

## **The Trouble with Christianity: Injustice Small Group Discussion Guide**

### **Opening Questions** (encourage everyone to answer):

- This week's "trouble with Christianity" is that Christians have carried out injustice and oppression in the name of religion.
  - Has this topic been a stumbling block in your own relationship with God? Why or why not?
  - What specific instances have you heard people reference as examples of this problem?
- Let's look through the lenses of James 2, to see whether the Bible or the Christian faith produces injustice.

### **Read James 2:1-13.**

- What problem seems to be happening among James' readers (vv. 1-4)?
- What are some practical ways that believers in our time and place might be guilty of the same problem?
- In v. 5, James gives the first reason why the Christian faith cannot be used to support oppression and injustice. How would you state this reason in your own words.
  - What does it mean that "God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith?"
  - Read Paul's words in 1 Cor. 1:26-29. What light do these words shed on this idea?
  - How does the Beatitude in Matthew 5:3 relate to this principle?
- Back in James 2, what is the essence of James' point in vv. 8-11?
- In v. 12, James makes a statement about how we can see our treatment of the poor and oppressed align more with God's. What principle does he give us to shape our actions, in your own words?
  - (Leaders, Pastor Josh stated it this way: *The more you know and understand God's mercy to you, the more you will be moved to do the same thing.*)
  - What is James talking about when he says, "the Law that gives freedom?" The same phrase shows up in James 1:25. See that reference for further insight.
  - How might our lives change if we "speak and act" in light of this reality?
  - In v. 13, to what is James referring with the terms "mercy" and "merciful?" If you're unsure, read Luke 10:25-37, especially v. 37.
- One common misunderstanding of this passage (and the rest of ch. 2) is that James is contradicting the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, and that he is teaching a salvation by works. What light does v. 17 shed on this supposed problem?
  - What does it mean that works of mercy are not means of salvation, but rather evidence of salvation?
- Pastor Josh said on Sunday that if we don't see acts of mercy flowing out of our gratitude to God, we may still not understand the gospel, for it will necessarily produce works of mercy. Agree or disagree?
- At this point, how would you answer someone who said, "I can't be a follower of Jesus due to the long history of injustice that has been carried out by his followers?"

### **Application:**

- What are some needs in our church body, our immediate community, or our broader world, of which you are aware and which we might band together to meet?

**Pray:** If you are realizing that you have perpetuated unjust or oppressive practices in any way, use this time to confess and receive God's repentance. Pray also for God's leading as to how we can express his mercy in our community and world. Finally, share your needs and pray for one another.