

Speaking to the soul

Justice

I will be merciful only if you stop your evil thoughts and deeds and start treating each other with justice; only if you stop exploiting foreigners, orphans, and widows; only if you stop your murdering; and only if you stop harming yourselves by worshiping idols. Jeremiah 7:5-6

Most of the time, we probably think of justice as being in the hands of other people. We look to the police and the law courts to handle issues of justice, and we wish them well as they do so. However, these verses make it clear that justice involves us all. We all need to think and to act justly, and that is a challenge every day of our lives. We have to continually make judgments about what is just, whether it's in our family, business, school, college, church or sports club. God was clear that he would only be merciful to his people if they were willing to take their responsibility for justice seriously.

We live in a deeply unfair world. Although massive strides have been made in recent centuries, people still suffer because of their age, gender, ethnicity, poverty, appearance, disability or education. The whole Bible encourages us to look out for those who are vulnerable in our society, and, wherever we live, we won't need to look far. It isn't good

enough to merely wish them well. We need to stand with them and explore ways in which they can be supported.

The Old Testament was particularly sensitive to the vulnerability of foreigners. Having lived in another country for a couple of years, I understand this, but my situation was not that of a refugee. I can't imagine how awful it would be to be forcibly displaced from this country, but the United Nations high commissioner for refugees believes that there are more than 80 million people in that position. The number has doubled in the past ten years. We can't change the world by ourselves, but we can reach out to those in our own communities who need our prayers, love and practical support.

QUESTION

What can you do to promote justice in your own community?

PRAYER

Loving God, forgive me for those times when I have left issues of justice to others, and haven't been eager fight for it and protect the vulnerable people that I know. Amen

