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STUDIES  
FOR LIFE®

# READY

MINISTERING LIFE TO THOSE IN CRISIS



CHIP INGRAM



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*Bible Studies for Life: Small Group Member Book*

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## ***You're called to minister. Be ready.***

Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," as the first line of his famous novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. I'm reminded of that opening because we may well be living in "the worst of times" today. Many in our culture have rejected absolute truth, the values in society are shifting, and the moral foundation of our nation is crumbling before our eyes. It's easy to feel discouraged. And it's tempting to insulate ourselves from the messiness of a culture that's far from God.

But this may also be the best of times. Why? Because the opportunity for ministry has never been greater. God didn't call us to retreat or run for the hills. He called us to be "in the world" (John 17:11-19) and to be "the light" of the gospel (Matt. 5:14-16) in a dark and broken society.

That's why I've created this study. In order for us to be ready to minister, we must be on the alert.

Specifically, this study will help you be more sensitive to some of the struggles and addictions that people in your community are facing. This study will also give you a biblical understanding and perspective for ministering in the midst of those crises.

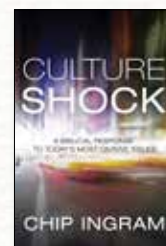
Every struggle, addiction, and sin involves and affects a person who has been created in the image of God. It's not enough to have minds equipped with truth; we must also have hearts moved with compassion. This study will give you practical ways to love, support, and minister to those in crisis.

In the pages ahead, we're going to tackle some of the most challenging issues of our day. If you will engage these sessions, you will be ready to minister when someone considers an abortion, when those around you experience poverty, when sickness comes to stay, when sex threatens to destroy, when families are torn apart by homosexuality, and when someone is trapped by pornography.



### *Chip Ingram*

Chip Ingram serves as senior pastor of Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, California, and as teaching pastor of Living on the Edge, an international teaching and discipleship ministry. He is the author of 12 books, including one that tackles many of the issues addressed in this study: *Culture Shock: A Biblical Response to Today's Most Divisive Issues* (Baker Books).



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# SESSION 1

# READY WHEN INJUSTICE PREVAILS



*What examples of injustice cause  
your blood to boil?*

**QUESTION #1**

#BSFLinjustice



## THE POINT

*God calls us to defend those who can't defend themselves.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Every few years, a trial takes place that captures the nation's attention. The case may involve a celebrity or some sensational murder, and it seems to be the only thing the national media talks about. And when the jury finally reaches a verdict, we hear a collective cry of surprise at their decision: not guilty!

"How could they let that person go free when all the evidence and testimony pointed to their guilt? They got away with murder!"

We've all had those moments when we marveled at a blatant lack of justice. But many examples of injustice go unnoticed: negligence, abuse, oppression, murder—the list goes on. Injustice often hits hardest against those who are unable to speak up for themselves. Who sees that justice is done for those without a voice?

God is a God of justice and He calls us, His people, to practice justice. In the Old Testament, we see clear-cut direction on how we should practice justice and speak up for others. Rather than letting our blood boil over injustice, we can step in and be a voice for the voiceless.

# WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

## **Exodus 23:1-3,6-9** (HCSB)

**1** “You must not spread a false report. Do not join the wicked to be a malicious witness.

**2** “You must not follow a crowd in wrongdoing. Do not testify in a lawsuit and go along with a crowd to pervert justice.

**3** Do not show favoritism to a poor person in his lawsuit.”

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**6** “You must not deny justice to a poor person among you in his lawsuit.

**7** Stay far away from a false accusation. Do not kill the innocent and the just, because I will not justify the guilty.

**8** “You must not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and corrupts the words of the righteous.

**9** You must not oppress a foreign resident; you yourselves know how it feels to be a foreigner because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.”

## Key Words

**The innocent** (v. 7)—The Hebrew describes a person generally characterized as godly or righteous. In this passage the word refers to a person who has committed no crime and deserves no punishment.

**Oppress** (v. 9)—The Hebrew literally means “to squeeze.” Its common use in the Old Testament refers to cruel treatment. The Israelites were “squeezed” in Egypt but commanded not to “squeeze” others.





## **Exodus 23:1-3**

Justice is an ideal in every society. And one way to carry out justice is to fight against the corrosion of lies and deceit. That's the focus of the commands recorded in Exodus 23:1-3.

Specifically, we're commanded not to "spread a false report." I can't read these verses without thinking about justice for the unborn children of our world. Why? Because one false report that has circulated for years is the claim that an unborn child is only "tissue" or a "product of conception." Abortion isn't an ethical or moral issue, the argument goes, because it doesn't involve "real" human beings.

Advancements in technology have shed light on this false report. Today we have access to 4-D ultrasounds, which is great because 85 percent of women who benefit from this technology decide to keep their babies—it's clear that what's inside the womb is a human life.

- ▶ The heart begins to beat between the 18th and 24th day after conception.
- ▶ Brain waves have been recorded as early as 45 days after conception.
- ▶ At eight weeks, the baby possesses the unique fingerprints he or she will have for life.
- ▶ At 11-12 weeks, a baby can suck its thumb.<sup>1</sup>

Given these truths, why have so many embraced a "false report" about abortion? Because the lie protects them from unwanted consequences and responsibility. Injustice occurs when people are willing to seek their freedom at the expense of someone else's life.

It's easy to go along with the culture on controversial issues. But God's command is clear: "You must not follow a crowd in wrongdoing" (v. 2). Our call is equally clear: stand up for others who can't stand up for themselves. Don't join in the falsehoods and lies against them.

