



Session 7

VALUE ALL

Jesus values all people.

PROVERBS 24:10-12; MARK 10:46-49

Proverbs 24:10 If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. ¹¹ Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. ¹² If you say, “But we didn’t know about this,” won’t He who weighs hearts consider it? Won’t He who protects your life know? Won’t He repay a person according to his work?

Mark 10:46 They came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it



was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many people told him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!” ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; He’s calling for you.”

As you read both passages, look for reactions and attitudes expressed toward people needing help. What do those reactions and attitudes reveal about the person expressing them?

FIRST THOUGHTS

During the war-torn days of World War II, Winston Churchill cited a quote allegedly coming from the Irish statesman Edmund Burke. Churchill, following Burke, said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Though Burke had died in 1797, this quote seemed to express a powerful maxim particularly suitable for the situation of embattled Europe in the early years of Nazi aggression. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. expressed a similar sentiment. When speaking of the near silence of the noble people in America during the often dangerous struggles of the civil rights movement, King indicated the greatest tragedy of that time would be “the appalling silence of the good people.”

These references have in common the basic observation that evil people triumph through the silence or inactivity of good people in not opposing them. This silence and inactivity in turn begs the questions: Why do good people not intervene in wrongful situations in order to establish what is right? Why is evil allowed to proceed and to intensify due to the silence and lack of opposition from good people?

What factors could contribute to good people remaining silent, indifferent, and inactive in the face of social, military, or political upheaval?

In our world, we have many people or groups of people who

face great challenges. Many live in homelessness, while others face extreme poverty. Some people arrive at retirement only to find they have little money or health to enjoy in their so-called “golden years.” Abortion on demand in the United States has claimed the lives of 58 million unborn children. God values all these people.

Today’s session challenges us to be advocates on behalf of others who face great challenges. Believers must promote social justice, knowing that all people reflect God’s image and that God values every person regardless of any physical limitation. As you study this session, prayerfully consider how you, your Bible study group, or church might take action in one of these vital areas.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVERBS 24; MARK 10

The Book of Proverbs, along with Ecclesiastes and Job, is a part of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. The writer of Ecclesiastes approached the question of the purpose of life from a philosophical or intellectual perspective. He determined to ascertain how happiness might be found, concluding with, “When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity” (12:13). In contrast, the Book of Proverbs offers a more practical approach to everyday life. It teaches the believer how to live. The principles found in Proverbs combine common sense and reverence for God, resulting in true wisdom. The key verse is 1:7: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” In other words, God is the starting point in the search for true wisdom.

Chapter 24 is a collection of individual sayings and proverbs on various topics related to life. We are not to envy or join with evildoers whose hearts plan violence (vv. 1-2). While evil men plan violence, the wise take up the cause of justice (vv. 3-4). Verses 10-12 challenge us to rescue those who have been wrongly condemned to death. God will hold accountable those who have it within their power to rescue the innocent but instead do nothing (v. 12).

The wicked are reminded of the futility of their malicious actions toward the righteous (vv. 15-16). We are told not to gloat when our enemies fall (vv. 17-18) nor be agitated by evildoers, for we know they



have no future. We are to fear God and the king (vv. 21-22); the king is God's agent to bring destruction to evildoers. We are not to show partiality in judgment (vv. 23-25) but to be honest in all our dealings (vv. 26,28-29). The chapter closes with the account of a slacker whose field came to ruin because of his laziness (vv. 30-34).

Mark 10 records that Jesus traveled to Judea. He was on His way to Jerusalem and the cross. While in Judea, crowds converged on Him and, as usual, He began to teach them (v. 1). When some Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with a question about divorce, Jesus affirmed God's design for lifelong marriage (vv. 2-12). He affirmed the value of children by taking them in His arms and blessing them (vv. 13-16). Jesus then challenged a rich young ruler to give all he had to the poor and to come follow Him—a price the young man was unwilling to pay (vv. 17-22). Jesus warned it would be hard for rich people to inherit the kingdom of God (vv. 23-27). He assured His disciples God would bless their faithfulness (vv. 28-31). For a third time, Jesus predicted His death (vv. 32-34; see also 8:31; 9:31). When James and John asked Jesus if they might sit at His right and left hand in His coming kingdom (10:35-41), Jesus responded by clarifying the true nature of leadership (vv. 42-45). True leaders serve those they lead.

