

## **Week Three - *Rich vs. Poor: Whose Side is God On?***

### **John 9:1-11**

#### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day One**

1. Remember, as a kid, when you used to complain to your mom and dad that life wasn't fair? What kind of response did you get from your parents to that complaint?
2. Now that you are grown-up, what's your take on whether life is fair? Is it? Should it be? Why or why not?
3. If we have a loving, powerful God of law and order, shouldn't He have created a world that is fair? Open your Bible to Genesis 1:1 and read it. Then look at verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25. How does God describe His creation?
4. What happened to mess it all up? (If you need help answering this question, skim Genesis 3.)
5. What effect did sin have over all creation? What effect does sin have on the world around you today?
6. Read Romans 5:12-18. What were the consequences of Adam's sin? How did God counteract these consequences?
7. If the world isn't fair, whose fault is it, ours or God's? And if the world isn't fair in our favor - we get to be saved from the consequences of Adam's sin - who do we have to credit for that?
8. Close in a prayer of confession. Confess your sins to God. Then thank Him for sending Christ into the world so that our sins would no longer bring us a fair punishment - and that He has now forgiven us and spares us the eternal consequence of our sins.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two**

9. As we established yesterday, if the world is unfair and broken, it is entirely the fault of humanity for breaking God's design through our sinful actions. With that in mind, read John 9:1-11.
10. Evaluate the disciples' assumption: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
11. We still think this way today, don't we? If something bad happens, we immediately look to assign blame. What good does it do us to think this way? How does it help us to solve the problem or understand the world better?
12. Jesus, however, contradicted this line of thinking. How would you paraphrase His response in verse 3?

13. Does this seem like a fair answer to you? Why, then, are people born blind or in other disadvantageous situations today?
14. I think very few of us would have a problem with the idea that we should display the work of God in our lives. And yet, given a choice, how many of us would choose hardship or disadvantage for the sake of giving God glory? Do you think it is possible to give God glory by being wealthy? By having advantages? Better abilities than others?
15. It seems that God, like Lucy, still “has some ‘splaining to do” about fairness in this world. But part of being God’s created children is that we trust Him, even when we don’t understand Him. Close your time today by reading Isaiah 64:6-9 as your prayer of confession and supplication.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three**

16. Have you ever made a judgment about a situation, only to find out that you were missing a key piece of evidence or perspective? What happened?
17. We always have to be careful when we judge a situation with our incomplete perspective. There is a powerful Jewish parable about the prophet Elijah. You can read it here:  
[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/111928/jewish/Rabbi-Joshua-ben-Levi.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/111928/jewish/Rabbi-Joshua-ben-Levi.htm)
18. What is the point of this parable?
19. We often approach God from our own human perspective, when, in fact, it is our job to try to understand God’s perspective. How easy or difficult do you think this is to do?
20. Turn in your Bible to Joshua 5:13-14 and read the encounter listed there. To help understand this story, you should know that many Biblical scholars believe that the person Joshua encountered was God himself. Joshua asked the man if he was friend or foe. Why did the man have a problem with the question?
21. Have you ever made a statement or held a belief that clearly God is on the side of (fill in the blank)? Whether it’s that God would support a certain political party or that God has obviously blessed or cursed a certain person, what assumptions have you made about God’s allegiance?
22. When we start to think this way, we need to reorient our thinking. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer asking God to give you *His* perspective. Ask Him to put His Spirit of discernment in you, to help you remember that it is our job to be on God’s side and not our job to assign His loyalties.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four**

23. We’ve seen it over and over again: good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. When

was the last unfair thing you saw happen to someone around you?

24. Sadly, this is not a new phenomenon. The prophet Habakkuk struggled with this same problem thousands of years ago. Read Habakkuk's complaint to God in Habakkuk 1:1-4. What parallels to this question do you see in the world today?
25. Now read God's response in verses 5-11. This is a terrible answer! How would you paraphrase what God promises to do?
26. Habakkuk has a real problem with this response. He asks God one more time whether His judgment seems fair. Read an excerpt of God's final answer in Habakkuk 2:1-4, 18-20. How would you put in your own words what God is saying here?
27. God's answer can be summed up in two phrases. First, he says that those who trust in God's fairness simply need to be patient, because things will eventually be made right. Second, his answer to any of our concerns in the meantime is, because I said so! How easy or difficult is it for you to accept these answers? Why?
28. For the righteous who live by faith (2:4b), how did God ultimately make things right in the whole world? (For a hint, turn to Acts 17:30-31.)
29. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, asking God to help you live patiently until He fixes all unfairness in the new heaven and new earth. Pray that He will help you to trust in His word and that all things will be made right at the end of time.

### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five**

30. It can be easy to oversimplify how God works in our lives. Read 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Why was Jabez blessed?
31. Now read Acts 12:20-23. Why did Herod Agrippa die so horribly?
32. It can be tempting to fall into a basic binary: good things happen to people who are faithful to God and bad things happen to people who wrong God. Blessings are a sign of God's favor; but suffering is a sign of God's curse. How often do you tend to think in these terms?
33. Now let's look at how Paul considered all his blessings. Read Philippians 3:5-8. What word does Paul use to describe all his amazing advantages?
34. Now let's look at how Paul considered all his sufferings. Read Romans 8:18, 28. What negative effects did suffering

have on God's glory?

35. What difference did either blessing or suffering make to Paul in his goal to give glory to God?

36. In his healing of the blind man (Day Two), Jesus gave us a new paradigm for understanding the fairness of this world. All of our *blessings* pale in comparison to the glory we get from Christ Jesus. All of our *sufferings* pale in comparison to the glory we get from Christ Jesus. Ultimately, anything that brings you closer to Christ is a blessing. Finish your week with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the one who has conquered all blessings and sufferings by giving us His glory through His sacrifice on the cross!