel at God's creation?
- Verses 10 to 30 provide a picture of how God maintains order within his wonderful creation both on the earth and in the sea. How do we see God at work 'renewing the face of the earth' in our lives?
- How can we reflect God's care for his creation by caring for the environment around us?
- In verse 31 we read that God rejoices in his works. Are there situations near us where people have caused damage to the natural environment? (For example, rubbish, polluted water, erosion or squalid living conditions?) How can we take action to improve these so that God will indeed rejoice?
- Do we find it easier to praise God for his amazing creation and majesty or to bring our needs before him?
- Can we think of examples in our society where the natural environment is not treated with respect and with good stewardship? What are the consequences? Who suffers?
- What actions can we take to improve our immediate environment – in our homes or communities?
- Who owns or controls land in our region that is not used for agriculture (such as forests, mountains, deserts or lakes)? What care is taken of these areas, and what protection is given to them?
- What natural disasters occur in our country? What causes these? Are any steps being made to reduce the impact of such disasters? Are there any organisations that could help people become better prepared?

The right to work

The expectation that people will need to work in order to live, runs through the Bible. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, Paul makes the value of work very clear. People may work to grow or process crops, to look after family members or they may work for money in order to buy food.

People should have some choice in the work they do and ideally their work should bring some sense of satisfaction. People's labour should not be exploited by others. When working for employers, people should receive a fair wage with equal pay for the same work for men and women. Workers should have regular breaks, work reasonable hours and have regular time off each week for worship and rest. People with disabilities should have opportunities to work. Unions can help protect workers from unsafe or unfair conditions and people have the right to form them or to join them.

Children under the age of 14 should not have to work long hours. This will prevent them from going to school and developing into healthy adults. There is a huge difference between expecting children to contribute to household work and exploiting them.



Discussion

R21

- **Read Matthew 20:1-16.** Where do people gather in the hope of finding work in our region? How difficult is it to find work on a day-to-day basis for labourers?
- What agreement did the landowner make about payment with the first four groups that he hired (verses 1-5)? What was their response?
- Did the landowner discuss payment with the final group of workers that he hired at the eleventh hour? Why did they not ask him about this? Are casual labourers in our region in a position to discuss the rate of pay?
- Do you feel the people who had worked all day were justified in complaining? Do we often grumble when others seem to receive better treatment than us?
- Did the landowner meet his agreements over payment? What happens in our region if employers fail to meet their agreements, especially when they are not written agreements?
- Who does the landowner represent in this parable? Who do the workers represent? How is this parable helpful in understanding our different situations in life?
- This parable has a deeper meaning. It teaches us that God's grace is for us all and that we can do nothing to earn it. Whatever our situation in life, his grace makes each of us equal in his sight. How does this amazing truth make us feel?
- What difficulties do migrants face in finding work in our country?
- Do working women who are pregnant or caring for young children have special consideration in our country? Is there more that could be done to support them?
- Does our government take action to prevent working people from exploitation or from dangerous working conditions? How could we encourage them to improve conditions?
- The Fairtrade Labelling Organisation and International Labour Organisation (see page 64) aim to ensure that all workers are treated fairly. Are there any issues that we could ask their advice about?