***Why are we  
sometimes tempted  
to blend in with  
the crowd?***

**QUESTION #2**

## Exodus 23:6-7

Let me state the obvious: it is a great injustice—a sin, in fact—to kill anyone. People have tried to justify euthanasia or the taking of any life they deem non-viable or unproductive, but Scripture doesn't give us that option. **The Bible upholds the sanctity of human life.**

Now, most people read these verses with a sigh of relief. We think: "I haven't killed anyone. Whew!" But we also need to consider whether we're contributing to murder through inaction. Look at the full context of this passage. The law addressed the issue of seeing justice universally carried out. We aren't to favor the poor person in a matter (v. 3), but neither are we to deny him justice. A lack of justice can lead to an innocent person's wrongful death. And our inaction—our failure to prevent an injustice—can be equally harmful.

I realize abortion isn't a topic for casual discussion; your group would probably prefer to talk about something else. But there are lives at stake. This isn't simply a theological or theoretical issue. This issue impacts family members, neighbors, friends, coworkers, and your church. Here are the facts:

- ▶ More than one out of every five pregnancies ends in abortion.
- ▶ Sixty-five percent of all women who have abortions identify themselves as Christians.
- ▶ Since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, more than 56 million babies have been killed in the U. S. through abortion.<sup>2</sup> (For some context, the total population of California is around 40 million.)

What's more, every abortion sets off a chain reaction of loss. Parents are impacted. Untold numbers of people deal with the guilt of knowing they participated in or supported an abortion. All these repercussions are sobering, and the gravity of the situation is magnified when we consider God's response: "I will not justify the guilty" (v. 7). Those who contribute to the death of an innocent person become guilty themselves because of their unjust actions. God takes sin and injustice seriously.

*How does this passage influence your response to issues such as abortion?*

### QUESTION #3





## **Exodus 23:8-9**

***How does justice in this passage compare with the “justice” we typically see?***

### **QUESTION #4**

One group that is susceptible to oppression and unfair treatment in any culture is the outsider—those who are “not like us.” God gave the Israelites a strong reason for treating foreigners with fairness: they had been outsiders themselves. The Israelites had been oppressed and unfairly treated in Egypt; therefore, God called them to remember their own experiences. Implicit in this command is the heart of the Golden Rule: treat others as you want to be treated.

We place value on the object by virtue of who created it. (Try purchasing a painting by Van Gogh or Picasso for the same price as a painting by a talented, but unknown artist.) In Genesis 1:27 we read, “So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God.” God took His stamp, His image, and implanted it on every human being on this planet. That gives each human being infinite value and worth.

What’s more, we never lose our value in God’s eyes. Even when our lives are full of sin, even when we’ve been guilty of oppressing others, He steps in and removes our guilt when we repent. Because God is holy, He will not justify or ignore our guilt. But Jesus—the One with no sin or guilt—took our sin and guilt upon Himself. He removes our sin and offers us forgiveness in Christ.

We can and should apply that same value to others. We do just that when we work tirelessly to stop the great injustice of abortion. We do that when we help those struggling under the guilt of abortion see that God’s grace is available for them. We do that when we treat all people fairly and work for the justice of others. We do that when we do all we can to see that the innocent and the oppressed are shown the respect and value God gives them.

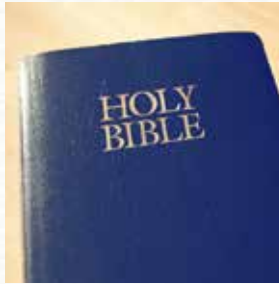
Most of all, we treat others with the value they deserve when we point them to the freedom we all need in Christ.

***What behaviors can we adopt or change in order to defend those who can't defend themselves?***

### **QUESTION #5**

## FINDING VALUE

*Write a sentence under each of the following images explaining why the object it represents should be considered valuable.*



*What prevents us from always treating people the way God sees and values them?*

Your eyes saw me when I was formless—all my  
days were written in Your book and planned  
before a single one of them began."

—PSALM 139:16



# LIVE IT OUT

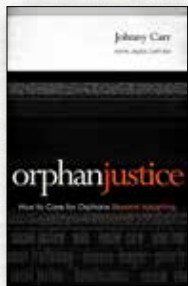
Consider what you can do this week to address the pain of wrong decisions and defend the lives of others:

- ▶ **Pray.** Pray each day for the thousands of unborn babies currently at risk. Pray for the women and families that have been impacted by abortion.
- ▶ **Get involved.** Consider writing letters to your congressional representative and other elected officials on this vital issue.
- ▶ **Give what you can.** Contribute to a local crisis-pregnancy center. Donate money or volunteer your time to help in this important work.



Abortion is not the “unpardonable sin.” God can bring beauty from ashes and healing from the pain of wrong decisions—and from the pain of failing to prevent wrong decisions. God values us. He values others. So let’s follow suit and do the same.

## Excerpt: Orphan Justice



*“Johnny, what would have happened to your little girl if she hadn’t been adopted?”*

*My friend Matt’s words cut through the cool night air as we leaned against his pickup truck while watching our sons’ baseball practice. Xiaoli came running by, laughing with glee as she dodged behind me to avoid getting tagged, then bolted off across the parking lot.*

To continue reading this excerpt from *Orphan Justice*, by Johnny Carr, visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles).



## My group's prayer requests

## My thoughts

1. "Pro-Life America," [cited 8 May 2014]. Available from the Internet: [www.prolife.com](http://www.prolife.com); "Medline Plus—Fetal Development," [cited 8 May 2014]. Available from the Internet: [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov).
2. "Induced Abortion in the United States," Guttmacher Institute, February 2014 [cited 16 April 2014]. Available from the Internet: [www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org).