

Title: Sinful Silence (Chapters 3 & 4):

“Seek Justice, Relieve the Oppressed, and Defend the Helpless!”

Study Passages: Objective 1: Isaiah 1:17

Various passages from Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Micah

Objective 2: Isaiah 1:15, 3:14-15, 59:7, Micah 2:2, 7:2

Objective 3: Exodus 22:22-24, Isaiah 1:23, 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 14:29, 24:17-21

Introduction:

Several Activities can be used to set up the concept of Injustice/Oppression: Choose from the following list.

-  Ask students to line up shoulder to shoulder in order of birthdates. No one may talk. Ask for feedback and how taking away the ability to openly communicate hindered the activity.
-  As students come in to the room, give each a colored chip and direct them to a large container of candy in a designated spot. The color of their chip should determine how much candy they may take. (I.e. Red- 5 pieces, Blue: 3 pieces, Yellow: 1 piece, Green- 0). Additionally as the first topic is introduced, explain that those who have candy may trade in their candy to be able to answer questions. As questions are answered, additional candy will be given for responses. Ask for feedback and how those who did not receive any candy felt about the set up of the class.
-  As students come in, direct girls to sit in the back. As discussion begins, explain to the girls, that they may not participate in verbally answering questions throughout the first section of the Bible study, but must quietly listen to the discussion led by the guys. Even if they disagree, they may not say anything. Ask for feedback at the end of the discussion.
-  As students enter, give them a card with a disability listed on it. (Paralyzed from the neck down, broken leg, no arm, no legs, blind, deaf, No injury, etc.) Disabilities should be varied according to the group size. As students come in, explain that an explosion has occurred, and that everyone has been injured. They must get out of the building before it collapses in 5-7 minutes. As students work to get out of the building, many will be left who cannot help themselves. Debrief after time is up and ask how those who were left felt. Ask how they could redo the game to ensure that everyone made it out.

Transition: Today’s topic is going to focus on God’s standards for Christians in dealing with the concepts of justice, oppression, and helplessness.

Learning Objective 1:

Students will:

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Identify three biblical principles used to define the term “justice” used in Isaiah 1:17.

LIFE APPLICATION: Identify specific ways in which justice is not being upheld nationally and personally.

LIFE CHANGE OUTCOME: Identify one way they can tangibly seek justice in an area that is currently not being upheld personally.

Teaching Activities:

- ✚ **Read Isaiah 1:17; Review from first lesson as to the context of what is taking place in Isaiah. (See Lesson 1 for context)**

- ✚ **Explain that today's lesson is going to focus on specifics of the standards God desires for his people in relationship to civil government. Read Isaiah 1:17 aloud a second time, and ask students what three commands the Lord gives his people to follow in relationship to civil duties? (*Seek Justice, Relieve the Oppressed, and Defend the Helpless*); Write them on the board.**

- ✚ **Divide the group into three groups. Explain that each group is going to look more closely at elements of each command. The first group activity will focus on defining the first command: Seek Justice. Give each group a note card with the following scripture verses.**
 - **Group 1: (Right Versus Wrong) Isaiah 5:20**
 - *Fairness*: Leviticus 19:13, Isaiah 5:8-9, Micah 2:1, 2, 9
 - *Sexual Morality*: Leviticus 18:20-24, 20:10-23
 - *Sanctity of Life*: Exodus 20:13, 21:12-14; Leviticus 18:21, 2 Kings 16:3
 - (Group 1 will divide among itself to look up the three groups listed above)
 - **Group 2: (Favor-Free Decisions)** Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19, Isaiah 1:23, 5:23, 3:13-15, 33:15
 - **Group 3: (Crime and Punishment)** Exodus 22:1-4, 21:12-17, Leviticus 20:1-16, Isaiah 5:8-9, 59:1-9

