

A SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**SEEK**  
**SOCIAL**  
**JUSTICE**

*Transforming Lives in Need*



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# SEEK SOCIAL JUSTICE

*Transforming Lives in Need*

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# Before You Begin...

## Across America, people are in need.

Many struggle in the face of financial difficulty, broken families, and violent neighborhoods. We are called to care for those in need—to serve the poor and to oppose injustice. But where should we begin in our efforts to love our neighbors? Should we sign a petition? Campaign for certain laws? Stage a public march? Give money to charity? Call for a new government program? Start a church ministry?

Regrettably, ideas offered in the name of social justice have sometimes misdiagnosed the problem and had unintended consequences that hurt the very people they intended to help. That's because they have assessed poverty primarily as a material problem. Programs based on this assumption have kept those willing to help at arm's length from those in need, often looking first to government and substituting impersonal handouts for personal care and real transformation. Jumping into action without thoughtful consideration has led to damaging results.

Somehow in the urgency to dedicate our lives—or even a few hours or dollars—to a good cause, we're missing something. We're missing something about who we are at our core as human beings; we're missing something about the complex and relational nature of poverty. Though motivated by good intentions, we need a better framework for understanding and engaging the issues surrounding human need and social breakdown.

When it comes to translating good intentions into actions that really make a difference, we need to understand the nature and context of the problem. That begins with correctly diagnosing the suffering we see around us. In the United States, poverty and social breakdown are often rooted in problems that are deeper than a lack of money or material possessions. The poor in America typically suffer in different ways than the poor in developing countries, where corrupt governments, the missing rule of law, unstable financial systems, food shortages due to famine, and the absence of basic health care systems exacerbate extreme material deprivation. Unique conditions call for a different approach in developing nations.

*Seek Social Justice* investigates how to prevent and overcome the kind of need we see right here in America. It explores

**Four in 10 children in America are born to single mothers.**

**More than 1.5 million children in the U.S. have at least one parent in a federal or state prison.**

**There are thousands of homeless people on the streets in the U.S. on any given night.**

# Almost half of the students in America's major urban school districts don't graduate on time.

the underlying causes of, and the most effective solutions to, the ills that tarnish human dignity and hinder flourishing. The problems are complex—why do devastation and disadvantage spring up in the midst of a society marked by such abundance? The solutions are challenging—what hopes can we have for ex-prisoners when the odds predict that soon they'll be back behind bars? That's why it's so important to get to the root of the problem in order to develop a wise and effective response.

Helping others requires us to know the different players who can best meet their needs. Seeking social justice starts with each of us, but it's an undertaking that requires more than one person or even one large organization. It takes families, churches, non-profit groups, businesses, and government—all playing their distinct roles—to make progress on complex problems. So, in addition to discussing the source of social breakdown, we will explore the various roles of these different institutions. We'll look at how each operates on its own, as well as in relation to the others to achieve common good and transform lives in need.

**“It's just too easy to love ‘The Poor’. It's a lot harder to actually do the hard work of building face-to-face relationships with real people with real needs with real, messy issues.”**

–Dr. Amy Sherman,  
Center for Social Justice  
Trevecca Nazarene University

# Using This Guide

This written guide contains six lessons corresponding to six videos, available on the accompanying DVD or online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com):

**Lesson One** Rethinking Social Justice: Getting to the Root of the Problem

**Lesson Two** Cultivating Justice from the Ground Up: Marriage, Family, and Friendship

**Lesson Three** Serving the Whole Person: Churches and Ministries

**Lesson Four** Restoring Dignity and Purpose: The Importance of Work

**Lesson Five** Maintaining the Social Conditions for Justice: The Role of Government

**Lesson Six** Breaking Ground: What You Can Do To Seek Social Justice



Begin each lesson by reading aloud the section entitled “**Before You Press Play**.” This brief section will introduce the topic of the lesson and alert you to certain things to look for when viewing the video. You do not need to write down answers to these questions—they are simply intended to guide your viewing.



Next, “**Watch**” the video for each lesson.



After viewing the video, return to the study guide and start the “**Read and Discuss**” section of the appropriate lesson. The written text builds on and refers to the stories and principles presented in the video lessons. One or more people can read the text and questions aloud, or each group member can read the text silently before discussing the questions together.



You’ll have a chance to summarize and reflect on the main take-away points of each lesson in the “**Rethink**” section. Use the final question to think about what you’ve learned and how you might apply it in your own life and community.



“**Read On**” offers a list of suggested resources for further reading. This list can also be found at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com), along with additional facts about each lesson topic and bonus footage featuring experts from *Seek Social Justice*.

Finally, “**Behind the Scenes**” provides some details if you’re curious about the people, programs, or terms presented in the video.





## Lesson One

# Rethinking Social Justice: Getting to the Root of the Problem

If you haven't done so already, please take time to read the "Before You Begin" section on page one of this guide.



## Before You Press Play

"WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE?" That's the first question to ask when we find people in need. The answers should guide us to respond in ways that can make a lasting difference.

In Lesson One, you'll hear from members of one university community working to transform lives in need. As you watch the video, begin thinking about the idea of *social justice*:

- How should we understand this concept? What problems does it refer to? Who is responsible for addressing them, and how?
- What is the vision of social justice that motivates those in the video to serve others?



## Watch

### **Relational Justice**

(see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*An important goal of this first lesson is to develop a solid understanding of social justice. The following lessons will build on the relational approach to the concept proposed in this lesson.*

### **Rethinking Social Justice**

To seek social justice effectively, we need to understand the nature of the problems and the goal we seek to achieve.

Just as doctors must understand the basics of good health in order to diagnose illnesses, we need to understand what makes up a just society in order to understand the nature of social breakdown. In either case, failing to understand both the problem and the goal can lead to further harm.

- 1 In the video, Marvin Olasky observes that social justice is often understood to mean the equal distribution of income. According to that approach, what is the presumed problem, and what is the presumed goal?

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- 2 The commentators in the video propose a different, more holistic way of thinking about social justice. As they point out, true justice is about more than simply economics or government. Dr. Amy Sherman suggests that justice is about right relationships. According to this relational approach, what is the nature of the problems, and what is the goal of social justice?

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*“In the West, with the wealth-creating opportunities that we have, most issues of poverty are at least in part spiritual and moral and social problems, and they aren’t solved unless we deal with those underlying problems.”*

—Dr. Jay Richards,  
Author, *Money, Greed, and God*

### **Relationships: Where It All Begins**

Independence is a cherished ideal in American culture, and has been since 1776. But since then, a more troubling vision of independence has emerged: a kind of go-it-alone individualism that disregards relationships and communities, which are vital to a strong society.

Christian teaching, on the other hand, emphasizes that human nature is relational by definition. You are not an isolated individual but a son or daughter, a neighbor, a student or an employee, a citizen, and a child of God. From the moment you’re born, you’re embedded in networks of relationships that make life possible and shape your identity. Thriving people and communities, the true objectives of social justice, depend in large part on the health of some basic relationships.

- 3 What are the different kinds of relationships that Amy Sherman says make up this kind of justice?

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- 4 Amy Sherman suggests that this view of multi-faceted relationships as central to human flourishing resonates with biblical teaching. Choose one of the following Scripture passages and identify what kinds of relationships (spiritual, familial, communal, material, internal) are mentioned: The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4); The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21); The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
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### The Real Root of the Problem: Broken Relationships

It's common to approach poverty as a narrow issue of physical or material hardship and to calculate it solely in terms of dollars and cents. But poverty is much more than financial need or inequality. It has to do with a lack of both the tangible and intangible resources that people need to thrive. Amy Sherman says that, from a biblical perspective, poverty has a lot to do with brokenness in the foundational relationships of life.

- 5 Jason, who teaches boys at Son Farm, says that seeking social justice *with* someone is different from imposing it *on* someone. Talk about an example of each of these approaches around us today. Why does Jason think it's important that efforts to help people be face-to-face?
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- 6 Robin, the nurse who provides volunteer health counseling at the apartment complex, says that helping residents build relationships of trust with people like health care providers is one way to assist them in moving out of poverty. Why do you think that is the case?
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Some needs arise because of natural disasters or the harmful actions of others—dramatic external forces that can turn life upside-down. Some needs come from

*“Justice is more than just the law. It's more than the enforcement of the law, of finding people guilty of crimes. Justice infers right relationships between human beings.”*

—Sean Litton,  
Vice President of Field Operations  
International Justice Mission

the conditions—in the family, community, school district, etc.—in which people are born and raised. And some needs stem from a person’s own bad habits, poor choices, and irresponsible actions. These can have far-reaching effects in a person’s life. Drug and alcohol addictions, for instance, prevent many people from being able to hold down a job, save money, form a healthy marriage, and stay on the right side of the law. All of these causes can strain or rupture the basic relationships that people need to flourish.

This brokenness can have significant consequences on the health of not only an individual but an entire society. Where we see social breakdown, we’re likely to find that foundational relationships are missing or dysfunctional.

**7** What do the following verses say about the various causes of economic poverty? Proverbs 10:4, 13:18, 19:15, 21:5.

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*“Social justice is the sum of millions of acts of relational justice.”*

–Dr. Marvin Olasky,  
Editor-in-Chief  
WORLD Magazine

**8** Marvin Olasky says that social justice is the sum of millions of acts of relational justice. What do you think he means by acts of relational justice?

