


TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS



Part One:
What the Lord
Requires of Us

A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

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Questions for Discussion & Reflection

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...angered you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 What do you find **most disturbing** about our recent episodes of racial tension—and why?
- 3 { If you could **say one thing** to the participants, what would it be? What difference **might** it make?
If you could **make one change** in our world, what do you think would have the greatest impact?
- 4 • Read James 3:13-18 and John Perkins' testimony (found inside today's Talking Points, Walking Points).
Point out examples of "wisdom from above" and "earthly, natural, demonic 'wisdom'" (James 3:15) in Perkins' story. **How** do you think Perkins was **able** to choose the path of peacemaking?
- 5 Which of Perkins' "four admonishments" have you seen implemented in situations of social tension? What was the result?
- 6 Reread the first two paragraphs, the final paragraph of Perkins' testimony, and his bio at the bottom of the article. What role should his "moral authority" play in gaining a hearing for such radical ideas?
- 7 Think of an actual injustice you've observed (in your family, in your neighborhood, at your workplace). How could Perkins' "four admonishments" be implemented in that specific situation?
- 8 What role could you and other believers play in helping Perkins' "four admonishments" be implemented?

Application-Challenge

- 9 • Care about justice—but care **wisely**.
Learn to "know a tree by its fruit".
• Read and discuss John Perkins' testimony.

Have you been hurt by injustice?

write to:

BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

- 1 Although this is a standard “softball” opening question, reactions to this topic may be a bit heated! Be prepared **not** to react too strongly to any strong negative emotions expressed here. Just get people talking, and take note of anything you ought to follow up on.
- 2 This question begins a trajectory toward the topic of contemporary calls for social justice, but it’s still an “initial impressions” sort of question. Beware—there could be strong negative (judgmental) opinions shared. Be prepared to moderate any over-strongly expressed opinions and emotions.
- 3 These two questions begin moving the discussion toward solutions. Again, beware that strong negative (judgmental) opinions shared. Be prepared to moderate any over-strongly expressed opinions and emotions. Keep people “solution-oriented” so it doesn’t just turn into a “gripe session”.
- 4 Plan on reading this passage and Perkins’ testimony aloud. Ask for volunteers to read aloud, while others follow along (and jot notes, if desired). Then ask the questions and moderate the discussion. Ask follow-up questions to make sure that answers do deeper than typical “Sunday School” responses.
- 5 Straightforward question. Help folks be concrete and specific in their answers. If answers are vague and general, ask for details or examples.
- 6 Again, ask for volunteers to read aloud as other follow along on the page. Then dig into this question.
- 7 Ask for examples of injustices, then choose one or two of them to work through Perkins’ admonishments.
- 8 Again, don’t settle for vague platitudes. Get concrete and specific.
- 9 Direct group members’ attention to this second item in the Application-Challenge. Here’s what Pastor Dan asked them to do:

This week, look at the headlines and ask: “Are the words and actions that are being promoted ‘pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and without hypocrisy’? Am I seeing “good behavior and gentle wisdom”? If so, it’s from God.

Or, are the words and actions promoted by our culture full of “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition? Are their words arrogant? And do their behaviors lead to disorder? If so, it’s from hell.

Try to elicit commitments from folks to take this step. It will prepare them for next week’s message.

LAST CALL



PointMan

Men's Summertime Bible Study

- Genesis 1-11 "Creation, Sin and the Nature of God"
- June 7—August 30
- Open to all men
- Just \$10 (for materials)
- Choose the time that fits you best.

For complete info go to tcc.org/men

**BEGINNING
THIS WEEK!**

Sermon Summary (Key Text: James 3:13-18)

We often hear discussions of “social justice” combined with calls for equality, diversity, and inclusion. Christians care deeply about issues of justice—and we want to be involved. We want to know how to think and act biblically about these important topics. We assume that when folks use the same word, that we mean the same thing. Unfortunately, this is not true—and there are serious consequences to how we define words. Sometimes we vaguely sense that something has changed, but we may not know that these biblical words have been redefined with totally unbiblical ideas. This is dangerous. Not only are words defined differently, the actions which our culture puts forward as solutions to problems of justice and oppression—such as burning and looting—give us pause. We understand the anger, even the outrage—but are these responses justifiable? Our problems are not new (Micah 2:1–2). Throughout June we’ll be looking at the solution that one of Israel’s prophets, Micah, taught the people during his day. The ancient, biblical solutions to injustice are far superior to what’s being proposed by today’s social justice movement (Micah 6:8).