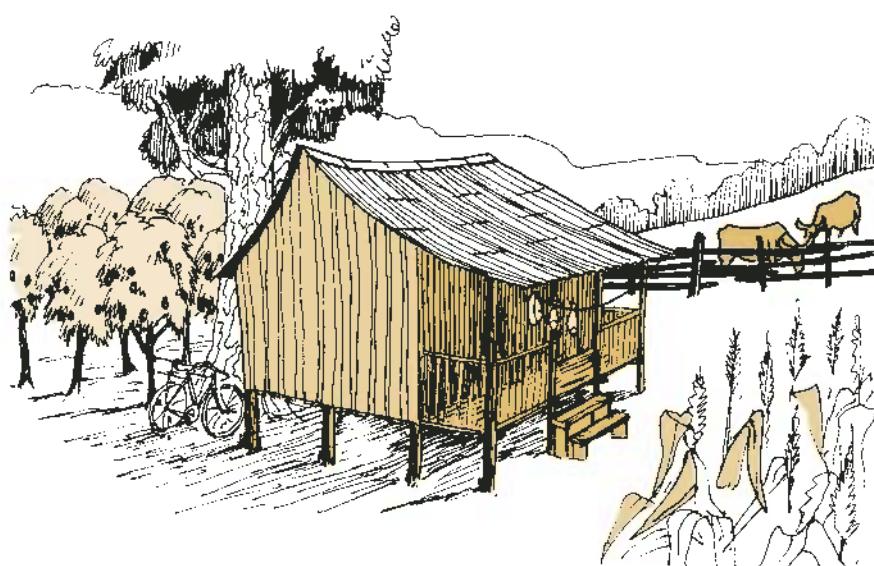
The right to property

Each person has the right to have belongings and property and to live somewhere where they can take care of themselves.

People moving into a new area often find homes on the edges of cities where they may be at risk of forced removal by outsiders who want to develop or exploit the area. This means they are unlikely to want to invest in improving their homes. This lack of security makes it harder for people to find work and find ways of generating income.

Poor people often have no legal proof or recognition of their ownership of land and property, even if it has belonged to their family for generations. In rural areas, people may lose their land or property as a result of debt or through not realising the importance of legal documents. This means they have no rights to make decisions over land use and to practise good stewardship. High rents (often a percentage of crops grown) mean they are unable to break out of a cycle of poverty.

Widows and their children may be left with nothing if their husbands die. They can lose their home, their land and their possessions to relatives of their dead husband. This often reduces them to a life of poverty.



Discussion

R22

- **Read James 1:27.** What does James say about those who care for widows and children? How could we respond more?
- Why is it so important to ensure that widows are able to remain in possession of their husband's land and homes?
- What kind of protection is available to widows who are vulnerable from within the family, from the community and from the state?
- What are the social customs in our community regarding land rights?
- How do our national laws support these customs?
- Can women own land and property? How can we support women in gaining their own land and property? What difference would this make to women?
- How can people take steps to register their rights to property or land? Are there organisations that can help with this?
- How often in our society do people lose their rights to land or property through ignorance, debt or corruption? What can be done to help challenge this?

Special rights for children

The Bible highlights God's particular interest in children. We have a responsibility to care and protect children so that they can use the gifts God has given them to their full potential.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), passed by the United Nations in 1989, was a historic achievement in recognising that children have particular rights. This convention has been approved in all countries (except the USA and Somalia). It includes these rights:

- Children should have their basic needs for housing, food and health met.
- Children's development should be encouraged. They have the right to play, education, curiosity, information, freedom of thought, and religion.
- Children have the right to protection from every form of abuse, ill-treatment, torture, sexual exploitation, participation in armed conflict, child labour and discrimination.
- Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and their communities.



Each of us is responsible for making sure these rights are respected for all children.



Discussion

R23

- **Read Matthew 18:1-6.** The disciples wanted to know who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus responds by bringing a child into their conversation.
- What value does Jesus place on children?
- **Read Matthew 18:10-14.** In verse 10 Jesus emphasises the value of children. He then uses a parable about shepherds to explain his answer. He speaks about the work of shepherds who care for the sheep 24 hours a day in all weathers. Who do these sheep represent? (See John 10:16) What characteristics do they have?
 - What does the shepherd do in verse 12? Why does he do this?
 - What is the shepherd's reaction when he finds the sheep in verse 13?
 - What did Jesus want to teach us through this parable? What is God's will for each of these little ones? Are there children who feel 'lost' in our society? What practical things would we have to do, in order to do his will?
- How does our government ensure that children are not abused (for example, as child labour or child soldiers)? Are there other ways in which the government could ensure more protection is available?
- Do all children have the opportunity to go to primary school in our region? If not, how could we advocate for the government to make sure education is available for all?