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### **Inadequate Solutions: What Doesn’t Work**

Our understanding of the nature and causes of poverty shapes how we respond. A failure to recognize fundamental needs will lead to inadequate approaches.

That’s why it’s important to understand the real nature of poverty in America. While situations of serious material need do exist in America, the typical household described as “poor” according to government statistics has more living space than the average European household, as well as amenities considered luxuries just a couple generations ago—cars, washers and dryers, dishwashers, and televisions. It’s true that even in these conditions, the situation of the poor might be far from thriving. But in these circumstances the nature of poverty is usually deeper and more complex than a lack of money or material possessions.

As a result, strategies that focus solely on giving handouts to the poor only treat one dimension of need and don’t reach down to the root of the problem. They ignore the multiple broken relationships that often lead to material need in the first place.

**9** “If a woman’s here for just two hours, they need to know, at least, that we said to them one time that ‘you have value’ and ‘you have worth,’” explains

Theresa Boyd about the approach of her ministry that works with former female prisoners. Why do you think this approach rather than material support is the priority?

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- 10** Have you or has someone close to you suffered in ways that may not be material in nature, but are every bit as painful and crippling?

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Different kinds of assistance shape attitudes and behaviors in different ways. Approaches intended to help people can actually encourage them to make unhealthy choices and reinforce actions that damage relationships and prevent healthy relationships from developing. Regardless of good intentions, assistance that encourages wrong choices is wrong. It doesn't advance social justice.

- 11** How can it actually hurt a person in need to provide handouts without certain expectations, accountability, or guidelines?

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- 12** In our efforts to help those in need, how can we incorporate the idea of restoring relationships *and* give generously in terms of money and material goods?

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*“Social justice is not a tip off of the excess that we have toward the poor so that we somehow salve our own guilt. It is a true stewardship of the resources that God has entrusted us with.”*

–Dr. Dan Boone,  
President  
Trevecca Nazarene University

### **A Strategy that Works: Consider the Needs of the Whole Person**

Because people often have many different needs—physical, emotional, social, etc.—effective responses must be multi-dimensional. Some institutions are better

than others at tackling the wide range of a person's needs.

The best approaches heal wounds while also inspiring, challenging, and enabling those in need to pursue a better course by restoring relationships. Seeking social justice should start with efforts to strengthen those spheres of society in which healthy relationships can grow.

- 13** Which institutions and spheres of society does Amy Sherman suggest have responsibility for seeking social justice?

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- 14** Read 1 Corinthians 13:2-3. How do the people and organizations highlighted in the video embody what these verses say about the way we give of ourselves and our possessions?

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## Rethink

Thriving depends on healthy relationships, so the roots of poverty and social breakdown typically can be found in absent or broken relationships. The problems of poverty and social breakdown are multi-dimensional and usually include material, interpersonal, and moral/spiritual needs.

Complex problems usually call for solutions that are relational and tailored to the specific person in need. Preventing and overcoming social breakdown depends on people and institutions exercising proper responsibility and relating appropriately to each other. We'll take a closer look at some of the most important relationships and institutions in the following lessons.

Social justice doesn't come about primarily through protests, pickets, and public marches or by imposing new programs from the top down. A relational approach means that social justice is best cultivated from the ground up.

- 15** How might it change your perspective and involvement with your church or community to see restored relationships as the foundation of social justice?

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## Read On

To explore the root of the problem further, check out the following resources. Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks to these and other resources.

Proverbs 14:21, 31

*Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity*, E. Calvin Beisner

*The Problem of Poverty*, Abraham Kuyper

*The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Marvin Olasky

“Defining Social Justice,” Michael Novak (*First Things* Dec. 2000)

“Name That Idea: Try a Little Social Justice,” Marvin Olasky (*WORLD* July 26, 2008)

“Understanding and Reducing Poverty in America,” Robert Rector, The Heritage Foundation

## Behind the Scenes

### **Who are the students referenced by Amy Sherman who appear in the video?**

The students attend Trevecca Nazarene University, in Nashville, Tennessee, which houses the J.V. Morsch Center for Social Justice. The Center hosts events that equip young leaders to serve those in need, such as sponsoring teams of students to clean-up a local stream or weed a community garden.

### **When Chuck Colson and Amy Sherman refer to “shalom,” what do they mean?**

*Shalom* is a Hebrew word usually translated as “peace” or “well-being” (see Jeremiah 29:7) which conveys a sense of full or complete harmony of the foundational relationships of life.

### **Who is Robin and what does she do at the Mercury Courts housing development?**

Robin Jewett is an instructor in the physician’s assistant program at Trevecca Nazarene University. At Mercury Courts she helps residents live a healthier lifestyle and get established with a primary health provider they trust.





## Lesson Two

# Cultivating Justice from the Ground Up: Marriage, Family, and Friendship

## II Before You Press Play

In Lesson One, we looked at poverty and social breakdown, seeking to diagnose the problem at its roots. We noted how the roots of poverty in America are often not primarily material in nature—poverty is not caused simply by a lack of money.

Material need is typically a symptom of deeper problems, such as the breakdown of marriage and family. Consider these facts:

- Roughly 80 percent of all long-term poverty occurs in single-parent homes.
- Nearly four in 10 children are born to single mothers. Seven out of 10 black children are born to an unwed mother. These children are seven times more likely to experience poverty than those born and raised in a home with their married parents.

How should we respond to problems such as poverty and social breakdown? What is an effective strategy for seeking social justice?

First and foremost, an effective strategy must target the root of the issue: brokenness in the foundational relationships that are essential for individuals and communities to succeed. This type of approach requires getting to know people personally—caring for them up-close and dealing directly with their core needs. It calls for more focus on rolling up sleeves in our own communities than on rolling out new government programs. How we view the power of personal relationships will shape the way we seek social justice.

Effective responses begin at the ground level with strengthening marriage and the family, building friendships, and investing in one person at a time. In the video for Lesson Two, you'll meet Roderick and Lisa and their friends, Cheryl and Ron. As you watch their story, begin thinking about:

- What enabled Roderick to transform his life, his family and community?
- What sort of influence did Roderick have on his children's chances of ending up in poverty or prison?
- What kind of transformation did Cheryl and Ron help bring about simply by becoming friends with Roderick and Lisa?



## Watch

### **The Power of Family and Friends**

with commentary by Rudy Carrasco, Former Executive Director, Harambee Christian Family Center (see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*Families can be the source of both our fondest memories and our deepest wounds. The pain many have experienced in their own families can get in the way of picturing family's positive role in society. You may find it helpful to set a separate time for your group to talk through their own family experiences. To get the most out of this study guide, try to focus on the key themes and all the questions presented below.*

### **The Power of Relationships**

When we speak of injustice, we often think of social forces that hurt people or hold them back. Because these forces are often beyond the control of any individual or group, because they appear so broad and powerful, the best response we can normally muster involves supporting or protesting the issue of the day—typically at a distance from the people in need. While rallies may be called for in some cases, opportunities to invest directly in people and relationships lie within our reach and we must not ignore them.

An effective social justice strategy cultivates the ground in which healthy relationships can bloom, heal, and thrive. Cultivation is the act of preparing soil for future growth—creating an environment that nurtures and enables flourishing. Isaiah 45:8 includes this imagery in its call to “let justice spring up” (NAB) or “grow” (NIV) or “sprout” (ESV). The pursuit of social justice should start with the people we have the opportunity to know and care for on a regular basis.



Who are the people in need who cross your path daily?

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How might you help equip members of your own small group, congregation, family, or community to better know and care for one another?

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### The Power of Starting Small

In the Bonton section of Dallas where Roderick lived, lives were changed—not by a bulldozing, top-down intervention, but by a few simple seeds that produced lots of fruit. For Roderick, those seeds were marriage and friendship: a commitment to his wife that was unusual in his neighborhood and a friendship with the Murffs that crossed socio-economic and racial lines.

At first glance, it might seem like parenting a couple of kids or starting a friendship can't contribute much toward social justice, since it limits one's influence to a very small arena. But tending to the growth and development of a single friend or family member can have positive and dramatic effects on an entire community for generations to come.

- 3 If someone asked you the question that the Murffs asked Mike Fechner—"What can we do to make a positive difference in a hurting neighborhood?"—how would you respond? How did Mike respond?

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- 4 In addition to the more obvious sacrifices, what small gestures did the Murffs make to help Roderick and Lisa? How did the Murffs try to nurture Roderick's relationships (financial, physical, marital, and spiritual)?

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### The Power of the Personal

Every person is different by design and each person needs different things at different times. That's why one-size-fits-all approaches do not lead to the most caring or effective solutions. Only if we understand the specifics of a situation can we best understand how to tailor a solution to meet a person's particular needs.

That kind of personal knowledge is likely to be fostered in families, close friendships, and mentoring relationships. These are relationships in which people

*"The family is an integral part of social justice because it is the starting point of social justice."*

-Rudy Carrasco,  
Former Executive Director  
Harambee Christian  
Family Center

see each other often, know each other by name, make themselves vulnerable to one another, and help each other with the mundane and personal aspects of life. These relationships form the roots of a just society.

**5** Cheryl had a knack for keeping things in order, so she bought containers and helped Lisa organize her home. What gifts, talents, and resources do you have that could help you serve others in a personal way?

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**6** In what ways did the Murffs' own marriage serve as a role model for Roderick and Lisa's relationship?

