

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." - Mic. 6:8*

Paths of Justice

Justice and Mercy

Can you show mercy while still upholding justice? I remember as a young child when my father, who was a cop, came home and would tell me stories of the criminals he dealt with. Some stories were about small, petty crime, but others were about something harsher, like drug abuse or domestic violence. My father viewed these people as having little value and I in turn grew up with a limited view of justice: do the crime, do the time. But in this view of justice there is no room for mercy.

To broaden this understanding, we need to look no further than the cross. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8 NIV). In this one verse we can see that we are criminals and we deserve to be brought to justice, but Christ showed us mercy by taking our place on the cross. In doing so, justice is served and our lives are spared.

Having received God's mercy, we are called to go and do likewise. In Rom. 12:20-21 ESV, Paul said: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Just as Christ filled the gap between us and our relationship with God, so must the church come alongside unbelievers to fill the gap between them and God and so fulfill God's justice and mercy. - Shaun Brainard

International Justice Mission

Jim Martin's book *The Just Church* was used for an equipping class in 2015. His book is about the work of the International Justice Mission (IJM). That class was the springboard to start the Faith Community Church Justice Mission. Since not everyone could attend that class, we will provide information about IJM in this month's newsletter.

IJM frees slaves! Before we get to a story, let's get a bit of background. Based in Washington, D.C., IJM has 17 field offices in 10 countries: Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, India, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines.

It is apparent from the news we hear that in much of the developing world people are not safe. The justice systems that should protect the people from violence don't. When the justice system

doesn't work, crime increases. A justice system breaks down when it lacks resources, training, accountability, and hope. IJM has created a model for their work designed to repair the problems that they find in the justice systems in the countries where they work. IJM partners with people working in the local justice systems to help victims of violence. They work with the police to rescue and with social workers to restore victims of injustice. IJM also helps the police to restrain the perpetrators, and with local public prosecutors to represent the victims in court. As the IJM personnel work in the justice system, they identify the weaknesses and lobby for changes to improve the system.

IJM Field Office personnel follow leads that they pick up on the street or from the police and investigate slavery issues in their assigned areas.



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Definition of injustice:
Injustice occurs when someone with greater power deprives someone with lesser power of freedom, dignity, treasure, or livelihood.

"[I]t was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt." - Deut. 7:8

International Justice Mission (Continued)

policing authorities. They work through the courts to help the police obtain authority to arrest the criminals involved in the slavery cases. The following story describes brutality that's hard to understand, but it is a real case that IJM helped prosecute.

24 boys who were forced to work on Lake Volta, Ghana are now FREE!

Early in the morning of January 24, IJM and Ghanaian authorities prepared for a rescue operation. The sun rose over the calm waters of Lake Volta, one of the world's largest manmade lakes. The team was abuzz with anticipation. **Everyone was ready for the day's mission: rescue the boys.**

These boys used their small bodies every day to dive into deep water to untangle nets for their masters. It was difficult and dangerous work, made worse by violent abuse and lack of food and sleep. They dreamed of their families, whom they could not see.



But today would be the day this would end. Right before 6:30 a.m., eight boats launched off the shores to look for them. When we found them, most were scared—the boys didn't know what was happening. As we pulled them into our boats, the Ghanaian commander instructed his unit to arrest the suspected boatmasters, 16 in all. **The boys were now free!**

Twenty-four boys were rescued; the youngest was 7 years old. Three had malaria. Several had

injuries from work and abuse. We quickly reassured them that they were now free and safe. **When this new reality sunk in, many began to clap and sing.** The youngest boy felt safe enough to fall asleep.

That night, for the first time in a long while, they slept in warm beds.

“It was a new experience for them to live like a child and eat a full meal and sleep a full night and play football and do the things normal kids do. In these small moments, there were little beginnings of transformation,” said IJM Ghana Director of Aftercare Anita Budu.

But the road to recovery and healing will

be long. The journey to regain their childhood will be hard. Many of them will need care for years for come. IJM works with local organizations to provide counseling and aftercare for freed slaves.

We can pray for IJM's success, but in addition, the FCC Justice Mission team has found opportunities right in our community where we, as followers of Christ, can answer the call and respond to injustice. We can extend a hand to help a local child whose parent is in prison or assist Pregnancy Decision Health Centers (PDHC) with care for a mother who just decided to not abort her child. Check the bottom of the page for these and other local opportunities to fight injustice.

Information for this article is from www.ijm.org.

Opportunities / Activities

- When a pregnant mother is in need through PDHC, our congregation will host a baby shower, provide meals, etc. for her, and when it's needed, we may have a work day at one of their centers. Please be prepared to help.
- Doug has written an article and will be giving a webinar on May 10 for Heartbeat International, the largest network of pregnancy centers, to equip pro-life leaders. Please pray for that to be fruitful.
- Help is needed to make personal contacts with those we've served through Angel Tree.
- Do you want to get more involved with righting injustice? Come to our Justice Team meeting.
- Check with Tom Castor (tcbus7@att.net) or Doug Dunsmoor (dwdunsmoor@hotmail.com) for more information.