



The Center: Speak Out | June 24, 2020

Discussion Guide

The Scoop

We can all agree that oppression is wrong, but what we don't agree on is who does it, who it is happening to, and how we address it.

Key Verses

Proverbs 31: 8-9 MSG

Speak up for the people who have no voice, for the rights of all the down-and-outers.

Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute!

Discussion

We often describe hot summer days as “oppressive.” The air is thick, it feels heavy, and it may even prevent us from living our normal lives. Many people even go as far as describing difficulty breathing because the air is so thick and heavy. Since oppression is a difficult topic to discuss, this analogy may help us explore the concept.

1. How would you describe oppressive heat? How do you feel? What makes heat oppressive? What causes oppressive heat?
2. Can you think of other things that are oppressive? What are the characteristics of the things that are oppressive that compare or contrast with the idea that heat is oppressive?

A simple way to think about oppression is one's power at another's expense, and this idea can be found throughout life in subtle ways. The sun's power or humidity weight costs us. This conversation gets more difficult when we examine it from the perspective of gender, race, or even religion. Because we universally hold the idea that oppression is bad, we prefer to disassociate ourselves with the concept. The bible is full of examples of oppression and how God helps various groups of people or individuals overcome oppression. We typically resonate with these stories from the perspective of the oppressed. What we rarely discuss is our potential as the oppressor characters based on being in a position of power.

3. What Bible stories can you think of that highlight oppression? Explore both the oppressor and oppressed.
4. In what ways do these stories apply to your current reality of being in a position of power or being in a minority position? Are there any situations where the opposite is true?

As Christians, we hardly see ourselves as the oppressors and usually identify with the oppressed. We typically even engage with our communities in ways that could help improve people's lives. In America Christians are largely in the majority when it comes to religion, men have historically held the majority of power, and white people have historically been both the majority and in positions of power. What the Bible seems to call us to is to use our positions of power or majority to help the oppressed. In the Bible, Luke was a doctor in the Roman world. He held a position of power and had no vested interest to speak out on behalf of Jesus, yet Luke used his place of power and privilege to do so. Similarly in Proverbs 31: 8-9, it says, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

5. Within your own life, who are some friends, family, coworkers, or acquaintances that have been oppressed within your society?
6. How might you speak out and advocate on their behalf? What are some tangible actions you can take to help their perspective be heard?

What's Next?

This week as you live out your faith, consider the areas where you may speak up to give a voice to those who don't have one. Seek new information, seek to learn more about the perspective of the oppressed. Consider how you can use your power/majority to help rather than oppress (either actively or passively).

You can find a template of our 5-minute faith journal at faithinfive.com to further engage your goals and connect them with your faith.