

Scripture and Justice Timeline Activity

Description: This activity illustrates how Scripture provides a foundation for our concern for those who are poor and vulnerable.

Preparation: Before your presentation, make a single copy of each of the 15 large-print statements below. You may want to use thicker card-stock.

Mix up the pile of the 15 statements so that they are not in order.

Identify a space of wall that would fit all 15 statements side-by-side on the wall, with a little space between each one. You may need to temporarily take down posters or picture frames.

Tear off 15 pieces from a masking tape roll. For each piece, tape the ends together to make a small loop of tape, sticky-side out. Stick the 15 loops on the wall so that participants will be able to grab one quickly to adhere the statements to the wall.

Instructions: Pass out the statements, one to each participant. If there are more than 15 participants, hand out one statement to every two or three people and announce that those who were not given a statement should find someone who was given a statement and work as a team with him or her.

Announce to participants that we will be making a timeline that illustrates our scriptural concern for the poor and vulnerable. People with the statements (and their small team, if applicable), have exactly three minutes to arrange their statements on the wall in the correct order—based on the order of the books in the Bible. When they are certain of the order, they should use the loops of tape to adhere the statements to the wall.

Allow several minutes for the participants to complete the activity. Then have everyone stand in front of the timeline they have created while, as a group, you go through each of the biblical events, one by one. Use the answer key on the last page to check the order of the statements. As you go through the statements as a group, talk about how each one illustrates the scriptural concern for those who are poor and vulnerable.

The human person is
created in God's image
and given a role as
God's partner in caring
for creation.

God helps the
Israelites escape
from slavery and
oppression.

On Mt. Sinai, God gives
Moses the Ten
Commandments to help
the Israelites live in right
relationship to God and
others.

The Israelites' legislative codes include rules for caring for the poor, forgiving debts, welcoming the stranger, and stewardship of the land.

The prophets, such as Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos, condemn injustice done to the poor as a sign of Israel's unfaithfulness.

Pregnant with Jesus, Mary visits Elizabeth, proclaiming, “[The Lord] has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty...”

In the synagogue, Jesus reads from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

During his ministry, Jesus shows mercy to the needy, grants pardon to sinners, shows concern for the weak, performs exorcisms, and heals the sick.

Jesus' parables, such as the Good Samaritan and the Sheep and the Goats show God's special love for the poor which we are to imitate.

Jesus washes the
disciples' feet, calling
them to love and serve
others in the same
way.

Having received the
Holy Spirit, the
disciples perform
wonders, such as
healing the sick.

The disciples establish
the Christian community,
in which all members
have enough and “there
was no needy person
among them.”

Paul chastises the
community at Corinth for
divisions according to social
class, presenting a vision for
Eucharistic community as
one body of Christ.

The letters of James, Hebrews & others exhort the early Christians to live out Jesus' commandment of love, to be doers of the Word (not only hearers) and to implement worship through Christian living.

Letters to the persecuted
churches use code
language to exhort them to
persevere in public witness
through saintly deeds, acts
of justice and work to
establish God's kingdom.

