

## **Being Doers, Not Just Hearers – Justice Day at LifeJourney!**

1. Warm up: Before we dive into this week's topic, let's take a moment to check-in. Tell us something good or bad (large or small) that's happened in your life this week.
2. James 1:22 says "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only." One of the things God's Word tells us to do is to seek justice. Let's begin by reading some of those passages, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Do you personally feel you're doing enough to be faithful to the Biblical exhortations we just read? Do you feel you're doing enough for justice right now? Explain your answer.
  - b. Glance back through the verses we just read and let's identify some of the justice issues that were "hot" back in the time when these verses were written.
  - c. There are so many urgent justice issues in play in our culture right now; it can feel overwhelming. There are a whole host of justice issues that need our attention, but if you were forced to choose a justice issue that most concerns you right now, what issue would you choose – and why?
3. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Being an effective advocate for those who are oppressed begins with understanding the experience of the oppressed. To be good advocates, we have to become knowledgeable about the life experience of those being targeted. So on Sunday, we asked Amy Townsend to share a bit about her life experience as a trans person. Here are several things Amy told us about her story. Read these points, then tell us which point most spoke to you – and why?
  - a. Amy cited Jeremiah 1:5 as a verse that means a lot to her. In that verse, God says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; and before you were born, I consecrated you."
  - b. When Amy was born and the nurses told her mother she had birthed a boy and laid "him" in her arms, she told them to take the child away – because she already had two boys and had her heart set on birthing a girl.
  - c. Amy's parents constantly pressured her to be more masculine. She was never able to live up to their expectations.
  - d. Amy said, "I did not live who I was until I was 50 years old."
  - e. When Amy finally came out, she says, "It felt like every neuron in my brain was releasing tension I'd held for a lifetime."

- f. Amy described how much our church has meant to her and how proud she is of the trans justice billboards we've done and the clergy letter to legislators we spearheaded.
4. Jude Brown, Advocacy Associate, for the ACLU Indiana briefed us on several bills that were defeated in the last state legislative session: (1) a bill requiring all Hoosier governmental offices to regard trans people as being of their birth gender and ignore their gender transition; (2) a bill banning medication abortion; and (3) a bill redistricting our state. Jude attributed the defeat of these bills to effective mass advocacy.
    - a. Jude said people keep wanting a silver bullet that will turn back the current tidal wave of oppression and injustice, but there is no silver bullet. Instead, Jude said, we must prepare for a long, sustained fight. Do you agree? Why or why not? When do you think the tide will turn?
    - b. Success, Jude said, depends on lots of people doing the steady, unglamorous work of advocacy by: (1) always voting, (2) getting action alerts; (3) regularly communicating with our legislators, (4) attending justice events, and (5) speaking to our friends and neighbors. Which of these things are you doing best? Which are you needing to do better? What keeps us from doing these things?
  5. Pastor Josh Riddick is the Director of LiveFree Indiana, which organizes black and progressive churches across the state to fight for justice. He began his remarks by asking us, "Who here is hungry for justice?" We all raised our hands. Then he asked, "Who here is hungry for power?" Most of us quickly lowered our hands.
    - a. Why do you think we so quickly lowered our hands? What point was Josh trying to make? And do you agree with his point?
    - b. Josh said our legislators "don't listen to dissent; they listen to power." Do you believe that's true and, if so, what does it mean for what we need to do?
    - c. To be effective in advocating for justice, Josh said, we must grasp two key principles. First, people in power respect and respond to power. Second, avoid the purity trap. By "purity trap," he meant the notion that we should only work with people who always agree with us. This is a trap, he said, because prevailing in the legislative arena requires coalition building across constantly-changing lines. In the political arena, he said, "There are no permanent enemies or allies, just permanent interests." To succeed we must be ready to take advantage of shifting alliances and work with our usual foes when our interests coincide. Your thoughts? Do progressives have a tendency to be too "pure"?
  6. Some people feel that churches should stay out of politics altogether. Other people feel that the Biblical command to do justice should compel churches to advocate in the political arena. How do you feel? Are you glad our church hosted Justice Day at LifeJourney? How do you feel about the significant uptick in the energy and resources our church has been investing in justice advocacy in recent months?

## **Medley of Scripture Verses About Doing Justice**

Jeremiah 22:3. "This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place."

Deuteronomy 16:20. "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you."

Isaiah 1:17. "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

Proverbs 31:8-9. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Amos 5:24. "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."