As Jesus and His disciples journeyed through Jericho, He met Bartimaeus [BAHR tih MEE uhs], a blind beggar, who implored Jesus to have mercy on him (vv. 47-48). The crowd rebuked him, but Jesus called to him and gave him sight (vv. 49-52).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

A CALL TO PROTECT LIFE (PROV. 24:11)

VERSE 11

¹¹ Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter.

Solomon issued a strong command to protect human life: ***Rescue those being taken off to death.*** The verb *rescue* can also mean “snatch away.” It is an imperative in the original Hebrew. Solomon was not offering a suggestion; he was issuing a command. The expression ***those being taken off to death*** describes people in danger of being put to death; the context suggests those wrongly condemned. The wise

king knew the Hebrew law dictated that certain crimes be punished by death. Solomon, therefore, was not instructing his people to rescue the guilty. Perhaps to add a qualifier would help us understand Solomon's intent: "Rescue those innocently being taken off to death." God expects us to advocate for those facing wrongful death, including the unborn. He likewise expects us to defend and care for society's most vulnerable—the poor, oppressed, displaced, orphans, and widows:

- "Do not deny justice to a foreigner or fatherless child, and do not take a widow's garment as security" (Deut. 24:17).
- "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you must not glean what is left. What remains will be for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow" (Deut. 24:21).
- "Provide justice for the needy and the fatherless; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute" (Ps. 82:3).
- "Speak up for those who have no voice, for the justice of all who are dispossessed. Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy" (Prov. 31:8-9).
- "Learn to do what is good. Seek justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause" (Isa. 1:17).

Solomon continued: ***and save those stumbling toward slaughter.*** The word *slaughter* is a strong word that often denotes the literal taking of human life (Isa. 30:25; Ezek. 26:15). The word can also describe circumstances in which people do not realize they are heading for ruin and it is within our power to rescue them. The concept can apply anytime we see a person in danger and certainly may also describe people whose lives are headed toward spiritual ruin.

We are reminded that people without Jesus face an eternity of punishment. When we share the gospel with them, we provide them a means of escape. We may also need to take loving, corrective action in order to help other believers who are caught in sin (Gal. 6:1).

How would you summarize Solomon's command? How does keeping this command strengthen a society?

A WARNING AGAINST INACTION (PROV. 24:10,12)



VERSES 10,12

¹⁰ **If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited.**

¹² **If you say, “But we didn’t know about this,” won’t He who weighs hearts consider it? Won’t He who protects your life know? Won’t He repay a person according to his work?**

While innocent individuals were being “taken off to death” (v. 11), some chose to ***do nothing*** in such ***a difficult time***. The king had heard some of his people offer the common excuse of claiming to be uninformed. How cruelly the excuse rolled off the tongues of those who had failed to protect the innocent: ***“But we didn’t know about this.”***

This excuse can be understood in different ways. Perhaps the people knew nothing about situations in which the innocent died. After all, news did not travel as fast in ancient days. The Hebrew word translated ***know*** communicates personal, intimate knowledge. Therefore, perhaps the people had some awareness of such situations but didn’t know the particulars or specifics.

Or, more likely, the people simply didn’t tell the truth when claiming ignorance. Perhaps the people knew exactly what happened and chose, for whatever reason, not to get involved. Perhaps the people had both the knowledge and the power to intercede and chose not to do so.

Solomon asked three penetrating questions, all of which had to be answered with a responding “yes!” Yes, God, ***who weighs hearts***, would ***consider*** the inactivity of His people as they failed to protect the innocent. Yes, God, ***who protects your life***, knew that His people had failed those individuals innocently condemned. And, yes, God would ***repay a person according to his work*** or, in this instance, his or her lack of work (lack of intervention on behalf of the innocent). Here, Solomon used the same Hebrew word for ***know*** twice. The people claimed not to know about those unfairly condemned. Solomon communicated that God did know about their inactivity and would punish their idleness. Solomon made it clear: inaction was an unacceptable option.