Disobeying the law

The laws of each country are generally made with great care and for the well-being of their citizens. As responsible citizens, it is really important that we obey these laws for the good of the country.

However, sometimes laws exist that go against what we know to be fair and just for all people. Some laws may only benefit the rich. Some laws cause real suffering for poor people or certain groups. For example, in some countries it is against the law to be a Christian! There may be occasions when we feel that it is more important to question the law than to obey it, for the benefit of those people suffering from the consequences.

By raising awareness of unjust laws, we may help to find new answers, new hopes and new voices to rise and free people from that threat.



Discussion

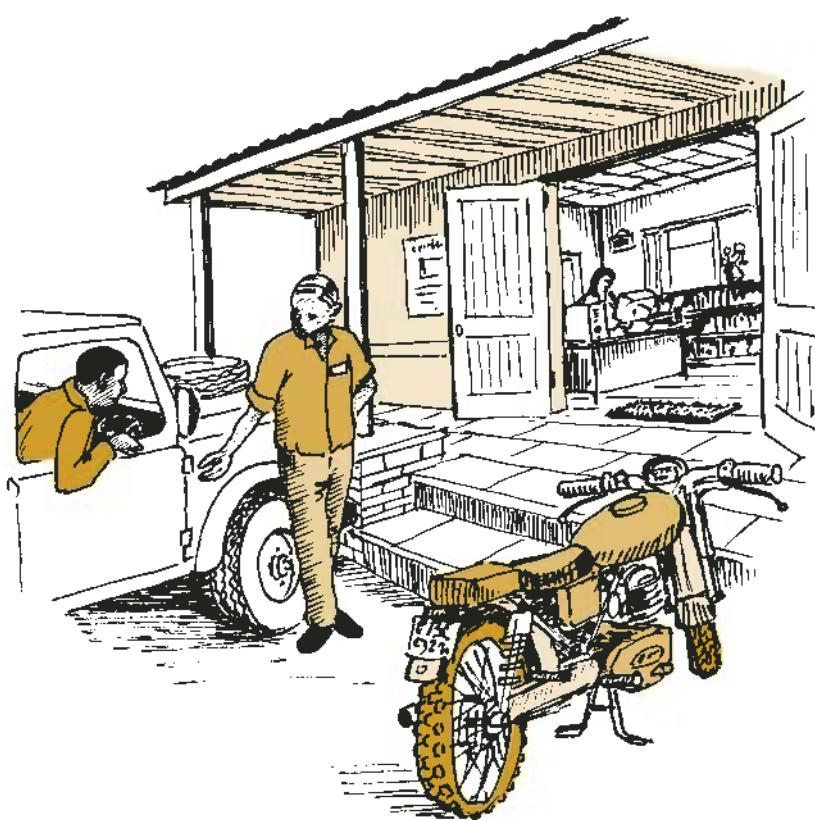
R24

- **Read Exodus 1:15-22.** The people of Israel were living in exile in Egypt. They knew God's blessing even in exile and continued to multiply. The Egyptians were alarmed at this. They used the Israelites to provide forced labour for them. What was the reason for the new law made by the king of Egypt (in verses 15 and 16)?
- Why did the midwives disobey this law? What defence did they give when questioned by the king? What can we learn from their actions and their defence?
- What was the result of their actions for the midwives (verses 20-21)?
- What should we do when faced with laws that are clearly against God's teaching? Can we think of any examples?
- What could we do to raise concerns over such laws?
- What actions could we take – as individuals, as a group or as a church? Are we prepared to face potentially violent reaction with non-violence?
- In the USA in 1955, an ordinary black woman called Rosa King refused to give up her rightful bus seat to a white person. This led to her arrest, imprisonment and a huge bus boycott by black people that eventually led to a change in the race relation laws. Can we think of any other examples where people have disobeyed an unjust law and brought good from their actions?

