

JUSTICE AND MERCY MINISTRY

One of the goals of Chicago Fellowship is to help men become wise and generous stewards of their time, talent, resources and opportunities. We want men to begin to see the world as God sees it and respond to the needs of others in a way that honors God and truly enriches their lives. To accomplish this goal, we have formed strategic partnerships with specific ministries that allow men to join with other men in service that is, ongoing, hands on, and relationship based. This allows men to get to know those they serve and develop relationships with them that are mutually beneficial and enriching to both parties. At present, there are some eight ministries that are part of our Fellowship network. You can find these ministries and their links listed in the service opportunities section of our website.

To better understand how we view both service to others and the stewardship of one's life, it is important to mention the core truths that serve as the foundation of our commitment. Below is a brief discussion of these core truths and the Biblical support for each. The verses listed are not exhaustive but serve as a representation of the call God has placed on our lives and the life of every believer in Christ to "...do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God." (Micah 6:8).

God created the world in order and peace.

Proverbs 3:19 tells us "...by wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding He set the heavens in place...". God did not create the world we now experience. Before the fall of the human race there was perfect order and peace (Hebrew – Shalom). When the fall of man occurred, this order and peace were destroyed and one of the results was the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. This creates a world of the "powerful" and "powerless"; those with great opportunities and with no chance at all. God will one day restore all that was lost in the fall of mankind, but until that day, we are called to see this present world as God sees it and respond.

Those who see the world as God sees it will care about the poor and disenfranchised.

Proverbs 29:7 says "...the righteous care about justice for the poor." The term "righteous" in this verse might better be translated "just". It is not a reference to those who keep the rules but those who see the injustice created by the fall of man and commit themselves to doing something about it. They understand that the fall of the human race resulted in an inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities and that they have a responsibility to do what they can to correct this inequity.

We are no more deserving of the opportunities we have been given than others who are less fortunate.

Proverbs 3:27 says that we should "...not withhold from those who deserve it, when it is in our power to act." This idea that there are those who "deserve it" can be easily

misunderstood. The point is not that one person is more entitled than another to receive a chance at a better life but that those of us who have had a better opportunity are no more deserving of that opportunity than those born into a more broken and disenfranchised place on the social and economic spectrum of this fallen world. We should not feel ashamed of the opportunities we have had or devalue the fact that we have been good stewards of them. That is not the point. The point is, we are no more deserving of these things than those without such advantage and should be willing to do what we can help create better opportunities for them when we are able.

As a response to God's grace in our own lives, it is a privilege to participate with Him in redistributing resources and opportunities to others.

Proverbs 19:17 tells us that "...he who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD". In keeping with what has already been said, those of us who have been blessed by God should be willing to join with God in helping restore what was lost in the fall of man. The poor spoken of here are not the "irresponsibly poor". The Bible is clear that we are not called to facilitate the behavior of those who do not seek to better themselves. The poor in all the verses we are discussing are those who were born into the world with little the world valued and without the power to keep anything of value they possessed from being taken from them if someone with greater power determined to take it. These are the poor and disenfranchised we are called to serve. When we act according to the justice of God on behalf of these, we work with God in restoring the world as God created it to be.

The greatest joy comes from using our prosperity to enrich the lives of others.

Proverbs 11:10-11 reminds us that "...when the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy... through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted". The exciting thing that happens in all that we are talking about is when people with resources and opportunities become good stewards of what they have been given, two important things happen. God takes delight in prospering them and those who are disadvantaged celebrate the prosperity of these good stewards knowing that all will benefit as a result. What a beautiful picture this becomes of working toward a world as God created it to be.

In Summary

Those of us who are part of Chicago Fellowship are committed to becoming wise and generous stewards of our time, talent, resources and opportunities. We believe that the fall of the human race created an inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities and that it is our responsibility to respond to the injustice this has created. Being no more deserving than others of the opportunities we have enjoyed, we believe it is our responsibility to look for places around us where the fabric of the world is torn and the walls of protection for people are collapsed and become part of reweaving the fabric and restoring the walls. We believe that such action represents a restoration of the order and peace of the world as God created it to be and allows us the privilege of cooperating with God in demonstrating His coming kingdom here on earth. This we commit ourselves to

as a response to the saving grace of Jesus Christ in our own lives and we invite you to join this highest calling and greatest of all adventures with us.

Isa 58:6 “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?

Isa 58:7 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 him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Isa 58:8 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.

Isa 58:9 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,
Isa 58:10 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.

Isa 58:11 The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

Isa 58:12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.