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*"We just wanted to stand along beside them and encourage them, and be a part of their family and them be a part of our family. We've learned from them and they've learned from us."*

-Cheryl Murff

**7** According to Cheryl, the benefits of friendship flowed both ways. What sort of lessons can we learn by serving those who are different from us?

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**8** Read James 2:1-9. What does this passage have to say about showing favoritism in regard to those we befriend?

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### **The Power to Shape Vision and Hope**

It's difficult for people to thrive if they can't envision a successful future. For example, they may not know anyone who has held down a job and may have no idea about the practical steps that are necessary to seek and keep employment. Family and cultural norms influence people's standards for living and what they consider

worth pursuing. Relationships shape expectations, desires, and ideas about what's possible. Parents, friends, and mentors have a significant role to play by modeling the kind of character and success to aim for.

- 9 In the video, Roderick explains that seeing his three-year-old son mimic him rolling a joint was part of what prompted him to change. Prior to Roderick's transformation, what was his son's likely long-term path? What, or who, shaped his expectations, desires, and vision of the future?

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- 10 Roderick had never seen a wedding ceremony before getting married himself. Do you think growing up in a culture that values marriage and family makes any difference in fighting social breakdown? Why or why not?

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*"There are many people in the city who want to have a family, but so often they've never seen what a family is."*

—Mike Fechner,  
H.I.S. Bridge Builders

## ***The Foundation of Family***

The family is foundational to human flourishing. As we've seen, it can focus attention and commitment on a small number of people, facilitate personal knowledge of their needs, and foster a healthy and hopeful vision for their future. The family is where the pursuit of social justice must begin.

### **The Family and Social Justice**

From the moment a newborn enters the world, family members typically provide and assist in all aspects of life. The family bears responsibility for a comprehensive range of needs. Parents act as doctors, teachers, chefs, janitors, accountants, and spiritual advisors in their homes. No parent fulfills all of these roles perfectly, and some may decide to delegate a few of these tasks to others. But parents and families bear all these responsibilities up front and are usually the best equipped to carry them out.

The benefits of strong marriages and families extend beyond their own members to society at large. It's in the family that we learn to look out for the good of others, to share, and to accept the fact that we can't always have things our way. It's where we learn a good work ethic, trustworthiness, and honesty—the habits that make a healthy and prosperous society possible.

- 11 When you hear people talking about social justice, do you hear much about the family as part of the solution to social breakdown? Why do you think that is the case?

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- 12 Read Isaiah 1:17. Consider the command to seek justice for the orphan and the widow. What do their situations have in common? What is the primary cause of their need?

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If parents abuse or neglect their children—a severe example of the broken relationships we’ve been talking about—law enforcement and government agencies that exist to protect the lives of all citizens have a responsibility to protect those children. We’ll see more of how this plays out in Lesson Five when we look at the role of government.

### **Family Breakdown and Poverty**

Broken family relationships hinder healthy development, distort values, and damage a person’s sense of hope. The breakdown of marriage and family is one of the most significant predictors of hardship in the life of a child, neighborhood, or community.

About 38 percent of single-mother families are poor. By contrast, only about seven percent of married families with children are poor.

Regrettably, government policies have made this problem worse. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s, the welfare system contained unintentional disincentives for marriage. Recipients only qualified if their household incomes were below a specified level. If a single mother were to marry an employed husband, she could risk losing her benefits. From 1965 to 1995, the unwed birth rate quadrupled, from less than eight percent to 32 percent.

Children raised by married parents are less likely to experience crime, unwed pregnancy, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol use. Studies have shown that many aspects of well-being, including physical and mental health, stress management, and educational performance correlate with growing up in a home with married parents.

- 13** In the video, what does Velma say is the result of government welfare support on a household?

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- 14** How do you see the breakdown of marriage and family affecting your own community?

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## Rethink

We need to cultivate social justice from the ground up, beginning with the kind of close-up relationships provided by friends, mentors, and family members.

Healthy marriage and family relationships are especially important for people to thrive. These institutions have the capacity and responsibility to care for a comprehensive range of needs in personal ways. When a family falls apart or fails to form in the first place, the consequences are often devastating for the individuals involved and the surrounding community. Fractured family relationships are a leading cause of poverty and social breakdown in America.

An important place to start seeking social justice is working to ensure strong, supportive, intact families, and pursuing meaningful relationships.

- 15** How might it change your perspective and involvement with your church or community if you approached family and close relationships as the foundation of social justice?

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## Read On

Learn more about cultivating social justice from the ground up through marriage and family. Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks to these and other resources.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Ephesians 6:1-4

1 Timothy 5:8, 16

*Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*, Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas

*Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*, Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur

*Losing Ground*, Charles Murray

“The Effect of Marriage on Child Poverty,” Robert Rector, Kirk A. Johnson, and Patrick F. Fagan, The Heritage Foundation

“Reducing Poverty by Revitalizing Marriage in Low-Income Communities,” Robert Rector, The Heritage Foundation

## Behind the Scenes

### ***What is H.I.S. BridgeBuilders?***

H.I.S. BridgeBuilders is a ministry that operates several programs in Dallas, including GED classes, recreational activities, Bible studies, and an eye clinic that offers free exams and trains people to make glasses. Clifton works at the BridgeBuilders Eye Clinic.

### ***How did Ron and Cheryl get to know Mike Fechner?***

Ron and Cheryl Murff worship at Prestonwood Baptist Church in North Dallas. Both Cheryl and Mike Fechner have offices in the church, which is how they got acquainted.

### ***What is “DTS”?***

When Velma mentions that “DTS” students volunteered for H.I.S. BridgeBuilders, she is referring to Dallas Theological Seminary.

### ***What does Roderick do now?***

Roderick now works on staff at H.I.S. BridgeBuilders.







## Lesson Three

# Serving the Whole Person: Churches and Ministries



## Before You Press Play

In Lesson One, we learned that seeking social justice requires tending to the broken relationships at the root of the problems we see around us today. In Lesson Two, Cheryl and Ron’s friendship with Roderick and Lisa demonstrated how preventing and overcoming social breakdown begins at home, through face-to-face, personal relationships found within the context of family and close friends.

But what happens when the need simply overwhelms a family? Or when someone in need has no family to lean on?

We’ve gotten used to the idea of turning to a government “safety net” for these types of situations. After all, there’s a targeted social service program for every tangible need from unemployment to homelessness. But government programs cannot adequately address the intangible and complex relational needs at the heart of many problems.

That’s what makes the work of churches and ministries so different—and so well-equipped to serve as a first line of defense to prevent and overcome human need.

Churches and ministries can offer a comprehensive set of resources to help cultivate and restore the foundational relationships of life. Along with other community groups and local networks of support, they also strengthen the family in its critical role. Religious congregations and aid associations once played the leading role in addressing human need in America. For various reasons, that focus has receded over time, but some congregations believe they can lead the way once again.

In Lesson Three, you’ll see one church’s role in serving its community. The First Baptist Church of Leesburg, Florida, under the leadership of Pastor Charles Roesel, established a “ministry village” called the Christian Care Center to offer a holistic range of services. The campus contains a Men’s Residence, Benevolence Center, Thrift Store, Pregnancy Care Center, and other facilities that serve hurting members of the Leesburg community. As you watch the video, consider these questions:

- How did healthy relationships play a role in this church and its ministries cultivating social justice in its own community?
- What makes this church’s service effective?



## Watch

### **The Loving Justice of First Baptist Church Leesburg**

with commentary by Dr. Albert Mohler, Jr., President, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*When thinking in terms of social justice, we should ask which institutions are best equipped to help those in need. Just as we learned about the role of family in Lesson Two, a key theme of Lesson Three is that local congregations are a foundational institution of a just society.*

## **The Responsibility to Serve**

### **Responsive Love**

For the congregation of First Baptist Church Leesburg, outreach and service aren't only for the especially pious. Church members don't consider service merely an act of personal generosity. Instead, they also view helping those in need as a response to God's command to love others. They approach this ministry as a responsibility, even a privilege—a joyful *obligation*, not just an *option*.

- 1** What difference do you think this perspective makes for churches, in terms of the kind of assistance they provide? With this question in mind, read and discuss Matthew 25:34-46.

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- 2** In the video, Pastor Roesel discussed social responsibility in terms of Jesus' call to "love your neighbor." Read Luke 10:25-37. Who does the parable of the Good Samaritan suggest is a neighbor?

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## The Servant Church in American History

Until recently, the character of American compassion was rooted in the church. As Dr. Albert Mohler notes in the video, churches led the way in developing schools, hospitals, and other social institutions in America. Christians pioneered disaster relief agencies and savings and loan programs. They were at the forefront of social movements such as the abolition of slavery and prison reform. Alongside these inspiring examples, American congregations in earlier centuries also carried out their responsibility to care for the day-to-day needs of hurting people.

In *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Marvin Olasky describes how, just a hundred years ago, congregations were the first place to turn to in times of need. Churches and Christian aid societies practiced careful, deliberate, and personal generosity by opening their homes and giving of their time—not just providing money. They did not separate the tangible needs from the intangible: such a division was considered neither wise nor truly compassionate.

Today, we don't necessarily think of churches on the front lines of meeting need. But churches and ministries still have the capacity to serve that role, and those that do often stand out for their effectiveness in tackling some of society's most complex problems.

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Where do people in your community tend to look first for help?