Working with organisations

When people become involved in seeking justice for others, they often need the help, support and guidance of local non-governmental organisations which represent local concerns. As people gain confidence in their ability to advocate for changes for the better on a local scale, they may feel more confident about raising their concerns at a regional level.

Local advocacy work can have only a certain amount of impact. National influence is frequently required to ensure human rights are defended. This involves advocacy work at a national or international level. NGO staff may be able to provide information on legal issues, guidance on what actions to take and be willing to make their office facilities available. They can share learning and case studies from other countries. Some NGOs may be able to raise advocacy issues at international level. Christians may consider entering more fully into the decision and policy making of their country by becoming politicians.



Discussion

R25

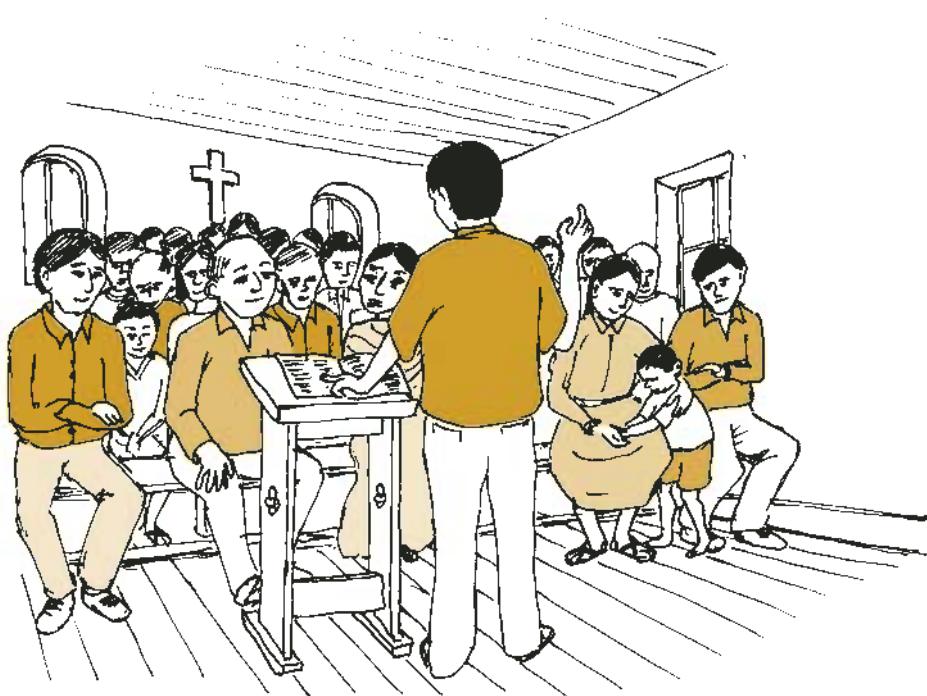
- **Read Exodus 2-5.** These stories about Moses show different stages of advocacy and different approaches we can use when acting as an advocate. Firstly, we need to be fully aware of the situations of others and to feel compassion for them (Exodus 2:11). Who do we feel God may be wanting us to help? How can we learn more about their situation?
- In Exodus 2:15 to 3:22 we learn that it takes many years before Moses is called by God to go to Pharaoh and bring God's people, the Israelites, out of Egypt. How did God equip Moses (4:1-9)? How may God be preparing and equipping us to take future action? What dangers are there in rushing into a situation to try to help people?
- Moses could have remained in his comfortable position, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. However, he gave up his privileged position to help the Israelites. Have we counted the cost of helping others? Are we willing to make any sacrifices involved?
- We read in Exodus 4:10-31 that Moses is given the help of Aaron and the support of the Israelite leaders. Have we identified others to work alongside? What organisations do we know about who work with advocacy issues? How could we find out more? Who else could work with us?
- Moses faced considerable difficulties and setbacks as he tried to change the situation of the people (Exodus 5 to 6:1). How did he cope with these difficulties? What was God's response? How do we cope with difficulties and opposition? How can we deal with the doubts and concerns of those we are trying to help?
- What examples do we know about from previous advocacy work or campaigns? What encouragements can we gain from these? What lessons can we learn from them?
- How can NGOs working on advocacy issues encourage and guide us in what we hope to do?