Answer Key

- 1) *The human person is created in God's image and given a role as God's partner in caring for creation.* The creation story is in the book of Genesis. The story illustrates that human persons are created in God's own image and likeness and therefore, every person possesses intrinsic dignity. Also, Adam and Eve were not created as solitary beings—they were created for relationship with God and one another. Finally, Adam and Eve were given a role as stewards. We are called to care for and protect God's gift of creation.
- 2) *God helps the Israelites escape from slavery and oppression.* Exodus 1:1-15:21 illustrates that God liberates the oppressed and hears the cries of those who are vulnerable.
- 3) *On Mt. Sinai, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments to help the Israelites live in right relationship with God and others.* This story, told in Exodus 20, shows how God gave the Israelites a moral code so that they could treat God and one another with respect and live rightly and peacefully.
- 4) *The Israelites' legislative codes include rules for caring for the poor, forgiving debts, welcoming the stranger, and stewardship of the land.* There are three Legislative Codes in the Old Testament: the Covenant Code (Exodus 21:1-23:33), the Law of Holiness (Leviticus 17:1-26:46), and the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19). These codes include rules for how those who are most vulnerable should be treated. The Codes exist as guides to right worship and living.
- 5) *The prophets, such as Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos, condemn injustice done to the poor as a sign of Israel's unfaithfulness.* Throughout the OT: the peoples' faithfulness is judged not only by faithfulness to God but also by their treatment of the widow, orphan, migrant, and those who are poor. We see examples of this in Hosea 4, Isaiah 1; 5; 32; 58, Jeremiah 5; 7; 9; 34, Ezekiel 18:5; 22; 34; Amos 5:7-17; 8; Micah 2, and Malachi 1:6-29. Each describes the result when leaders fail to follow God's commandments, including those on social justice. For example, the prophecy of Amos about the fall of the northern kingdom was tied to his criticism of the misuse and hoarding of wealth by the upper class while the poorest suffered (5:7-8:6). The prophet Jeremiah cried out against Judah's rulers' unfaithfulness to God—and the injustice that pervades society. The great sin of King Jehoiakim was his selfish use of power, building a new expensive palace using forced labor and ignoring the needs of the poor (5:26-29, 22:13)
- 6) *Pregnant with Jesus, Mary visits Elizabeth, proclaiming, "[The Lord] has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty."* Mary's proclamation of the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-56 testifies to God's special love for those who are poor and weak. Jesus, who is God incarnate, affirms the goodness of creation and God's love for humanity. Jesus' birth, life and death seek to make right the broken relationship between humans and God.
- 7) *In the synagogue, Jesus reads from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."* In Luke 4:18, Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus seeks to make present the Kingdom not only in end times, but also starting now!

- 8) *During his ministry, Jesus shows mercy to the needy (Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 25:31-46) grants pardon (Matthew 6:11, 14-15; 18:21-35), shows concern for the weak (Mark 9:35-37; 10:13-16, Matthew 18:10-14), performs exorcisms, and heals the sick (Matthew 4:23-25, 9:35-36, 11:5; 15:29-31). Through his ministry to those who are sick, weak, and possessed, Jesus shows us how to worship rightly and live rightly.*
- 9) *Jesus' parables, such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-40), show God's special love for the poor and the stranger which we are to imitate.*
- 10) *Jesus washes the disciples' feet, calling them to love and serve others in the same way. The washing of the disciples' feet in John 13:1-7 precedes the first Eucharistic liturgy, setting the stage for our own reflection during the Liturgy today about our own call to service, self-sacrifice, and mission.*
- 11) *Having received the Holy Spirit, the disciples perform wonders, such as healing the sick. The disciples receive the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and then perform great works and wonders through the power of the Holy Spirit.*
- 12) *The disciples establish the Christian community, in which all members have enough and "there was no needy person among them." The description in Acts 4:32-35 of the first Christian community inspires us today to take seriously the responsibility to care for all who are in need.*
- 13) *Paul chastises the community at Corinth for divisions according to social class, presenting a vision for Eucharistic community as one body of Christ. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10-11 remind us that we are one body and that when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer.*
- 14) *The letters of James, Hebrews, and others exhort the early Christians to live out Jesus' commandment of love, to be doers of the Word (not only hearers), to refrain from showing partiality toward the rich and from defrauding laborers (James 1:22, 2:1-9, and 5:1-6, respectively), and to implement worship through Christian living (Hebrews 10:22-25, 12:14-17, 13:15-16).*
- 15) *Letters to the persecuted churches use code language to exhort them to persevere in public witness through saintly deeds, acts of justice and work to establish God's kingdom. Letters to the persecuted churches, such as those found in Revelation 5:10, 19:8, 20:6, and 21:2, offer hope and instructions to live as powerful witnesses in the world.*