

God of Hope

- Our God is a God of justice, love, and compassion—and all of that is joined with the most hopeful perspective on injustice:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13 ESV)

- Hope is hard, the only way we can continually live in it is by the Holy Spirit's power.
- It's so important that we as Christians reflect the hope our God has, especially when we look in the face of seemingly hopeless situations.
- God has more information than you do, and more hope.
- One story from the book of Ezekiel gives us one perspective shift for how we can see injustice and still have hope.
- The prophet Ezekiel confronted the nation of Israel over their massive, huge complicated layers of injustice:

Again a message came to me from the LORD: "Son of man, give the people of Israel this message: In the day of my indignation, you will be like a polluted land, a land without rain. Your princes plot conspiracies just as lions stalk their prey. They devour innocent people, seizing treasures and extorting wealth. They make many widows in the land. Your priests have violated my instructions and defiled my holy things. They make no distinction between what is holy and what is not. And they do not teach my people the difference between what is ceremonially clean and unclean. They disregard my Sabbath days so that I am dishonored among them. Your leaders are like wolves who tear apart their victims. They actually destroy people's lives for money! And your prophets cover up for them by announcing false visions and making lying predictions. They say, 'My message is from the Sovereign LORD,' when the LORD hasn't spoken a single word to them. Even common people oppress the poor, rob the needy, and deprive foreigners of justice. (Ezekiel 22:23-29, NLT)

- This is an ugly picture of injustice influencing every part of a nation. Let's break this down.

Who are all of the people listed in the passage and what are they doing wrong?

- **Political leaders:** The princes are devouring innocent people, seizing treasures, extorting wealth, and making widows by killing men.
- **Religious leaders:** The priests aren't following God's laws or honoring Him.
- **Government officials:** The leaders are tearing apart innocent victims and destroying precious people's lives for money.
- **Prophets, the mouthpieces for God:** The prophets are covering up for everyone by giving false messages.
- **Normal citizens:** Everyday people are going along with everything—oppressing the

Demystifying Biblical Justice

poor, robbing the needy, and not giving justice to immigrants.

- When you look at justice issues in the world, it's all too common to see a picture like this—an intertwining of political, cultural, and religious leaders who are all doing horribly wrong things, while the average person just goes along with it.
- It's overwhelming to look at. No one person could change a picture like that, right?
- Well, take a look at what Ezekiel goes on to say God is looking for:
 - “I looked for **someone** who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for **someone** to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found **no one**. So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them with the fire of my anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!” (Ezekiel 22:30-31 NLT, emphasis mine)
- In the midst of the entire nation doing something wrong, God isn't looking at all the wrong, He's looking for someone willing to make it right again.
- Over and over again in the Bible, seemingly overwhelming issues are solved by God starting with “someONES”:
 - When Israel was oppressed by Egypt, He raised up a liberator, Moses.
 - When the world was going to be destroyed by a flood, He raised up Noah to save humanity.
 - When Nineveh was facing judgment, He raised up Jonah to be His mouthpiece in order to give the city a second chance.
 - When Haman plotted to commit genocide against the Jews, He raised up Esther to stand before the king and to convince him to save God's beloved people.
 - When the Gentiles needed the gospel, God raised up a former Jewish murderer, Paul.
- The answer for seemingly overwhelming problems like oppression from an international superpower, environmental destruction, genocide, and most of the world not knowing was to start with someone, and build from there.
- Look for the someones that God is raising up to solve massive injustices. Invest in the someones. Pray for the someones. Work with the someones. Be the someone.
- Don't replace hope with ignorance. True hope doesn't need ignorance.