Jesus said that we can sort out competing and contradictory claims by observing the outcome of our beliefs and actions—“you know a tree by its fruit”. What results from current secular views of justice? Outrage, anger, factionalism, enmity, hostility, suspicion, entitlement, grievance, self-righteousness, or pride. Those are not good, godly outcomes. Jesus’ half brother, James, gives us insight into the source of these destructive ideas:

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
(James 3:13-18)

Everyone claims to be right, to be wise—but real wisdom results in good, gentle behavior. True, godly wisdom is, first and foremost, “pure”; it is “undefiled by any fault”. It’s also “peaceable”—“quiet and tranquil; free from disturbance and agitation.” Today people proudly admit that their goal is to disrupt and agitate! James continued: the wisdom from above is “gentle” (moderate and willing to put up with provocation from others). Heavenly wisdom is “reasonable” (willing to yield to differing opinions, to compromise) and “full of mercy” (Luke 6:35-36). Whenever we fail, we want mercy for us—but we demand justice to be handed down on others! James warns: “judgment will be merciless to those who show no mercy” (2:13). Wisdom that truly is from God is full of “good, beneficial fruits”—in thought, word, and deed. More than that, it is “impartial”. The opposite of “impartial” is when we “show favoritism”; “us versus them tribalism”. James says that so-called “wisdom” is demonic! Now this is a shocking claim: James says that if your views result in “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition”, then the source of our “wisdom” is hell, not heaven; Satan, not God!

These biblical authors care deeply about injustice—and so should we. But we have to be careful that we define our terms correctly—biblically—and that the “solutions” we propose are not worse than the injustice and oppression they aim to rectify.

Talking To Others About This Week’s Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asks you, “*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*”, how would you summarize the most important elements of this week’s sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

I was born on a Mississippi cotton plantation in 1930. My mother died of nutrition deficiency when I was just seven months old. My big brother, a World War II veteran, was gunned down by a town marshal when I was seventeen years old. As a civil rights activist, I was jailed and beaten nearly to death by police. They tortured me without mercy, stuck a fork up my nose and down my throat, then made me mop up my own blood. I have known injustice.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for me to answer hate with hate. But God had another plan for my life, a redemptive plan. Jesus saved me. He saved me from my sin. He saved me from what could have easily become a life of hatred and resentment. He saved me by his amazing grace. And it's by that same grace that I have spent the last sixty years with my wife, Vera Mae, confronting injustice. We have literally poured blood, sweat, and tears into the causes of civil rights, multi-ethnic reconciliation, community development, building good relationships between urban communities and the police, education, teaching the gospel, and holistic ministry. I have labored not by my strength, but "by his strength that works powerfully in me," as Paul said. And God has been faithful.

Through my sixty years of working for justice, I offer four admonishments to the next generation of justice-seekers:

First, start with God! God is bigger than we can imagine. We have to align ourselves with his purpose, his will, his mission to let justice roll down, and bring forgiveness and love to everyone on earth. The problem of injustice is a God-sized problem. If we don't start with him first, whatever we're seeking, it ain't justice.

Second, be one in Christ! Christian brothers and sisters—black, white, brown, rich, and poor—we are family. We are one blood. We are adopted by the same Father, saved by the same Son, filled with the same Spirit. In John 17 Jesus prays for everyone who would believe in him, that people from every tongue, tribe, and nation would be one. That oneness is how the world will know who Jesus is. If we give a foothold to any kind of tribalism that could tear down that unity, then we aren't bringing God's justice.

Third, preach the gospel! The gospel of Jesus' incarnation, his perfect life, his death as our substitute, and his triumph over sin and death is good news for everyone. It is multi-cultural good news. In the blood of Jesus, we are able to truly see ourselves as one race, one blood. We've got to stop playing the race game. Christ alone can break down the barriers of prejudice and hate we all struggle with. There is no power greater than God's love expressed in Jesus. That's where we all find real human dignity. If we replace the gospel with this or that man-made political agenda, then we ain't doing biblical justice.

Fourth and finally, teach truth! Without truth, there can be no justice. And what is the ultimate standard of truth? It is not our feelings. It is not popular opinion. It is not what presidents or politicians say. God's Word is the standard of truth. If we're trying harder to align with the rising opinions of our day than with the Bible, then we ain't doing real justice.

We are in the midst of a great upheaval. There is much confusion, much anger, and much injustice. Sadly, many Christian brothers and sisters are trying to fight this fight with man-made solutions. These solutions promise justice but deliver division and idolatry. They become false gospels. So I encourage you: dare to reach across the divides of our day. Venture beyond anger and hurt into grace and forgiveness. Don't get swept along into false answers that lead only to more injustice. Love one another. Confront injustice without compromising truth—healing, unifying, biblical truth!

John Perkins is a civil rights activist and community developer, Bible teacher and author.

He is the founder and President Emeritus of the John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation.

Despite being a third-grade dropout, Perkins has advised and/or served on the Presidential Task Forces of five U.S. Presidents, has been recognized for his work with sixteen honorary doctorate degrees. He is the author of seventeen books, including the best-selling

One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race.

