

BIBLICAL JUSTICE & COMPASSION AT WEST SIDE

Foundational Principles:

- Understanding and practicing biblical justice and compassion are key components of discipleship to Jesus.
- God's people are called to serve as conduits of his love, compassion peace, restoration and justice on earth.
- There are many secular political opinions and justice theories, but only biblical justice is comprehensive enough to address the needs of the human condition.
- Biblical justice and compassion are rooted in the character of God and is the outworking of that character, which is never less than just and compassionate.
- God stands against the thwarting of the justice due to those who are overlooked and under-resourced, which includes: the poor, the innocent, the widow, the orphan, the immigrant/foreigner, the powerless, the fatherless, the marginalized and the weak. Scripture tells us that God raises those who are treated unjustly to a position of honor and well-being.

Three Components of Biblical Justice & Compassion

Partnering with God to right wrongs, heal wounds and make all things whole again through the compassion of Jesus Christ.

1. Radical Generosity
2. Universal Equality
3. Life-Changing Advocacy

1. Radical Generosity

The first facet of biblical justice is radical generosity. Secular individualism says your money belongs to you. Socialism says your money belongs to the government. The Bible says that all your money belongs to God, who then entrusts it to you. As followers of Jesus, we are stewards of wealth, which means our resources belong to us, *and yet* do not belong to us. Therefore, discipleship to Jesus require us to become increasingly generous and sacrificial with our money, time and connections for the sake of those who are often overlooked and under-resourced.

Radical Generosity at West Side:

- We teach believers to give first to the local church, through which God works to distribute compassion and justice, both locally and globally.
- We organize opportunities for individuals to link arms with our strategic mission partners who specialize in compassion and justice initiatives.
 - Serve Springfield
 - Springfield Sharefest
 - Rooted Group Serve Experiences
- Our Local Mission Partners:
 - Inner City Mission, Refuge Ranch, The Outlet, Contact Ministries, Helping Hands, Washington Street Mission, and more.
- Our Global Mission Partners: Missions of Hope in Kenya, MyHope in Myanmar, Central India Christian Mission and others.

2. Universal Equality

The second facet of biblical justice is universal equality. Biblical justice requires that every person be treated according to the same standards and with the same respect, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender or any other social category.

The New Testament offers believers this firm warning: “How can you claim to have faith in Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?” (James 2:1). Working for universal equality means each follower of Jesus must personally address their own “blind spots.” Blind spots are areas that keep you from recognizing the favor you show to those in your “in group” (those that look, act or believe like you) and the favor you withhold from those in your “out group” (those that do not look, act or believe like you).

While it is a biblical expectation that every Christ-follower learn to relate rightly with EVERYONE, some Christ-followers will be compelled to work more extensively to end the mistreatment and address disparities still faced by many people groups in our country and around of the world.

Universal Equality at West Side:

- Through Sunday messages and discipleship opportunities, we teach believers how to relate rightly with others.
 - **Recommended Resource:** [The West Side Teaching Page](#)
- We encourage every believer to consider and root out the racism, classism and favoritism that may still exist within them.
 - **Recommended Resource:** *The Third Option: Hope For a Racially Divided Nation* by Miles McPherson
- Through recommended resources and small group experiences, we equip believers who are ready to dig deeper into reconciliation themes to do so from a biblical perspective.
- Recommended Resource: *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom and How We're Stronger Together* by Tony Evans

3. Life-Changing Advocacy

While the Bible instructs believers to treat EVERYONE equally, we are also to possess a special concern for the poor, the weak and the powerless. Followers of Jesus are specifically instructed to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9) which includes the foreigner, the fatherless, the widow and the marginalized. Consequently, the third facet of biblical justice is life-changing advocacy for those in need.

So, how do we do advocacy? There are at least three ways, according to the Bible.

- Direct relief to meet material needs (Luke 10:30-35)
- Empowerment that helps a person, family or group gain self-sufficiency (Deut 15:13-14)
- Taking on social structures that disadvantage certain groups (Job 29:17)

Life-Changing Advocacy at West Side:

We create teams that work for the good of disadvantaged people groups in our community:

1. Jobs For Life

Many in our community are without work or underemployed. Without meaningful work, there is a loss of purpose and dignity. This creates a vicious cycle of poverty for individuals and

their families- economically, spiritually and emotionally. This team of Christian business and community leaders attempts to break the cycle of joblessness and poverty through providing mentoring-based job readiness programs and minority workforce development efforts.

2. Fostering and Adoption

The foster care system in the state of Illinois is broken. More children are in need of safe, loving homes than the current system can accommodate, leaving caseworkers and foster parents without the needed resources to express God's love to hurting kids over the long-haul. West Side's fostering and adoption community seeks to advocate for kids in need by a.) Encouraging caseworkers b.) Providing for the practical needs of foster families in their first 30 days of welcoming a new child c.) Offering care groups and care tribes to support foster parents d.) Facilitating ongoing education to help parents navigate the complexities of the foster care system.

3. Investment in Education

Educational disparities are pervasive throughout our city. This team seeks to meet the practical needs of staff and students engaged in our region's schools of highest need. While we currently focus the majority of our educational equity efforts toward the staff and families of Harvard Park Elementary School and Jefferson Middle School, our hope is to someday extend our advocacy efforts to new partners serving high school and college students.

**These teams have evolved from the volunteer and staff leaders God has already put in play at West Side. Future teams are likely to form in the future as we identify additional ways we can bring hope to the marginalized communities in our region.*

Additional Reading

For more on these themes, check out Tim Keller's helpful article, [*Justice in the Bible*](#), which has influenced our thinking and strategy.