

DEUTERONOMY 24:17-22:17 NAS

17 “You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow’s garment in pledge. 18 But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing. 19 “When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. 21 “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. 22 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.

In passages like this one, we can see that God deeply cares for the vulnerable--the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow. These laws address equality and care for the vulnerable. Notice that the motivation given is, “you used to be slaves in Egypt.” In other words, everyone shares this in common.

QUESTION 1

What stood out to you as you read this passage?

QUESTION 2

Who are the vulnerable today?

QUESTION 3

How does recognizing that you have also been redeemed by Jesus impact how you think about yourself and others?

ISAIAH 58:1-14 NAS

1 "Cry loudly, do not hold back;
Raise your voice like a trumpet,
And declare to My people their transgression
And to the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways,
As a nation that has done righteousness
And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.
They ask Me for just decisions,
They delight in the nearness of God.

3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see?
Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?'
Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,
And drive hard all your workers.

4 Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike
with a wicked fist.
You do not fast like you do today to make your voice
heard on high.

5 Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man
to humble himself?
Is it for bowing one's head like a reed
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?
Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?

6 Is this not the fast which I choose,
To loosen the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the bands of the yoke,
And to let the oppressed go free
And break every yoke?

7 Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry
And bring the homeless poor into the house;
When you see the naked, to cover him;
And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

8 Then your light will break out like the dawn,
And your recovery will speedily spring forth;
And your righteousness will go before you;
The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'
If you remove the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness,

10 And if you give yourself to the hungry
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness
And your gloom will become like midday.

11 And the Lord will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

12 Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;
You will raise up the age-old foundations;
And you will be called the repairer of the breach,
The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

13 "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the
Lord honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure
And speaking your own word,

14 Then you will take delight in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

In this passage, we find that God's people are neglecting the vulnerable in their communities, while continuing in their rhythms of worship (the Sabbath, prayer, and fasting). But what God cares about most is that his people do justice and care for the oppressed in their community.

QUESTION 1

Did anything in this passage surprise you?

QUESTION 2

In what ways do we sometimes focus on external practices rather than what matters most to God?

QUESTION 3

What injustice grieves you the most right now? What do you think God thinks and feels about this?

JAMES 1:26-2:5 NAS

Chapter 1

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Chapter 2

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

James describes genuine devotion to God as being aware of the needs of vulnerable people in our communities and doing something about it. He talks about how we are easily blind to inequality and sometimes even play a part in it. James actually sees the poor as having a privileged position because they can more easily see their need for God's provision and grace.

QUESTION 1

Who around you might need support in this crisis?

QUESTION 2

Where do you find hope when there's injustice in and around us?