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How do you think the community of Leesburg would differ without the people of First Baptist Church? If those being served had to turn somewhere else for assistance, how would the help they receive differ in that scenario?

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## Keeping the Faith

Pastor Roesel sees serving the needs of the community as part of the core mission of the church, stemming from its central beliefs. But some members of the congregation were initially wary that focusing on social ministries would lead the church off course.

They're not alone. Churchgoers have voiced similar concerns since the appearance of the "social gospel" movement in the early 1900s. That movement

*"We as the church have to be the people who say, 'We can't franchise this out.' ...The church has the responsibility to make a start—to get its members mobilized for that kind of ministry."*

—Dr. Albert Mohler, Jr.,  
President, Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

has been criticized for abandoning central Christian doctrines and fundamental responsibilities of the church, reducing the gospel to a message of social redemption through political and economic transformation.

Theologians like Dr. Anthony Bradley note that the main problem with the social gospel isn't that Christians were concerned with improving social institutions and structures. Rather, it is the tendency to reduce the entire gospel to this one arena, distracting from an emphasis on personal sin and redemption. First Baptist Leesburg provides one example of how faith and acts of service are biblically compatible.

**5** In what ways do you think that maintaining core doctrinal beliefs and cultivating social justice might actually reinforce each other?

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**6** Read Matthew 5:13-16. What do you think it means for the church to be salt and light? What does that look like in practice?

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*“The amazing thing is the impact a servant church makes on a community.”*

—Rev. Charles Roesel,  
First Baptist Church Leesburg

## What Makes Churches' Service Distinct

### Care for the Whole Person

First Baptist Church Leesburg demonstrates that local congregations can provide a full range of resources—spiritual, material, financial, emotional—to people in need.

**7** Name an *intangible* resource this church was able to provide in its efforts to restore broken lives and cultivate human flourishing. How did this kind of effort make a difference for people like Bob (the Men's Residence graduate) and Vicki (the lady helped by the Pregnancy Care Center)?

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Consider the following characteristics of local congregations and faith-based outreach. Churches and faith-based ministries:

- Take people's spiritual nature seriously
- Possess close-up knowledge of the surrounding community's needs
- Can address problems at the level of the human heart
- Are motivated by deep conviction and hope
- Point to a source of meaning and purpose in life
- Emphasize reconciliation
- Allow members to know each other by name
- Represent a wide-ranging pool of gifts, skills, and resources
- Provide a sense of belonging in a supportive community
- Foster hope, strength, and perseverance in the face of difficulties

**8** How do these characteristics distinguish the kind of help that churches can provide from the kind offered by more remote sources such as government welfare agencies?

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**9** Pastor Roesel talked about ministries serving the totality of a person's needs. Which foundational needs and relationships did he mean by this and how did they do it?

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*“Every ministry we have is for the purpose of meeting the total needs of the individual.”*

—Rev. Charles Roesel,  
First Baptist Church Leesburg

### **Different Gifts and Different Needs Drive Innovative Solutions**

One of the most exciting aspects of church outreach is that it can offer flexible, creative, and resourceful solutions to both immediate and long-term needs.

Needs change over time, for both individuals and communities. Churches can be flexible in addressing those needs: shifting resources and developing new approaches as necessary. Because of their close relationships with those who are hurting, church members see the direct effects of their efforts and get immediate feedback. This allows for quick course correction as well as maximizing the outreach that works.

The initial ministry effort at First Baptist Church Leesburg was a rescue mission, which provided soft beds and hot meals for the homeless. Pastor Roesel says that he later came to believe that this particular approach needed improvement.

- 10 How does the Men's Residence represent a change in the congregation's approach to serving those who came to the rescue mission?

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There is no single right model for all churches' outreach ministries. Faith naturally manifests itself in a diversity of gifts of service, and the needs of each community differ. One church may express its responsibility to love and serve community members through establishing a targeted ministry, such as a health clinic or a school. In another congregation, an informal group may identify opportunities for congregation members to participate in existing external ministries.

- 11 What kind of relational ministries could members of your church or small group engage in to seek social justice in your community? What do you think are the main obstacles standing in the way of church members engaging in this kind of ministry?

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## Rethink

Congregations and faith-based organizations have great power and potential to promote social justice by serving community needs through personal relationships. Face-to-face interactions generate personal knowledge and care and can yield direct feedback that allows for innovation and course correction. The diversity of gifts in a congregation allows for creative and flexible service, and even a small church can make a big difference.

Churches once had a much more prominent role in providing for social welfare in America. Today, government's social welfare activity has greatly expanded, but churches remain better equipped than government in their ability to meet the wide range of complex, relational human needs. By resuming their place on the frontline of serving those in need, churches and ministries could significantly advance social justice in America.



- 12 How might it change your perspective and social engagement to view local, caring congregations as a necessary component of social justice?

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## Read On

Explore further how churches and ministries can serve the whole person through these Scripture passages and other resources. Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks and related material.

John 13:34-35

Romans 12:9-21

James 1:27

*Meeting Needs, Sharing Christ*, Donald Atkinson and Charles Roesel

*Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, Timothy J. Keller

“Why Religion Matters Even More,” Patrick F. Fagan, The Heritage Foundation

“The Difference One Church Can Make,” Ryan Messmore, The Heritage Foundation

“Private Faith, Big Government,” Ryan Messmore, The Heritage Foundation

## Behind the Scenes

***How many ministries are a part of the “ministry village” of First Baptist Church Leesburg?***

First Baptist Church Leesburg operates a “ministry village” called the Christian Care Center that includes six different ministries—from an Emergency Children’s Shelter to a Pregnancy Care Center—each housed in a separate building on the FBC campus.

***Are the health care scenes from a ministry run by the church?***

The scenes of the nurse and the medical equipment were filmed inside the Community Medical Care Center (CMCC), which is jointly sponsored by the Christian Care Center

and the Leesburg Regional Medical Center. The CMCC provides free health care to the indigent and uninsured through the volunteer services of doctors in the congregation.

***Has the church always been this excited about ministry?***

It took Pastor Charles Roesel five years of preaching and teaching before the congregation voted to launch the first ministry, the rescue mission known as the “White House Ministry.” Although in its early stages no one could stay for more than seven days, today the Men’s Residence offers a 15-week, in-depth residential program for transient men.

*Notes*

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## Lesson Four

# Restoring Dignity and Purpose: The Importance of Work



## Before You Press Play

We've explored the role of families, churches, and ministries in building strong relationships and overcoming brokenness. Work is another essential element in human flourishing.

Work provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment and offers people opportunities to exercise their gifts. Treating people justly means relating to them as beings created with the capacity to work, with something to contribute to society. Treating them otherwise can be demeaning and dehumanizing.

In the video for Lesson Four, you'll hear about Men of Valor, a ministry to help men transition out of prison. You'll meet Carl Carlson, an ex-prisoner who founded Men of Valor, and Curt Campbell, manager of the ministry's pre-release program, the Jericho Project. You will also hear from the Men of Valor staff who help men after they are released from prison, including employment coordinator Andrey Brinson and aftercare manager Raul Lopez. As you watch the video, consider the following questions:

- What does Men of Valor teach prisoners about work and why does the ministry staff think this is important?
- In what ways do released prisoners benefit from a job? In what ways do others around them also benefit?



## Watch

### **Working Toward Justice**

with commentary by Star Parker, President, Coalition for Urban Renewal and Education, and Chuck Colson, Founder, Prison Fellowship and BreakPoint (see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*This lesson spells out some potentially unfamiliar economic principles. You may find it helpful to read these explanations before your group meets.*

### The Importance of Work

Christianity teaches that people are made in the image of the Creator and are therefore naturally creative beings, called by God to work and produce. Work and creativity are fundamental to human existence. Work is good in its own right, not just because it produces positive material and social outcomes.

- 1 Read Genesis 2:4-7 and 2:15. What do these verses imply about the significance of work?

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*“If a man takes work really seriously—the concept of work in and of itself—it provides him with dignity and self respect, meaning, and purpose in life.”*

–Carl Carlson,  
Director  
Men of Valor

- 2 As we hear in the video, Curt Campbell teaches that God commanded humans to work *before* the “Curse” or the “Fall.” How should this affect our understanding of work?

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Work, at a minimum, helps people avoid boredom by giving them something to do. But more important is work’s positive contribution to a person’s sense of dignity and accomplishment. Work is a means of exercising personal responsibility and providing for family. Ultimately, Christian teaching views work as a way to glorify God through good stewardship of the physical creation and the individual gifts we’ve been given.

- 3 In the video, what reasons do Men of Valor staff give for making work an essential component of their ministry to prisoners? What sort of difference do you think this might make for the way prisoners think about themselves and their responsibilities?

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- 4 Based on comments from the video, what tends to happen to released prisoners when they lack a sense of purpose or accomplishment that work provides?

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### Loving Our Neighbor Through Work

The Bible teaches that work can be a form of loving our neighbor. Building houses, running a business, or creating a useful product are not just ways to make a profit—they are tangible ways of serving others. Work allows people to provide for the needs of their own families, but it also enables them to contribute to the common good of society.

- 5 Read Ephesians 4:28. What reason does Paul give for urging people to do honest work with their own hands?

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- 6 What relational and community benefits of work does Star Parker describe in the video?

