

# CROSSROADS BIBLE CHURCH

GROWTH GROUP CURRICULUM

June 23, 2019

## "CITY OF GOD" - Week 7

For more information or to join a Growth Group, please visit our Growth Group page online at [cbclife.org/groups](http://cbclife.org/groups) or call the church office at 408.288.4115.

### QUICK REVIEW

For those who weren't there or even those who didn't understand it very well it will help them to get acquainted with the text and topic. These questions are also designed to be "softball" questions in order to get people to engage and participate.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

This is an opportunity to clarify the teaching for those who may not have understood it. This can also be a jumping off point for great discussion. Sometimes groups don't get past this question and that's ok! Remember, you want to "scratch where it itches" so don't feel the need to rush past this.

2. What is one thing from Sunday's message you are likely to remember two weeks from now?

### MY STORY

1. Have you ever served the poor in Jesus name? What was that experience like?
2. On Sunday Pastor Jeff said that despite Jesus clear and repeated admonition to care for the poor and marginalized, most Christians view it as optional. Do you agree? Why or why not?

### DIGGING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 58:3–10 and answer the questions below.

Isaiah 58:3–10

'Why have we fasted,' they say,  
'and you have not seen it?

Why have we humbled ourselves,  
and you have not noticed?'

"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please

and exploit all your workers.

4

Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists.  
You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on high.

5

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,  
only a day for people to humble themselves?  
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed  
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?

6

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?"

7

Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

8

Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

9

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.  
"If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

10

and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.

1. What is the problem with the people's behavior (vv. 3–6)?

Apparently there were some in Israel who exploited their workers (vv. 3) and those who would engage in spiritual fasting only to have it result in "quarrels" (vv. 4). The point is found in vv. 6 when we learn that, though Israel had practiced religious devotion, they missed the larger goal of the law which had to do with not doing evil and aiding the oppressed and marginalized.

2. Within the context, what does it mean to "loose the chains of injustice"?

The immediate context here is income inequality in the sense that some people, at the bottom end of the socio-economic spectrum are being cheated. Here God is urging everyone to stand with those being oppressed and to work for justice on their behalf. The edict is not just to the one doing the oppressing but to all of Israel, because of the intended audience we can infer that God is asking everyone to do what they can.

3. What is the result of doing this justice (vv. 8–10)?

Healing and God's protection (vv. 8), "your light will rise in the darkness" (vv. 10 [this bears a striking similarity to Jesus' admonition in Matthew 5:16])

Read James 2:1–17 and answer the questions below.

1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

4. Do you perceive the scenario James describes in verses 1–7 to be occurring in your life or in the church? If so, in what ways does it manifest itself?

What is being depicted is favoritism within the church based on someone's economic status. Also in view is the oppressive attitudes and actions towards those who may not have economic means. James is trying to get his audience to see their attitudes are no better than the those of the pagan people exploiting them.

5. James writes, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (v. 10). What does he mean by this? What impact does he intend for it to have on his readers? How does he intend for them to change their lives as a result of reading these words?

James is telling his audience that if they do not uphold any part of the Law they are guilty in God's eyes and in need of mercy. He then explores them to be merciful since they have received mercy by way of the "Law that gives freedom." James is likely refereeing Jesus admonition to be merciful since God has been merciful towards you (Luke 6:36).

6. What is the connection between verses 12–13 and verses 14–17?

vv. 12-13 indicate that we should engage in works of justice and mercy because God has been merciful to us. vv. 14-17 indicate that meeting the needs of the poor and oppressed is the sign of a true saving faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

7. What does this passage tell us about God's concern for the poor, and what are the implications for us?

## **TAKING IT HOME**

1. Who is your neighbor? Make a list of the people or groups around you that are in need.
2. Consider how you typically view these individuals or groups.
3. Ask the question; "How does God view them?"