- ✚ **Share the Following Contextual Information as passages are introduced.**
 - *Exodus*: Chapters 1-18 deal with the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, whereas in chapters 19-40, Moses begins to teach about worship practices that the people need to adopt as a redeemed nation.
 - *Leviticus*: This book is divided into two parts: How to Approach God through sacrifice (Chapters 1-16) and How to walk before God in a holy manner that is set apart (Chapters 17-27). The book is a series of laws and statutes that teaches the Israelites how to follow God's commands in order to live as His nation that is set apart.
 - *Deuteronomy*: The book of Deuteronomy is a series of strong sermons by Moses to the Israelite nation that has been wandering in the desert since release from Egypt. The book is considered a covenant renewal contract.

- **Micah:** Micah is a prophet who prophesies against both the Northern and Southern Kingdom. He is a contemporary of Isaiah and calls for the people to turn back to the ways of the Lord.

✚ **Ask groups to work together to look up the scripture verses and to answer questions given to their groups about their passages.**

- **Group 1:**
 - What three metaphors are used for “right and wrong” according to Isaiah 5:20?
 - What actions are considered “unfair” according to the scriptures related to fairness which you were given?
 - What sexual actions are commanded against according to the passages in Leviticus?
 - What commands are given that support the sanctity of life, and what consequences result from not keeping these commands according to the passages you were given on the Sanctity of Life?
 - How do these passages show that God establishes clear boundaries of right versus wrong actions? Write the three principles that encompass “right” living” (*Be fair, Be Sexually Moral, Life is Precious/Sanctified*)
- **Group 2:**
 - According to Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19, and Isaiah 5:23 what results from accepting bribes?
 - According to Isaiah 1:23, what are those who love bribes called?
 - According to Isaiah 3:14-15, what does the Lord do to those who oppress the poor financially?
 - According to Isaiah 33:15-16, what results from righteous living in relationship to legal decisions?
 - How do these passages show that God desires for his people to make legal decisions that are fair and just, not based upon favors or bribes?
- **Group 3:**
 - According to the passages from Exodus and Leviticus, what consequences are given for the various offenses against the Lord?
 - What punishment results from crimes against the Lord according to the Isaiah passages?
 - How do these passages show that punishment results from criminal activity according to God’s standards?

✚ **As Groups are working, walk around and interact with group members to check for questions. Write the following on the board before large group discussion resumes:**

- **WHAT IS JUSTICE?**
 - **Right Versus Wrong**
 - **Favor-Free Decisions**
 - **Crime = Punishment**

- ✚ **Large Group Discussion:** Ask each group to present findings from Scripture. Define “justice” to be ultimately doing what is right, making legal decisions without bias and bribery, and criminal activity resulting in punishment that fits the crime. These are included in the concept of justice that Isaiah taught.
- ✚ **The death penalty is not always given for transgressions today, as believers today, have a substitute in Christ who died in their place. Discipline results from sin for those who are believers, but believers are no longer under the wrath of God that resulted in automatic death for those who sinned. Christians, however, are still held liable to the laws of the land as are non-believers. Punishment should be rendered when crimes are committed, regardless of financial status.**
- ✚ **On a large tear sheet (butcher paper), ask students to look at the three elements of “justice” as listed on the board, and ask them to brainstorm ways in which justice is not being upheld nationally. Ask groups to go back to scripture, and see what specific elements comprise justice. Students may take turns writing or may all go to the paper simultaneously and write their thoughts.**

Stats:

- *4000 abortions per day (Connor & Revell, 74)*
- *Pornography- \$10 Billion dollars per year (More than all professional football, basketball, baseball sales combined and greater than all box office revenue from all movies combined annually) (77)*
- *The number of adult bookstores outnumber the number of McDonalds’ restaurants nationwide. (78)*
- *2003: The US Supreme Court struck down a Texas statute that criminalized homosexual sodomy. (79)*
- *The Massachusetts Supreme Court mandated same-sex marriages the same year. (79)*

