

SMALL GROUP LESSON: THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The Real God, Part 6

Scripture: Matthew 25:31–46

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ ⁴⁶“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

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DISCUSSION STARTERS

Read through the questions below and pick the ones that would work best for your group. Chances are, you won't need to work through all of them! Ask the questions in your own words—don't feel that you need to read them "as is." And feel free to ask your own questions! Keep the overall objective in mind so that no matter what "path" your conversation takes, you end up driving home the objective.

OBJECTIVE

To help your students understand that God's justice means He will make everything right.

1. WARM UP

- When you think of the word justice, what comes to mind? Give an example of justice or injustice.
- Based on the message, what's your definition of God's justice?

2. SET UP THE PASSAGE

"It can be difficult to talk about God's justice. On one hand, we might think, "Why does God judge people? Can't he just forgive them?" And on the other hand, "Why doesn't God judge the people who do bad things?" The Bible is clear about God's character: He is both loving and just—always. God is not sometimes loving and other times just. He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins: Jesus paid our debt, a debt we could never pay. This sacrifice was an expression of His love and satisfied His justice. In today's study, we are looking at a parable from Jesus about the judgment and love we can expect at the end of time."

3. CONTEXT QUESTIONS (focus on scripture)

- Read the passage out loud (consider having a different student read it a second time).
- Does anyone have any questions about this passage? Did you find anything confusing or difficult to understand?
- Without looking at the text, retell this parable in your own words. Does anyone have anything to add?
- Repetition stands out in this passage. What material is repeated and why do you think this repetition is important?
- What is the difference between the sheep and the goats? What determines how a person will be judged?
- Why were both the sheep and the goats surprised?

4. APPLICATION QUESTIONS (focus on personal significance)

- Based on your experience, how is human justice different than God's justice?
- Life isn't fair! Bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people. This seems to contradict the clear teachings of the Bible about God—that he is good, just, and sovereign. Have you ever personally struggled with this reality or known someone who has?
- As followers of Jesus, we are called to be just, as God is just. On a practical level, what could this look like in your life? How can you reflect God's justice this week in your relationships?
- How could the reality of God's justice impact the way you view your life?
- In the message, we had two responses to God's justice. Which one was most challenging for you personally and why?

1. Realize that justice is coming.
2. Choose forgiveness over vengeance.

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