The role of the church

God sent his son Jesus to establish justice in the world. Churches need to share Jesus' concern for the poor and the oppressed. The Bible makes it clear that as Christians we should share God's passion for justice. This does not just mean that we should live good lives as individuals. We should also try to correct what is wrong in our society, bringing about righteousness.

Church leaders can speak out with considerable authority about many situations. They can challenge unjust laws and promote and defend the rights of poor people. Through their example and leadership they can inspire, direct and encourage their churches to take action to promote justice. This may be through prayer, through giving, through practical caring, through speaking out and through different approaches to advocacy work on behalf of those who are suffering. Usually it will be a combination of all of these.

God wants righteousness to flow from his church, just like the water in a fast-flowing river. The Church should provide leadership and inspiration for a wide range of social actions that aim to bring justice into our hurting world.



Discussion

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- **Read Amos 5:1-24.** We read in the book of Amos about the injustice of that time. Poor people's rights were not respected (verse 11), bribery was common (verse 12) and those who fought for justice and truth were despised (verse 10).
 - What do verses 7, 10, 11 and 12 say about the way the people behaved towards their neighbours?
 - What does God condemn in verse 21? What did it mean for an Israelite of that time to carry out religious festivals? Are there similar situations today in the way we practise our faith?
 - What does the prophet suggest will be a true and acceptable action towards God in place of these 'religious festivals' in verse 24?
 - Does our worship lack concern for those who suffer or are treated unfairly? Christians frequently think that such problems have nothing to do with their faith. How could we answer them?
 - How can we include our concern for social justice in the heart of our worship?
 - Challenging injustice requires considerable courage and persistence. What strengths does the church have to equip it to take action?
- **Read Micah 6:8.** What does God ask of us? How effective are we in carrying out these three commands? Which do we find the most challenging? Let us make them our prayer for future direction.

APPENDIX

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here is a simplified summary.

- Article 1** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They should act with respect towards each other.
- Article 2** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind because of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Article 3** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- Article 4** No-one shall be held in slavery. All slavery must be stopped.
- Article 5** No one shall be tortured or suffer cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 6** Everyone has a right to recognition as a person before the law.
- Article 7** Each person is equal before the law and is entitled, without discrimination, to equal protection by the law.
- Article 8** Everyone has the right to expect justice if their fundamental rights, granted by the constitution or law, are not respected.
- Article 9** No one shall be arrested or detained without good reason.
- Article 10** Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial court when their rights and obligations are being decided or when they are accused of committing a crime.

- Article 11** Everyone charged with a crime has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty in a fair and public trial where they are allowed to mount a proper defence. No one can be tried for doing something which was not a criminal offence in law at the time it was committed.
- Article 12** Each person's privacy, family, and correspondence shall be protected from interference without good reason. Each person shall also be protected from attacks on their honour or reputation.
- Article 13** Everyone has the right to freedom of movement within their own country and to travel freely from and to their own country.
- Article 14** Everyone facing persecution has the right to asylum in other countries.
- Article 15** Everyone has the right to a nationality. They also have the right to change their nationality. No one's nationality can be taken away from them without good reason.
- Article 16** Men and women have the right to marry and have a family, regardless of their race, nationality or religion. Both partners have equal rights in the marriage and their free and full agreement is needed for the marriage to take place. The family is entitled to protection by the state.
- Article 17** Everyone has the right to own property, alone or with other people. No one's property can be taken away from them without good reason.
- Article 18** Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change their religion or belief and to practise and teach their religion or belief.
- Article 19** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to find and share information and ideas.
- Article 20** Everyone has the right to meet together with other people, to organise peaceful demonstrations and to form groups. No one may be forced to join any group against their will.