- ✚ **Ask students to look at the list comprised, and to think of one way in which they have personally not upheld justice. Ask students who feel comfortable to share aloud.**
- ✚ **Direct students to get in groups of 4 and discuss individual ways to uphold justice in the upcoming week which they are not already doing. Ask them to write down one specific way to uphold justice in a tangible way on a note card. (Could be as simple as refraining to watch TV shows that show sexually immoral behavior, etc.)**
- ✚ **Have them exchange their cards with a partner. Ask each student to call their partner in the next week to see what progress has been made on the goal of upholding justice. Prepare to report when study resumes.**

Learning Objective 2:

Students will:

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Define the term “oppression” as used in Isaiah 1:17 and identify specific ways in which oppression was taking place within Judah.

LIFE APPLICATION: Identify specific ways in which oppression taking place on a national and personal level.

LIFE CHANGE OUTCOME: Identify one tangible way they can seek to relieve the oppressed as a church body and as an individual in the upcoming weeks.

Teaching Activities:

- ✚ **Write the following scripture verses on the board: Isaiah 1:15, 3:14-15, 59:7, Micah 2:2, 7:2**

- ✚ **What types of oppression were taking place in Judah, and how did the Lord respond?**

- ✚ **Give students a large sheet of butcher paper and divide them into small groups of 4-6. Ask them to draw a representation of Judah as “Oppressor”. This could be a drawing of a person with red hands representing bloodstains and large boots that are stepping on small people underneath, holding a money bag filled with houses, land, and gold coins, etc.**

- ✚ **Have groups present their representations.**

- ✚ **Ask: What is oppression?** *Lead students to understand that oppression was taking advantage of those who could not defend themselves, for the sake of personal gain -- murder was an extreme example of oppression.*

- ✚ **Ask: Do people experience oppression today? Ask students to picture individuals or groups of people within their own lives who they know are experiencing oppression. List examples.** *(Putting others out of business to get ahead in a company, selling drugs to gain financially and promoting others to continue in a state of addiction, theft, oppression of the Christian agenda by Special Interest groups- i.e. taking prayer out of schools, etc)*

- ✚ **Ask: What are ways that Christians today can relieve those who are oppressed?** *May be a simple as being kind to someone who is being oppressed by others to voting against legislature that would cause unfair advantages to one group of people over another.*

- ✚ **Ask students to think of ways in which they have seen oppression in their own lives and how the church can relieve oppression. Ask them to pray with a prayer partner for specific groups of people who are experiencing oppression, and to pray specifically for Christians who are experiencing oppression around the world.**

Learning Objective 3:

Students will:

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Identify four specific people groups that God included as being “helpless” as used in Isaiah 1:17, what specific tasks the people of Judah were commanded to do to “defend the helpless”, why the people were commanded to do these tasks, and what consequences resulted from disobedience. .

LIFE APPLICATION: Identify specific ways in which the “helpless” are not being defended on a national and personal level.

LIFE CHANGE OUTCOME: Identify one tangible way they can seek to defend the helpless as a church body and as an individual in the upcoming weeks.

Teaching Activities:

-  **Ask Volunteers to read aloud the following scripture passages:** Exodus 22:22-24, Isaiah 1:23, 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 14:29, 24:17-21

-  **Ask the Following questions:**
 - According to Deuteronomy 14:29, what four specific people groups did God include as being “helpless”?
 - In looking at all of the passages, what specific tasks were the people of Judah commanded to do to “defend the helpless?”
 - According to Deuteronomy 24:18, why the people were commanded to do these tasks?
 - According to Exodus, what consequences resulted from disobedience?
 - What resulted from helping the needy?

-  **What specific ways are the helpless not being defended today?** (*Abortion, elderly in nursing homes that don’t provide proper care, widows, orphans, etc.*)

-  **What are specific ways that individuals can defend the helpless?** (*Vote against abortion legislature, visit and care for elderly, widows, orphans, etc.*)