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*“When you take work off of the table, you take worth off of the table. You’ve taken the dignity from the person’s life to contribute to their own well-being and to their community and society.”*

–Star Parker,  
President  
Coalition for Urban  
Renewal and Education

### Hope, Growth, and Opportunity

Economic opportunity is critical for people escaping poverty, and a job is a key step toward that goal. Businesses provide jobs, and when businesses grow, so do job opportunities. In a free market system like that of the United States, employers have an incentive to pay and treat their employees well, because workers have the freedom to look for better opportunities.

- 7 Chuck Colson suggests that organizations that help to employ people coming out of prison promote not just kindness but social justice. Why do you think he believes that?

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- 8 What examples of business initiative did you see in the video and who benefited from them?

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We tend to think of the economy like an apple pie. In apple pie economics, if somebody gets a huge slice, the rest of us end up fighting over crumbs. But in reality, the economy isn't like a 9-inch pie to be carved up in a win/lose scenario. The economy grows, and when it does the available income increases and spreads. The primary way an economy grows is through business activity—and that's good news for all of us, including those currently living in poverty.

Instead of apple pie, think of Apple Computer, Inc., a company that has revolutionized personal computing and, in turn, created countless opportunities for those who create and benefit from their technology and products. The Apple IIe desktop was one of the first computers to appear in American classrooms. Today, if a classroom doesn't have a computer, we would probably consider those students disadvantaged.

By developing these technologies, Apple has helped to unlock the capabilities of children, no matter their background. In so doing, it has helped increase the standard of living for all of us and contributed to expanding human potential. At the same time, the company's success has created numerous jobs, generating income that employees spread to their families and communities. Apple's profitability has led to increased wealth for stockholders and opportunities for Apple engineers to develop innovations like the iPhone, starting the whole cycle of growth again.

Human ingenuity is staggering. Given the freedom, human beings will constantly innovate—especially when they have the incentives of enjoying the fruits of their own labors and being able to share those rewards with people around them.

- 9 If a growing economy is essential for fighting poverty, what habits, attitudes, and actions make that possible? How can we encourage these?

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- 10 It's true that many corporate leaders are motivated by the goal of increasing profits more than helping those in need. But why is it important that a company whose leaders want to help the disadvantaged first run a financially successful business?

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In addition to encouraging innovation and economic opportunity, the free market also advances human dignity, responsibility, and healthy relationships. It provides strong incentives for people to use their gifts. In its simplest form, the free market is represented by the single mom who wants to get off welfare by opening a daycare in her home. By encouraging free exchange—when the daycare provider sets a price and her neighbors choose her service—the free market meets a variety of needs and harmonizes diverse interests. It enables workers to provide for themselves, their families, and the greater good of the community around them. In all these ways, the free market advances social justice by contributing to healthy community relationships.

Regrettably, our fallen human nature is vulnerable to greed and materialism. As a result, many people engage in corruption or treat others unfairly to make a profit for themselves. That's why it's important to have political and economic systems that guard against such actions. It's important to note that a free market is not the same as a free-for-all. It requires government to enforce contracts and to guard against criminal activity such as fraud.

Wealth earned by hard work and ingenuity can be used for great good. Many universities and hospitals have been created by the wealth earned in the free market, as have countless charitable organizations and community enrichment programs. A political and economic environment that encourages innovation and growth and allows workers to enjoy the fruits of their labors is more likely to stimulate investment in worthy causes.

- 11 Do you think there is a difference between greed and a desire to see profit in a business? If so, how would you describe that difference?

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- 12 Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10. These verses cite the love of money as the root of all evil. What is the difference between the love of money and simply having wealth? How can wealth be used to advance social justice in the ways these lessons have discussed?

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*“Instead of looking at how I can get people to give me stuff, now I look at life from a standpoint of how I can give to other people.”*

-Billy Joe King, Jr.,  
Men of Valor Graduate

## **The Difference Between Work and Welfare**

### **The Limits of Welfare**

What happens when people are unable to work or when work is simply not available?

In these situations, people need help. As we’ve seen, family, friends, churches, and charitable organizations that have a relationship with those in need are best equipped to offer effective support.

If these resources aren’t enough, government welfare programs can provide short-term assistance. The downside is that these programs have a track record of creating long-term dependence on government, which can be dehumanizing to the individual and damaging to the relational support network around them. That’s because impersonal welfare programs tend to treat human beings as passive *recipients* rather than active *participants* who have something important to contribute to their personal well-being and to the common good. These programs also lack the accountability that’s inherent in personal relationships, and over time they can generate an entitlement mindset—a sense of being owed something without doing anything in return.

- 13 According to Men of Valor staff, what kind of attitude and behavior does welfare and government intervention foster in men? How can this play into the cycle of repeated criminal behavior?



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- 14** Read 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12. Why does Paul urge readers to avoid idleness and to work instead?
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In the 1990s, a majority of Americans generally reached agreement that welfare policies were discouraging work and marriage and were hurting many of the very people they were intended to help. In 1996, reforms to the central federal assistance program for needy families added work requirements and policies to encourage marriage and strengthen families. As a result of these new incentives, welfare caseloads fell by more than 50 percent. Work participation increased as well, particularly among the most disadvantaged. Ten years after the reform, 1.6 million fewer children were living in poverty, and by 2001 black child poverty dropped to its lowest rate in national history.

- 15** According to Star Parker, what kind of mindset did the government encourage in her when she was on welfare?
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## Rethink

Effective social justice strategies recognize that work promotes human dignity and fosters healthy relationships that lead to human flourishing. Work provides an individual with a sense of purpose, responsibility, and a way to contribute to the common good. Businesses have the capacity to promote a just society by creating opportunities to work. The free market presents opportunities and incentives for people to use their gifts to provide for themselves and those around them. In seeking social justice, we should pursue conditions and policies that create opportunity and incentive to work.

- 16** How might it change your perspective and involvement to view work as an essential element of a just society?

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## Read On

Interested in learning more about the role of business and work in pursuing social justice? Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks to these and other resources.

Proverbs 10:4-5

*The Call of the Entrepreneur* (DVD), Acton Media

*Economics in One Lesson: The Shortest and Surest Way to Understand Basic Economics*, Henry Hazlitt

*Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, Lawrence M. Mead

*Working: Its Meaning and Its Limits*, Gilbert Meilaender, editor

*Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life*, Michael Novak

*The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Michael Novak

*Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism is the Solution and Not the Problem*, Jay W. Richards

"The Role of Parental Work in Child Poverty," Robert Rector, The Heritage Foundation

## Behind the Scenes

### ***What is Carl Carlson's background?***

Carl began serving time in a state reformatory after running away from home at the age of 10. As an adult he received a 15-year prison sentence for robbery. During that time Carl first came to understand that he was loved by God. After his release, he began looking for ways to help other men struggling with the despair of prison life and the difficulties of reentry.

***What is Alfred's business?***

Alfred owns a construction clean-up company; his employees come in at the end of a construction job and clean the site to prepare it for use.

***What does Andrey do?***

Andrey works as the Employment Coordinator for Men of Valor, helping men find jobs after their incarceration. He works with the men on job readiness, job retention, and career planning.

## Notes

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## Lesson Five

# Maintaining the Social Conditions for Justice: The Role of Government

## II Before You Press Play

In previous lessons, we've looked at essential components of social justice, including close friendships that provide personal knowledge and meaningful connections, families and churches that offer comprehensive care and responsibility, and hard work that generates dignity and economic opportunity.

But these relationships and opportunities need secure social conditions to flourish. This brings us to the responsibility of government.

Government's role is to sustain an overall environment of safety, order, freedom, and peace. That includes upholding justice through laws and responding to threats to social harmony.

By doing these things, government ensures that healthy relationships can grow and thrive in the context of family, church, and community. In the video for this lesson, you'll witness the story of Shyima, whose dire situation required government intervention on her behalf. As you watch the video, consider these questions:

- What steps did government authorities take on Shyima's behalf that only government authorities can? What is government specifically equipped to do well?
- What needs did Shyima have that government was not well-equipped to meet?

## ▶ Watch

### **Liberty and Justice: Shyima's Story**

with commentary by Sean Litton, Vice President of Field Operations, International Justice Mission (see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*This lesson focuses on fighting human trafficking to highlight government's role in pursuing justice in society. While it may seem like a problem that exists only abroad, human trafficking is more prevalent in America than many people realize.*

What is the proper role of government in a just society? To answer this, we first need to address the question: What kinds of need is government best able to meet?

### **What Kinds of Need is Government Best Able to Meet?**

#### **Law and Order**

Although we often take the point for granted, a just society requires law and order. Laws express a community's agreement about the basic rules of conduct for its members' lives together. In other words, laws express a society's understanding of justice. Government articulates and implements specific laws to provide order for our public interactions.

*"It was a good day.  
They went to justice."*

-Shyima Hall

- 1 How did public awareness of the law help bring about Shyima's rescue? Who first tipped off the police about her situation?

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Government acts on behalf of—and seeks the good of—all citizens of a society, not just a particular family, church, or social group. Government also has a “monopoly” on the use of public force. In other words, government is the only institution in society that is authorized to use force to uphold public law. Without such a monopoly, rogue groups or gangs would take it upon themselves to impose their own notion of justice on the larger society.

- 2 In the video, how did government bring about freedom through the use of appropriate force?

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- 3 According to Sean Litton from International Justice Mission, why is it important to have only one institution in society that is authorized to enforce public laws on all citizens?
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### Protection for Civil Society

As we've discussed throughout this guide, effective social justice strategies seek to cultivate and restore healthy relationships. These relationships are best nurtured locally, in families, neighborhoods, and congregations—collectively referred to as *civil society*.