- Article 21**
- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, either directly or by choosing others to represent them.
 - Everyone has an equal right to join the public service.
 - The government of a country is based on the will of the people. This means there should be regular and genuine elections in which everyone can vote and in which everyone's vote is secret.
- Article 22**
- Everyone has the right to social security and to the economic, social and cultural rights that are necessary for dignity and development as individuals.
- Article 23**
- Everyone has the right to work and to choose their job. Everyone has the right to be paid enough for a decent standard of living and to receive equal pay for equal work without any discrimination. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions to protect their interests.
- Article 24**
- Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including the right to work reasonable hours and to holidays with pay.
- Article 25**
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living which is adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family. This includes adequate food, clothes, housing, medical care and social services. Everyone has the right to security if they are unable to work because they are unemployed, sick, disabled, widowed, elderly or otherwise unable to support themselves. Mothers and children are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether or not their parents are married, have the same right to social protection.
- Article 26**
- Everyone has the right to education which is free and compulsory during the early stages and which promotes understanding and respect for human rights. Education at a higher level should be equally available to everyone on the basis of merit. Parents have a right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
- Article 27**
- Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts (such as music, plays, exhibitions, poetry) and to share in the benefits that scientific discovery may bring.

- Article 28** Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms of this Declaration are fully realised.
- Article 29** Everyone has duties to the community and will only develop fully as an individual by meeting those duties. Everyone's rights and freedoms can only be limited as set down by the law, either in order to protect other people's rights and freedoms, or for reasons of morality, public order or the welfare of society as a whole.
- Article 30** Nothing in this Declaration gives anyone the right to destroy the rights and freedoms of others.

Recommended reading

Advocacy Toolkit: Book 1 *Understanding advocacy*, Book 2 *Practical action in advocacy* (2002) by Graham Gordon. Published by Tearfund.

What if you got involved? Taking a stand against social injustice (2003) by Graham Gordon, Paternoster Press.

Good news about injustice (2002) by Gary Haugen, Inter Varsity Press.

Justice, mercy and humility: Integral mission and the poor (2002) by Tim Chester, Paternoster Press.

Questioning the basis of our work: Christianity, children's rights and development (2004) compiled by Judith Ennew and Paul Stephenson. Published by Tearfund.

For all people's and all nations: Christian churches and human rights (2005) by John Nurser. WCC Publications.

Human rights for human dignity: A primer on economic, social and cultural rights (2005) by Amnesty International.

Full UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (available in over 300 languages).

Website: www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm

Full UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Website: www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm

Useful organisations

Human Rights Watch, 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10118-3299, USA

Website: www.hrw.org Email: hrwnyc@hrw.org

Amnesty International, 17–25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA, UK

Web site: www.amnesty.org Email: info@amnesty.org.uk

Advocates for International Development, 10th Floor Beaufort House, 15 St Botolph St, London, EC3A 7EE, UK Web site: www.a4id.org Email: info@a4id.org

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Website: www.ohchr.org/english Email: InfoDesk@ohchr.org

International Labour Office, 4, route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland

Website: www.ilo.org Email: ilo@ilo.org

Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), Bonner Talweg 177, 53129 Bonn, Germany

Website: www.fairtrade.net Email: info@fairtrade.net

Further information

This guide is one of a series published by Tearfund.

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These guides are available free of charge on the website: www.tearfund.org/tilz

For organisations wishing to translate these materials into other languages, a CD Rom with design files and layout is available, and there are full details on the website.

For organisations planning workshops to train people to either use or translate PILLARS materials, a workbook is also available on the website.

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**Seeking justice for all
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ISBN 978 1 904364 67 2

Published by Tearfund

