



Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of **'Justice'**.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

Development

1. Key themes to explore

Personal justice - 'playing fair' with others; respecting others' rights; acting responsibly and fairly with the people we meet each day

Social justice - speaking up on behalf of others in the community; recognising that others are fellow human beings with the same rights as ourselves; making sure all voices are heard impartially; challenging biased reporting, unfair practices and institutional prejudice; working for a fairer society

Global justice - honouring human rights for all people; campaigning for a fairer world; challenging unfair systems of trade and exposing financial exploitation; speaking up for the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable; giving a fair hearing to migrant workers, refugees, the forgotten poor and the powerless; speaking up against global inequality; reassessing our own experiences of justice in the light of global issues

2. Key Bible verse

Micah 6:8 (CEV):

'The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: "See that justice is done; let mercy be

your first concern, and humbly obey your God.”

Many of the prophets in the Old Testament spoke out against corruption and injustice in the society of their day, because this is something that God hates. The way we treat each other is seen by Christians as a true mark of their commitment to God.

3. Key concepts to unpack

Fair play is a very strong instinct in most of us. We tend to become upset when things aren't fair and we or others get a raw deal.

Justice is obtained in most democratic societies through a system of laws, which are there to make sure that people are not hurt or exploited by others. These laws are made by people to protect them from their own worst behaviour. However, sometimes these very laws are shown to be unfair and they need to be challenged and changed.

A simple 'rule of thumb' on what is just behaviour is provided by the so-called 'golden rule', taken from Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount:

'Treat others as you want them to treat you' (Matthew 7:12).

However, this verse must be put in its wider context. Jesus calls his followers to see justice, not as a way of getting revenge and paying people back; instead, he calls them to forgive their enemies, go the extra mile and not judge other people.

Working for justice for various groups and causes brings people together to form pressure groups that aim to change things for the better.

Christians are involved, for example, in campaigns to change rules on unfair trading; promote ethical conditions for the workers around the world, and they support the buying and selling of fairly traded goods as a way of acting on behalf of the poor.

The first of 30 wise sayings from Proverbs (22:22-23) is:

'Don't take advantage of the poor or cheat them in court. The Lord is their defender.'

And David exclaims in Psalm 41:1:

'You, Lord God, bless everyone who cares for the poor.'

Children encounter issues of justice when:

- they are involved in solving classroom disputes and personal rivalries
- they experience the rules of a school
- they help establish golden rules for the classroom, playground or dinner hall
- they buy fairly traded goods or ethical clothing

- they hear stories that explore global inequalities
- they become arbiters for others in disputes
- they hear about inequality and unfairness on the TV or via the Internet
- they get involved in charity campaigns such as those run by in Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund or CAFOD

4. **Display and reflective corner ideas**

As a symbol for this value use a picture of 'the scales of justice' or perhaps some real old-fashioned scales.

Include some fairly traded goods or labels from them.

Include some speech bubbles with commonly heard justice-related phrases such as:

'It's not fair' - 'fair enough' - 'fair play' - 'fairs, fair' - 'a fair hearing'

'justice must be done' - 'we demand justice' - 'justice for the poor'

Have pictures of people on a march or making a protest.

Organise a petition to be signed for some local issue.

Have a picture of two individuals in dispute who look unfairly treated.

Download from the Internet global maps of a our 'rich and poor' world.

Key questions to have on the display:

Do I always act fairly? Am I fair to other people? What unfair things make me cross? How can our school/community/world be a fairer place? What does God think is unfair in this world?

A picture of an angry Christ, for example the picture from the Philippines that is part of the CMS/USPG/Methodist pack 'The Christ we Share' is disturbing but a great discussion starter!

Key verse:

The prophet Amos wrote (5:24)

'Let justice and fairness flow like a river that never runs dry.'

5. **Bible story links**

- Amos the prophet was furious with God's people of his day because they worshipped God but cheated the poor - see Amos 8:4-7



- The story of Naboth's vineyard describes God's concern for 'the little man', who is exploited by the powerful and rich – see 1 Kings 21
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a strong condemnation of those who deny justice to the poor 'at their gate' – see Luke 16:19-31
- Jesus himself was angry at the way the temple courtyard had been turned into a marketplace where traders made money at other's expense – see Matthew 21:12-13
- In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus equates acting justly for the poor, the weak and vulnerable with loving and serving God – see Matthew 25:31-45
- Throughout his whole life, Jesus upheld the rights of the marginalised both in his stories and his miracles: such as the outsider (the Good Samaritan); the outcast (the leper); the unfairly treated (women, children and non-Jews).
- Isaiah the prophet called God's people to worship God by behaving justly towards others – see Isaiah 58:6-8.

Ideas for collective worship and classroom lessons

- [A story about appreciating difference on the theme of the rainbow](#)
- [The story of Janani Lawum in Uganda](#)