Individuals in these various spheres and communities need the freedom to serve one another and to exercise their proper role in society. This is difficult to do when their personal safety or possessions are in jeopardy. It's also difficult for families and churches to cultivate relationships and for businesses to supply economic opportunity through work if other entities interfere with their proper roles and responsibilities. Government serves to guard against such interference as various institutions intersect in public life.

In addition to protecting the freedom and authority of individuals and institutions, government also protects the freedom of a society as a whole—its freedom to pursue its way of life. A just society is one in which members are bonded to each other through sharing common goods, traditions, and a sense of moral purpose. Government safeguards these bonds and ensures that a society's heritage can be handed down to future generations.

- 4 Read Romans 13:3-4. What do these verses identify as the role of governing authorities?
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- 5 Discuss how government protected and allowed for a strong civil society response in Shyima's case.
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- 6 The family that trafficked Shyima into America and held her captive not only treated her as less than human but also refused to abide by basic assumptions, norms, and expectations of American society. If actions like this went unpunished, how would they threaten not only individuals like Shyima but also the larger society?

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Not all needs are best met by government. While government is very good at protecting freedom and physical safety, it lacks the ability to provide the personal care that is necessary for healthy relationships. Government is not well-equipped to address “problems of the heart” such as severe depression or destructive addictions—problems that often contribute to poverty and social breakdown. While the state can safeguard the conditions of a just society, it shouldn’t seek to respond to needs it doesn’t have the capacity to address. Government has an obligation not to overstep the boundaries of its own legitimate responsibilities. That was a significant concern when our nation’s Founders drafted the U.S. Constitution, which was carefully written to limit government’s role in a way that would allow civil society to thrive.

Government is at its best when it protects what civil society cultivates.

- 7 According to Sean Litton, in addition to their physical rescue and the prosecution of their perpetrators, what other needs do trafficking victims usually have? Which of these needs do you think government agencies are well-equipped to address?

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- 8 According to Lt. Derek Marsh, which of Shyima’s needs was the government not able to meet? What does this say about the possibility of achieving social justice if we primarily look to government to fulfill it?

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*“The government can take care of the law and order part of the equation, but other people have to step in and help that person heal.”*

—Sean Litton,  
Vice President of  
Field Operations  
International Justice Mission



## ***No One Has a Monopoly on Responsibility for Social Justice***

Listening to public debate, it's easy to get the impression that government bears the primary, if not sole, responsibility for social justice. Politicians and pundits often imply that a hurting society is the result of a cold-hearted and stingy government failing to uphold its responsibilities. In contrast, Sean Litton suggests that no single institution has the capacity to meet all the needs of social justice. Instead, responsibility for those requiring help is distributed throughout society, with different institutions called to serve in different ways. This approach matches the multi-dimensional nature of human need. Social breakdown is most often due to people failing to carry out their responsibilities to others—parents for their children, spouses for their mates, churches for their members, etc. Government cannot substitute for these foundational relationships.

9

Read 1 Peter 2:13-14. What do these verses say is the responsibility of government? How could government “praise those who do good” in society?

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10

Accountability can be uncomfortable. Why is it sometimes easier to avoid face-to-face contact and personal relationships?

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*“Each person that comes to the table does not provide a full set of utensils to deal with things.”*

—Lt. Derek Marsh,  
Orange County Human  
Trafficking Task Force

## ***Crowding Out Civil Society***

As we've seen, government best promotes social justice when it protects what civil society cultivates. But when government assumes ever-more responsibility for providing goods and services directly to citizens, it can work against the cause of social justice by crowding out civil society efforts in terms of both responsibility and resources.

For example, Social Security and similar government programs that provide for the elderly can shape our sense of responsibility for taking care of our own parents and grandparents. Government-funded unemployment benefits can weaken a congregation's or neighborhood's sense of obligation to its members who lose their jobs.

Government assistance programs rely on taxes that take money out of the hands of families, friends, churches, charities, and businesses. That leaves the institutions that are best able to care for and equip those in need with fewer resources while putting more resources into the hands of government, which can't provide people with the meaningful relationships they need to flourish. When they crowd out civil society, government assistance programs actually work against the cause of social justice.

Without a doubt, we should be very generous in committing resources to fighting poverty and social breakdown. However, the question is what kinds of resources are most effective—Money? Time? Emotional support? And which institutions are best equipped to deploy them given the specific circumstances—family, church, ministry, business, or government?

- 11** The more government crowds out other institutions, the more we place expectations on it to solve problems. Yet the more expectations we place on government, the more likely it is to grow and crowd out civil society institutions even more. The process of crowding out is self-perpetuating. How can we break this cycle when it comes to our own actions and expectations?
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## ***A Safety Net that Doesn't Trap***

What happens in emergencies when civil society organizations are unable to meet people's basic tangible needs? In dire situations, the government does have a responsibility to intervene by providing a "safety net." But a government safety net can only help a person or a family so far. Government cannot effectively build the relationships required for true human flourishing.

Safety nets should be a last resort and they should be temporary. Earlier in American history, government assistance was limited to cases where people fell through the primary net of civil society. When government intervenes today, it should do so in a way that supports rather than crowds out smaller, voluntary organizations. Government policy should also avoid fostering a dependence that discourages people from working and fulfilling their responsibilities to others.

It would be better to think of the safety net as a trampoline—a flexible place to land that helps people bounce back into independent living.

- 12** In what ways do government safety nets foster dependence and undercut justice?

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- 13** Strong relationships and work skills nurtured by family, church, and ministries are important for human flourishing. How might government intervention support rather than crowd out the role of families, churches, and work in our society?
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## Rethink

Government plays a crucial role in social justice by establishing and maintaining social conditions such as safety, order, freedom, and peace. These conditions allow families, churches, and ministries to nurture healthy relationships and businesses to provide the opportunity to work. Government is distinctly equipped and authorized to meet those needs in society that require the use of force to safeguard lives, property, institutions, and social identity. When government fails to respect the authority of other social institutions by stepping outside its proper limits, it inhibits human flourishing.

- 14** How might it change your perspective and involvement to view government's primary responsibility as protecting what civil society provides?
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## Read On

Check out these verses and other sources on the role of government. Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks to these and additional material.

Leviticus 19:15

Proverbs 29:4

1 Timothy 2:1-2

*The Heritage Guide to the Constitution*, Edwin Meese, Matthew Spalding, and David Forte

*To Empower People: From State to Civil Society*, Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus

*Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*God and Government*, Charles Colson

*Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville

*The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom*, Robert Nisbet

*From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan

*Vindicating the Founders: Race, Sex, Class, and Justice in the Origins of America*, Thomas G. West

"The Government Cannot Do It All," Herbert Hoover, April 25, 1949, New York City

"A Moral Case Against Big Government," Ryan Messmore, The Heritage Foundation

"The Size and Scope of Means-Tested Welfare Spending," Robert Rector, The Heritage Foundation

## Behind the Scenes

### ***What is going on in the opening footage?***

The opening footage is of a raid of a massage parlor in Orange County, California, suspected of trafficking women. The police treat the girls working there as victims; the girls are taken to the police headquarters where their needs can be assessed and where they can talk openly and freely about how they were treated at the massage parlor.

### ***What is a "john"?***

"John" is a slang term used for a person who solicits prostitution services.

**What happened during Shyima’s physical rescue?**

In response to a neighbor’s call, an investigator from the Department of Child Services and the police did a “knock and talk” at the house in which Shyima was enslaved. While talking with the owner of the house, who gave evasive and contradictory answers, the investigators determined that they needed to secure a warrant to search the house. Upon receiving the warrant, the investigators saw Shyima walk by the front door, so they removed her from the house in order to take her to safety.

**What is “ICE”?**

Shyima refers to “ICE,” which is the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, a division of the Department of Homeland Security that enforces customs and immigration laws.

**What is “Explorers”?**

“Explorers” is a local organization in Shyima’s town that people join to learn about police work and law enforcement.

## Notes

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## Lesson Six

# Breaking Ground: What You Can Do To Seek Social Justice



## Before You Press Play

The previous five lessons have presented different pieces of a framework for thinking about social breakdown in America and the different players who can respond most effectively.

How do these different pieces fit together, and how can you live out this approach in your community?

As we seek social justice, it's not effective to rush to solve an abstract problem called "injustice" in the name of a generic category of people called "the poor." Casting blame solely on distant, impersonal social structures doesn't solve our neighbors' needs. Justice is not ultimately found in political campaigns and government handouts.

The stories highlighted in this series portray a different approach, one that seeks social justice by pursuing human flourishing in its fullest sense. This strategy helps us to recognize not only material needs but also familial, spiritual, moral, emotional, and social ones. People need food, shelter, and clothing, but they also need relationships that offer love and accountability and that address the transcendent aspects of human existence. This perspective emphasizes the importance of work, good habits, and a sense of hope.

This approach recognizes the responsibility and capacity of multiple institutions in society to help transform lives in need. Families and churches have a critical role in cultivating personal relationships from the ground up, while government protects the arena in which they operate.

As you watch the final video, ask yourself:

- What are some common pitfalls we need to avoid in seeking social justice?
- How might you work to strengthen those social institutions that best care for people's needs?



