



The Power of Community

How a Community of Faith Can Seek Justice Together

Biblical Texts

Luke 4:14-21; Acts 2:42-47; Luke 12:29-34

Introduction

Before leaving the earth, Jesus commissioned his disciples to be his witnesses—to speak on his behalf, to tell others what they had seen and heard Jesus do and teach. Christians have often interpreted this commission to be primarily concerned with explaining to people how to make things right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, but if we are to obey everything Jesus commanded us, we must also feed the hungry and visit those in prison, as Matthew 25 tells us. Furthermore, as we learn from Luke 10, we are not expected to serve as witnesses in isolation from others. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, and called his followers to form new communities of faith.

1. Jesus' vision statement for the world: Luke 4:14-21

When Jesus appeared on the scene announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand, he was announcing that a new era of God's influence and power and rule was breaking in on the world and was about to turn things upside down. Jesus inaugurated his ministry with the announcement, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."* With this proclamation, Jesus unmistakably declared that his mission was about restoration and transformation, about making things right, about healing personal and societal brokenness. His was to be a kingdom of shalom, of well-being for all, of people living in right relationship with God and each other. If societal brokenness is to be healed, then Jesus' followers must challenge the evil structures of society like human trafficking and forced labour slavery that are oppressing and abusing the poor and vulnerable.

Provide a local or global example of how Christians have worked together to restore an example of societal brokenness, like the neglect of the homeless or exploitation of children in sex trafficking. You might want to tell the story of [Cambodia's transformation](#) over the course of IJM's ten years of involvement in the country.

2. Companions for the justice journey: Acts 2:42-47

Jesus sacrificially lived out his vision for changing the world through his own life. He made a way for us to be rescued from the self-centredness of sin and transformed into those who live for

God and live for others -- and then he transferred his mission to his disciples, to be executed by them in the power of the Spirit given at Pentecost. But from the beginning, we find Christians banding together to form communities that expressed through their actions and their lifestyle choices the transforming power of God's kingdom. As these first followers of Christ each embarked on their own personal justice journeys, they found companionship, encouragement and support in others who had similar vision and values.

Through Acts 2:42-47 and other passages in the New Testament, we see that the early church sought to fulfill the mission of Jesus by focusing on evangelism, discipleship, compassion and justice. Compassion and justice were non-negotiable priorities for those who wanted to be disciples of Jesus. The early Christians understood that the mission of Jesus was not only to be embodied in individual believers, but in corporate expressions of the body of Christ—so that entire communities of Christ-followers could model the shalom of God to their neighbours—as vibrant, attractive, growing representations of what it looks like to live in right relationship with God and each other.

Share a personal illustration of a time when you were able to accomplish something significant for God because you approached the challenge with some companions, or tell the story of the group from a church in the U.S. who [accomplished the mammoth task](#) of reorganizing legal files in two courthouses in Uganda.

3. Seek courage to seek justice: Luke 12:29-34

Even when we have some companions with us on the journey, it is very easy to feel intimidated by challenge in front of us. The amazing thing is that God knows this about us—knows that we are broken, weak, flawed and timid people—and still wants to use us to accomplish his mission of justice and compassion. When we step out in obedience, we will find him at work by our side, making his limitless power available to us in our weakness, speaking words of comfort to us like “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*” His Spirit is at work to grow us into the courageous, loving and humble people he created us to be through the experience of expressing God's heart of justice and compassion to the broken and needy, and we get to do it in community with others! As companions on the journey of justice, we have a responsibility to speak courage and faith to one another, saying, “You can do it! God is with us.”

Illustrate with a personal story of a time when God encouraged you—through his word or through a friend—to persevere in a seemingly impossible task. IJM is relentless—as [this story illustrates](#)—but we draw the strength to persevere from God and one another.

Conclusion

As Christ's witnesses, we are called to seek to understand where abuse, violence and oppression prevail in our communities and relentlessly work to restore victims of violence to freedom and dignity. This is the mission of every community of believers, because it is the mission of Jesus Christ. Where do you see someone who is being oppressed, a group of people who are vulnerable, who need you to raise your voice against injustice or stretch out your hand in compassion? Once you have identified who God has called you to, ask him for courage to take action in Jesus' name.



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