

WHY JUSTICE?

A Biblical perspective

In today's world, we all encounter injustice daily, whether it's through the media or in the spaces we inhabit and as followers of Jesus, it seems important to have a clear response. Justice in terms of love, care and integrity, is a repeating theme in Scripture which suggests it's importance to God and subsequently, us. Biblical justice with its promise of hope and restoration includes the whole of God's creation, with the most vulnerable at the centre.

The life of Jesus, his teachings, his mission of love and restoration, his heart for those pushed to the fringe of society, clearly embodies God's heart for justice. Jesus challenged oppression with words and lived out his convictions.

When asked "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answers with what he describes as the greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and love your neighbour as you love yourself". LOVE, it seems, is key.

Jesus is then asked: "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:25-37).

So, *who* does Jesus say our neighbour is? Who does Jesus command us to love as ourselves in order to inherit eternal life?

In this context, a neighbour is not only someone who is hurt and vulnerable, this person is also a foreigner and enemy. The Samaritans and Jews are said to have despised each other equally, yet this Samaritan man stops.

And *how* does Jesus describe the actions of a neighbour? Again, in this context, it is one who shows mercy, unconditional love and care for their physical needs. One whose generosity towards a complete stranger, a perceived enemy, goes above and beyond expectations. Jesus says do this and you shall inherit eternal life, you shall live.

These words of Jesus are stark, arresting, yet life giving, they are words spoken as a teaching and a commandment. Trying to model our lives on Jesus is not easy, we can often feel overwhelmed, yet love for our neighbour naturally flows from a commitment to love God with everything we have and everything that we are. It's a daily practice of asking God to show us who our neighbours are, both locally and internationally and how best to love them.

Within the NBA family of churches there are many with a heart for social¹ and environmental justice. Churches are already expressing the love of Jesus in practical ways to their local communities and internationally, but if we are honest, it can be a challenge to hold this as central. Justice is of key importance to the NBA and so to build on what is already happening, we are seeking to design a collaborative platform in the form of a Justice Hub as an accessible resource for churches and individuals. Through learning from, challenging and encouraging one another, the aim is that we all become better equipped to act and speak out against social and environmental injustice.

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¹ *Social Justice: The objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest.* (Oxford Reference Dictionary) Addressing systemic inequalities.