



Justice for Our Neighbors

UMCOR Bible Study

Refugees and Immigration

A Resource for Churches

Hebrew Scriptures (RSV)

The Law and the Heart of the Law

This study is used at JFON initial site trainings. Usually there are enough participants for up to four small groups. If your group is smaller, you may want to select fewer scriptures.

Small Group #1 Clients: "Teresa & Sam"

Exodus 22:21 You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (From The Covenant Code)

Leviticus 19: 33-34 When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do (her) wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love (her) as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (From the Holiness Code)

Small Group #2 Clients: "Hyo-Won & Thanh"

Deuteronomy 24:17-21 You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge; but you shall remember that you were a stranger in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this.

When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.

When you gather grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. (From the Deuteronomy or Justice Code)

New Testament (RSV)

Small Group #3 Clients: "Annette & Flavia"

Biblical/Theological Background

Matthew 25:34-36, 40b Then the King will say to those at his right hand, “Come, O blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

Small Group #4 Clients: “Pierre & Katya”

Hebrews 13:2-3 Let brotherly loves continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

(For Study Facilitator) The selections from the Hebrew Scriptures are taken from that time when Israel was forming itself as a people, and a nation. It was therefore very important to have specific laws, or codes of behavior, as a means of setting themselves apart from others. However, this setting apart was to allow the Hebrew people to learn what it meant to be God’s people. Therefore, these laws or codes were to be “means” of attaining covenant, holiness and justice, not only in their relationship with God, but with each other, and importantly, with others. Later, Jesus taught us that these values of covenant, holiness and justice are what make up the kingdom of God. Together they form the heart of all our relationships.

The Justice For Our Neighbors ministry is a unique and challenging ministry, in our place and time, which seeks to meet the challenges of not only adhering to God’s law, which demands compassion and justice as well as obedience, but to speak out and take action when the laws of our nation fail to reflect these same values and beliefs that have also been an acclaimed and cherished hallmark of our nation and history as a democracy.

Instructions for Community Bible Study

Questions for Today’s Disciples

The Client : What is God’s good word for me?

The Volunteer : What is God’s good word for those who seek to serve?

All of us : What does God invite me/us to do, be or change through this passage? What have been your experiences of communicating the values expressed in these scriptures?

Leader: Transfer the following client stories (details changed for purpose of confidentiality). Pass out to the appropriate groups as indicated in the study guidelines. After the reading of the Scripture, to begin discussion of Question #1, the persons holding client stories may read the stories and begin a reflection on the Scripture from the perspective of the client stories, followed by contributions from other

members of the group.

Small Group #1

TERESA: I am a Mexican woman. I came to America by walking across the border. I used to work at Domino's at the Denver Airport. After 9/11, the government started doing the Operation Tarmac to clear the airports of illegal workers. I was one of them and was arrested. At the time I was about 7 months pregnant. I was kept in jail during the rest of my pregnancy. When I went into labor, I was taken to a hospital. I was very happy when my baby girl was born without any problem. But two hours after my baby arrived, the immigration officers took her away and gave her to my mother. I did not see or touch my baby again until 2 weeks later when they allowed my mother to bring her to visit. What will happen to my baby and me?

SAM: I am a Sierra Leonean man. I came to America in 1995. In 1997, the government began the TPS program for Sierra Leonean. I qualified and got the work permit. I started driving a cab. I met and married another Sierra Leonean woman. We have 3 beautiful children together. My wife was also in TPS. She worked at a nursing home. They liked her so much there that they started the process to sponsor her. The process was started in 2001 but it was taking so long. In 2003, the nursing home had a new director and she decided to stop the sponsorship process. In September 2003, the government terminated the TPS program for Sierra Leoneans and said they wanted us all to return to Sierra Leone. Our work permits have expired. DMV won't renew my driver's license because my work permit expired. What should my family and I do?

Small Group #2

THANH: I am a Vietnamese man. I have a green card and have lived here since I was 8 years old. I like to be around people but don't like school. So, I asked for some money from my mother and opened a video store. I have a lot of friends and I give or lend my friends money when they need it. One time, I needed some money and told a friend about it. He handed me a credit card and said it belonged to his uncle and that I could use it. I did and bought a fish tank for my girl friend. I was arrested soon thereafter and told that the card was stolen. I pled guilty and accepted 3-year suspended sentences. I only spent a few months in jail. Now, immigration wants to deport me. What can I do?

HYO-WON: I am a Korean woman married to a U.S. citizen who works for an international non-profit organization. We have 4 children together and have been living here a long time. Because John's income from the non-profit job was not very high and he was frequently away for work, I took a job as a waitress at a restaurant. At one point I was really short of money and took a little bit of cash from the register. I

honestly took no more than \$70 in all. But the restaurant owner became suspicious and had me arrested. The owner claimed I took more than \$10,000. The public defender advised me to plead guilty so that I would not have to spend much time in jail. I wanted to keep the whole thing from my family, so I followed that advice. I pled guilty to embezzling \$10,000 and received a three-year sentence with all but one suspended. Did I do the right thing? Will I be OK now?

Small Group #3

ANNETTE: I am Haitian. I am 9 years old. My family is only my father and I. We came here in a small boat. It took us a long time. My father told me we were coming to America so we could have food to eat and I could go to school. When we got here, they took my father away. They put me in this place with other children and some women. I have been here a long time and I miss my father so much. Where is he?

FLAVIA: I am Mexican. I have a green card. One day my cousin picked me up in his car. He said he wanted to go down to Mexico to pick up a friend and he wanted me to keep him company on the ride down. We went and picked up his friend and drove back. At the border, we were stopped. It turned out that the friend had no visa or green card. Both my cousin and I were arrested and charged with alien smuggling. We both pled guilty. Now my cousin, a U.S. citizen, goes free. Immigration got me and I have been in jail for almost a year now. What happened?

Small Group #4

PIERRE: I am a Haitian man. I came here by boat after my sister and brother were both killed. Immigration arrested me and put me in jail as soon as I arrived on the shore. The immigration judge had pity for me and told me he was granting me political asylum. But the government attorney appealed the case. I have been in jail for 8 months now and I don't know when I will be free. Why?

KATYA: I came to the Miami in July to visit a friend. Once here, I discovered that there is a great aeronautical program at a university in Daytona Beach. I went to see the school admission officials and some professors. They seemed excited about having me enroll as a full-time student. They even mentioned that I might be able to get a scholarship for parts of the tuition fee, but I had to act fast to take advantage of this opportunity and enroll in September. What should I do?