## Watch

### **Justice as a Way of Life**

featuring Jedd Medefind, Executive Director, Christian Alliance for Orphans (see DVD or watch online at [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com))



## Read and Discuss

*As you discuss how to seek social justice in your own neighborhood, keep in mind which institutions best cultivate healthy relationships, and why. Our actions will have the most impact when they strengthen and support those institutions.*

### **Common Pitfalls to Avoid**

In the video, Jedd Medefind identifies several common pitfalls in seeking social justice. First, the sheer size and scope of some social problems can leave us with a sense of hopelessness. As Jedd mentions, this can lead to weariness, frustration, anger, and burnout. But as we've seen in the stories highlighted in this series, taking action with faith, hope, and love can bring about real transformation in people's lives.



What kind of vision motivates Jedd to continue serving those in need?

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Another temptation is to keep our distance from the problem. As Jedd acknowledges, getting personally involved with another individual or family's need is a lot tougher than writing a check or signing a petition. Though those actions can be necessary and important, personal outreach and investment make a difference on a deeper level. Serving others isn't always safe, comfortable, or immediately effective. When a stranger is hurting, it's often much simpler to pass by on the other side of the road and pass the buck to somebody else. As Rudy Carrasco says, we'd like to think "they" will handle it—that is, somebody besides us. In contrast, in this series we've seen individuals, congregations, and ministries take personal responsibility for the wounded neighbor in their midst. Their responses show patience, personal sacrifice, and a willingness to relate to just one person in need.

*“There’s a circle of people closest to you, and in the middle is the circle of people who understand the person best and who understand the need best.... And the farther away you get from the people who know the problem, the less effective you’re going to be.”*

—Rudy Carrasco,  
Former Executive Director  
Harambee Christian  
Family Center



- 2 Think about the kinds of ministries highlighted in previous lessons and the various ways volunteers contribute to them. What kind of investment—in time and effort—do those volunteers make toward social justice?

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- 3 Think back to Ron and Cheryl Murff, whose friendship played a key role in helping transform a young family in need. What sort of commitment did they make to Roderick and Lisa Yarbrough?

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- 4 Discuss what your weekly routine might look like if you made the same level of investment to help others.

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It's also tempting to think that only mega-institutions and massive campaigns or programs can make a difference. It can seem more worthwhile to join the ranks of those promoting a monumental solution than to cultivate the mustard seed—to follow the flock rather than to go after a single hurting sheep. We're drawn by celebrity-sponsored campaigns to problems half-way around the world while we may overlook the work of the "street saints" serving just around the corner. "Street saints" do not usually make sweeping claims about wiping out global poverty—but they do care passionately about stamping it out in individual lives, one person at a time. Their work happens outside the spotlight, as they humbly pursue incremental change through personal relationships.

- 5 According to Andy Crouch in his book *Culture Making*, "No matter how complex and extensive the cultural system you may consider, the only way it will be changed is by an absolutely small group of people who innovate and create a new cultural good." Why do you think this is the case? Can you think of an example of an organization or movement that brought

about significant social change by starting small?

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Finally, perhaps the most common pitfall is to focus our hopes and expectations on government. The problems are big, and so is government—after all, the U.S. government has a bigger budget than any other institution. Increased government spending on welfare might seem like an obvious solution to combat poverty throughout the nation.

But as we've seen, human need and social breakdown are not simply monetary problems. Poverty isn't only a lack of money. At their roots, the problems of poverty are relational and complex, and effective responses focus on restoring relationships. That means family, church, and ministries are best equipped to be first responders to those in need because they deal with the whole person, face-to-face. As Jedd learned from his own experience, government is not able to love people. It simply doesn't have the capacity to cultivate relationships from the ground up.

*"It is these small acts of love that can transform the world one life at a time. And together they form the vital core of a whole-person approach to justice."*

—Jedd Medefind,  
Executive Director  
Christian Alliance for Orphans

**6** What does Jedd mean when advocating a “whole-person” approach to justice? What are the different aspects of a person’s well-being that social justice approaches should address?

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**7** In the video you just watched, think about Rudy Carrasco’s explanation of concentric circles of relationships. Why is government less able to cultivate justice from the ground up than family, neighborhood, and church?

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## ***A Better Response***

How should we respond to the needs around us in a way that avoids these pitfalls?

What does a better response look like? How can we navigate the various options and possibilities before us?

This series has suggested an approach to social justice that centers on two questions:

- What’s the nature of the need?
- Who is best able to meet that need?

Seeking social justice is about matching the abilities of different institutions with the nature of the need. Demanding that an institution fulfill tasks for which it’s not equipped can actually work against the cause of justice. A church can’t lock up a criminal engaged in human trafficking; government programs can’t provide the unconditional love a child needs from a family.

**8** Read Romans 12:4-8. Like the various parts of a body, or the various gifts within the church, different institutions serve the common good of society in different ways. Thinking back on the previous lessons, how would you describe the different roles and responsibilities of each of the following in seeking social justice?

- Friends/Neighbors \_\_\_\_\_
- Families \_\_\_\_\_
- Churches and Ministries \_\_\_\_\_
- Businesses \_\_\_\_\_
- Government \_\_\_\_\_

As in Shyima’s case, sometimes we need to call on government to administer justice for those in need of protection or rescue. Government is well-equipped to maintain the social conditions of freedom, order, safety, and peace in which healthy relationships can grow.

**9** In what ways can you call on government to exercise its proper responsibility in fulfilling social justice?

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*“The bottom line is that when government complements and enables these different spheres to thrive—the businesses, non-profits, and families—then it is championing true justice. But, when government grows so big, it crowds them out...then it ultimately does more harm than good.”*

–Jedd Medefind,  
Executive Director  
Christian Alliance for Orphans

- 10** At the same time, in what ways can you encourage government officials to recognize and protect the authority of the family, the role of churches and ministries, and the value of work and the free market?

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Like those volunteering at Men of Valor or the ministries of First Baptist Church Leesburg, sometimes we need to start or join a ministry or support a church initiative to serve those struggling with problems such as hunger, sickness, homelessness, addiction, unemployment, abandonment, and alienation. Our care should promote the human dignity of those who are served by recognizing their spiritual and relational—not only financial and material—needs.

- 11** Make a list of some of the ministries and other charitable organizations in your community. What needs do they address well? Which needs do you think require more attention? Do you, your group, or your congregation have the capacity to fill those gaps?

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*“The way of Christ is different. He loved the one person in front of him in each moment in the way that they most needed to be loved.”*

—Jedd Medefind,  
Executive Director  
Christian Alliance for Orphans

- 12** Strengthening families is one of the most important steps we can take to cultivate strong, healthy relationships in society. What ministries do churches or para-church organizations in your community sponsor to encourage strong marriages and healthy family life—e.g., marriage enrichment programs or counseling for dating couples, newlyweds, or first-time parents? What are some concrete steps your congregation or small group can take to strengthen marriages and families in your area?

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The opportunity to pursue justice can present itself in humble, interpersonal ways. As in the case of Ron and Cheryl Murff, this can take the form of befriending a stranger, caring for a sick neighbor, sharing knowledge or material goods, tutoring or mentoring a child, or offering accountability.

**13** In what ways do your gifts and passions match the needs and opportunities to serve in your current circumstances?

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**14** Discuss the concrete steps you can take to befriend someone in need and help that person cultivate healthy relationships.

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## Rethink

Seeking social justice is about cultivating healthy relationships from the ground up—relationships among individuals as well as among institutions. Family, church, business, and government all have different and important roles. A just society is one in which individuals and institutions exercise their proper roles and responsibilities, each freely doing what they do best and working together to meet people’s needs and to advance the common good.

We can all make a difference by engaging personally to help transform lives in need, starting with the opportunities in our own neighborhoods.

**15** How has your understanding of social justice either changed or been confirmed since the beginning of this study?

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**16** What concrete steps do you plan to take to seek social justice?

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## Closing Thought

Unlike people in many parts of the world, Americans generally enjoy long life expectancy, good nutrition, clean water, and a general absence of treatable life-threatening diseases such as malaria or tuberculosis. Social justice has a better chance to thrive when these positive physical conditions are present. But these conditions didn't arise by accident. They emerged from a combination of values, relationships, and ways of ordering society over the course of many years. General prosperity and well-being go hand-in-hand with the freedoms Americans enjoy: the freedom to worship openly according to the dictates of our conscience, to work where we can best make use of our gifts, to educate our children in accord with our values, and to express our opinions without fear of government censorship or oppression.

In other words, the ingredients of social justice are moral, social, and relational as well as economic and political. They stem from a way of life that respects human dignity, equality, mutual responsibility, neighborly service, and hard work, and from a strong, but limited constitutional government that protects a vibrant civil society of individuals, families, businesses, and churches.

Things are far from perfect, and we have lots of work to do. But as we seek social justice, we are blessed with a strong constitutional order and civil society on which to build.



### Read On

Keep breaking ground with the following resources. Visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com) for hyperlinks to these articles and other resources.

*Matthew 25:31-46*

*James 2:14-18*

*Who Really Cares: America's Charity Divide—Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why It Matters*, Arthur C. Brooks

*Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, Andy Crouch

*Street Saints: Renewing America's Cities*, Barbara J. Elliott

*Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, Eric Metaxas

*Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-Based Ministries that Work*, Amy Sherman

*The Triumphs of Joseph: How Today's Community Healers are Reviving our Streets and Neighborhoods*, Robert L. Woodson, Sr.

## Behind the Scenes

### ***Who is Jedd Medefind?***

Jedd serves as the Executive Director of the Christian Alliance for Orphans and has experience working in government at various levels. Most recently, he served as head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

### ***What does Anthony Bradley mean when he refers to “mediating institutions”?***

Mediating institutions are those forms of association—such as families, churches, local non-profits, etc.—that stand between citizens and the large institutions of public life, like government.

## Notes

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## Featured Persons

### **Anthony Bradley, Ph.D.**

*Research Fellow, Acton Institute*

Anthony Bradley is visiting professor of theology at The King's College in New York City and serves as a research fellow for the Acton Institute. He holds a Ph.D. in Historical and Theological Studies from Westminster Theological Seminary. His research interests include welfare, education, and modern international forms of social injustice, slavery, and oppression.

### **Rudy Carrasco**

*Former Executive Director, Harambee Christian Family Center*

Rudy Carrasco was born into an impoverished section of East Los Angeles. After graduating from Stanford University, he returned home and began working at the Harambee Christian Family Center in Pasadena, California, with a focus on developing indigenous community leadership. He writes on these issues for major publications and serves on the board of directors of World Vision and TechMission. He is also an advisory board member of the Christian Community Development Association. Carrasco currently serves as an associate director for Partners Worldwide.

### **Chuck Colson**

*Founder, Prison Fellowship and BreakPoint*

Chuck Colson was the Chief Counsel for President Richard Nixon. While incarcerated for Watergate-related charges, he experienced a calling to serve those whose lives were affected by crime. In 1976, Colson founded Prison Fellowship Ministries, which has become the world's largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners, crime victims, and their families. In 1993, he was awarded the Templeton Prize and, in 2008, he was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal. He has authored a number of books including *God and Government* (with Ellen Santilli Vaughn), *How Now Shall We Live?* (with Nancy Pearcey), and, most recently, *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe It, and Why It Matters* (with Harold Fickett). Colson is also the founder and chairman of the Wilberforce Forum and can be heard daily on the *BreakPoint* radio commentary broadcast.

### **Sean Litton**

*Vice President of Field Operations, International Justice Mission*

Sean Litton serves as the Vice President of Field Operations for International Justice Mission (IJM). In this capacity, he directs IJM's casework operations in Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, developing intervention



strategies and serving as an advocate for victims of oppression before local and national authorities. Litton received a J.D. from the University of Notre Dame Law School. Before attending law school, he worked with Young Life and served as associate pastor for youth at Christ Church in Roswell, New Mexico, for four years.

### **Jedd Medefind**

#### *Executive Director, Christian Alliance for Orphans*

Jedd Medefind is the Executive Director of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, a ministry founded to inspire and equip individuals and churches to effectively address the needs of orphans through Christ-honoring service. He was formerly the head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Medefind is the author of numerous articles and two books, including *Four Souls: A Search for Epic Life*.

### **Albert Mohler, Jr., Ph.D.**

#### *President, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*

Albert Mohler serves as the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and hosts *The Albert Mohler Program*, a daily live nationwide radio program. Mohler is a theologian and an ordained minister, holding an M.Div. and Ph.D. in systematic and historical theology from Southern Seminary. His writings have been published throughout the United States and Europe, and he has written several books including *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth*.

### **Marvin Olasky, Ph.D.**

#### *Editor-in-Chief, WORLD Magazine, and Author, The Tragedy of American Compassion*

Marvin Olasky is editor-in-chief of *WORLD*, a national weekly news magazine, and provost of The King's College, in New York City. He holds a Ph.D. in American Culture from the University of Michigan and is the author of 20 books, including *The Tragedy of American Compassion* and *Freedom, Justice, and Hope: Toward a Strategy for the Poor and the Oppressed*.

### **Star Parker**

#### *President, Coalition for Urban Renewal and Education*

Star Parker is the founder and president of CURE, the Coalition for Urban Renewal and Education, a non-profit think tank that works on issues of race, poverty, and the challenges of inner-city neighborhoods in the media and the public policy arena. Prior to her involvement with social activism, Star Parker was

a single mother on welfare in Los Angeles, California. Today Parker is a nationally recognized expert, discussing social welfare issues on major television and radio shows throughout the country. She is the author of three books, including *White Ghetto: How Middle Class America Reflects Inner-City Decay*.

**Jay W. Richards, Ph.D.**

**Author, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem***

Jay Richards has served in leadership positions at the Discovery Institute and the Acton Institute and is currently a Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute and Visiting Fellow at The Heritage Foundation. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and theology from Princeton Theological Seminary. His most recent book is *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem*. Richards is also the creator and executive producer of several documentaries, including *The Call of the Entrepreneur* and *The Birth of Freedom*.

**Robert L. Woodson, Sr.**

**President, Center for Neighborhood Enterprise**

Bob Woodson is president of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE), which he founded in 1981 to help residents of low-income neighborhoods address the problems of their communities. Since its inception, CNE has provided training and technical assistance to more than 2,000 community leaders in 39 states. Woodson has been awarded the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship (often referred to as the “genius” award) and was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2008. He has written hundreds of articles and several books, including *The Triumphs of Joseph: How Today’s Community Healers are Reviving Our Streets and Neighborhoods*.

## Sources

### Before You Begin

**Nearly four in 10 children in America are born to single mothers.**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Vital Statistics Report*, January 7, 2009, p. 11, at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57\\_07.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_07.pdf).

**More than 1.5 million children in the U.S. have at least one parent in a federal or state prison.**

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children,” August 2008, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/pptmc.htm>.

**Thousands of homeless persons sleep on the streets of the U.S. on any given night.**

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “The Fourth Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” 2009, at <http://www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr09-108.cfm>.

**Almost half of the students in America’s major urban school districts don’t graduate on time.**

Source: Christopher B. Swanson, “Cities in Crisis: A Special Report on High School Graduation,” America’s Promise Alliance, April 1, 2008, p. 9, at [http://www.americaspromise.org/~media/Files/Our%20Work/Dropout%20Prevention/Cities%20in%20Crisis/Cities\\_In\\_Crisis\\_Report\\_2008.asbx](http://www.americaspromise.org/~media/Files/Our%20Work/Dropout%20Prevention/Cities%20in%20Crisis/Cities_In_Crisis_Report_2008.asbx).

### Lesson Two

**Roughly 80 percent of all long-term poverty occurs in single-parent homes.**

Source: Patrick F. Fagan, Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, and America Peterson, *The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts*, The Heritage Foundation, April 2002, p. 8, at [http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Marriage/upload/48119\\_1.pdf](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Marriage/upload/48119_1.pdf).

**Nearly four in 10 children are born to single mothers. Seven out of 10 black children are born to an unwed mother. These children are seven times more likely to experience poverty than those born and raised in a home with their married parents.**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Vital Statistics Report*, January 7, 2009, p. 54, at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57\\_07.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_07.pdf); and Robert Rector, “Understanding and Reducing Poverty in America,” testimony before Joint Economic Committee, United States Senate, September 25, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/tst040209b.cfm>.

**About 38 percent of single-mother families are poor. By contrast, only about seven percent of married families with children are poor.**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, Current Population Survey, at [http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/macro/032008/pov/new03\\_100\\_01.htm](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/macro/032008/pov/new03_100_01.htm).

**From 1965 to 1995, the unwed birth rate quadrupled, from less than eight percent to 32 percent.**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Vital Statistics Report: Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-99*, October 18, 2000, p. 17, at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48\\_16.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48_16.pdf).

### Lesson Four

**As a result of these new incentives, welfare caseloads fell by more than 50 percent. Work participation increased as well, particularly among the most disadvantaged. Ten years after the reform, 1.6 million fewer children were living in poverty, and by 2001 black child poverty dropped to its lowest rate in national history.**

Source: Bernadette D. Proctor and Joseph Dalaker, *Poverty in the United States 2001*, Current Population Reports, P60-219, U.S. Census Bureau, September 2002, p. 21.

### Lesson Six

#### **"Street Saints"**

Source: Barbara J. Elliott, *Street Saints: Renewing America's Cities* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004).



*“Complex problems call for thoughtful solutions. I am grateful to The Heritage Foundation for including the needs of the poor in this innovative new study resource—and for inviting and encouraging us to translate our good intentions into actions that really make a difference.”*

*—Gary Haugen, President and CEO, International Justice Mission*

*“Social justice is all about relationships, and this is the real tragedy—a person in need is often cut off from all of his support structures found in relationship. Seek Social Justice brings into focus a relational framework for responding effectively to those in need.”*

*—Chuck Colson, Founder of Prison Fellowship and BreakPoint*

*“What does it really mean to seek social justice? This small group guide/DVD will help you find out.”*

*—Marvin Olasky, Editor-in-Chief, WORLD,  
and Author of The Tragedy of American Compassion*

## **Poverty. Addiction. Homelessness.**

These problems are serious and complex. Passion alone won't solve them. We need effective strategies for overcoming human need.

*Seek Social Justice* is a six-lesson DVD and small group guide that provides a framework for understanding the roots of human need and social breakdown and what to do about them. It explores the roles and responsibilities of family, church, business, government, and individuals in promoting social justice by profiling real-world examples of effective action. *Seek Social Justice* will challenge assumptions about where to turn to truly transform lives in need.

For more information please visit [SeekSocialJustice.com](http://SeekSocialJustice.com)