Every society has people who have no one to advocate for them. God calls His people to do so. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord announced His displeasure at Israel’s neglect and mistreatment of orphans and widows: “They do not defend the rights of the fatherless,

and the widow’s case never comes before them” (Isa. 1:23). In Jeremiah, God warned against inaction: “They have not taken up cases, such as the case of the fatherless, so they might prosper, and they have not defended the rights of the needy. Should I not punish them for these things?” (Jer. 5:28-29). The Lord’s words were aimed at those who had the power to help the vulnerable but chose not to do so. James, the half-brother of Jesus, challenged his readers to take action on behalf of others when it lay within their power to do so. He declared that if they did not, their faith was worthless (see Jas. 2:15-17).

What excuses might a person use to justify ignoring people in dire need or in peril?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Social Justice*

We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick.

AN EXAMPLE SET (MARK 10:46-49)

VERSE 46

⁴⁶ **They came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road.**

As Jesus and His disciples were *leaving Jericho* (north of the Dead Sea and on the western side of the Jordan River, 17 miles from Jerusalem), *a blind beggar* named *Bartimaeus* was *sitting by the road*. Mark explains that Bartimaeus literally means *son of Timaeus*.

Luke records Jesus’ encounter with another citizen of Jericho—Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus were opposites in one sense—one was very rich (Luke 19:2) while the other was very poor. But the two were the same in that they both experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus as He passed



through Jericho.

The blind in those days had little opportunity to support themselves. They often had to resort to begging. Thus, a blind man begging on the side of a busy road would have been a common sight. The large crowd on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast likely would have failed to take notice of him.

VERSE 47

47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!”

When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he cried out: **“Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!”** *Son of David* was a messianic title based on the promises God had made to David in 2 Samuel 7:11-14. Bartimaeus believed Jesus to be the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

The blind man made a general request that Jesus might simply have mercy on him. Later, when asked by Jesus what he wanted, he made the specific request for his eyesight (v. 51).

VERSE 48

48 Many people told him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”

The crying out of Bartimaeus annoyed the crowd; they **told him to keep quiet**. Perhaps the crowds believed he meant to ask Jesus for alms. But Bartimaeus did not intend to ask Jesus for money. He knew Jesus was his only hope to gain sight and to be relieved from his life of begging. Undeterred, and with so much at stake, Bartimaeus cried out **all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”**

VERSE 49

49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; He’s calling for you.”

The persistent voice of Bartimaeus came to the attention of Jesus. The cry of a blind beggar **stopped** the Son of God in His tracks. He instructed His disciples to **“Call him.”**

Mark gives no indication that anyone aided Bartimaeus as he came to Jesus. We can imagine Bartimaeus in his excitement, hands

extended, rushing to find Jesus.

When Bartimaeus arrived, Jesus asked him what he wanted. Bartimaeus said, “I want to see!” (v. 51). We get the impression that Bartimaeus said, “More than anything in this life, I want to see!” Jesus then healed him of his blindness.

Matthew and Luke both provide an account of Jesus’ dialogue with Bartimaeus (Matt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43). Interestingly, only Mark records the man’s name. (Matthew tells us there were two beggars.) What if we didn’t know Bartimaeus’s name? Would it matter? Not at all. What does matter is the fact that Jesus valued a blind beggar (that we just happen to know by the name Bartimaeus). He valued a person who, no doubt, had been neglected on a daily basis by multitudes of other people. Not only did Jesus value Bartimaeus, He focused His attention on him, and rescued him.

Bartimaeus “immediately ... could see and began to follow Him on the road” (v. 52). In the Gospel of Mark, the healing of Bartimaeus is Jesus’ last recorded miracle before His entrance into Jerusalem on the way to Calvary. The value Jesus had for Bartimaeus brings into focus the value Jesus has for every person, which would soon be demonstrated most dramatically by His death on the cross.

Why is it important for Christians to set the example in regard to the valuing of human beings?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Review and compare these stories with Mark 10:46-49; Matthew 9:10-13; Mark 5:24-34; Luke 19:1-10; John 8:3-11. Look for similarities and differences. Seek to create a summary statement that synthesizes the similarities found in these passages. What abiding principles can be seen in all five events?



IN MY CONTEXT

- God expects Christians to advocate for those facing unjust death, including the unborn.
- Believers must promote social justice, knowing God will hold them accountable for being light in the world.
- Believers are to value every person, regardless of physical, emotional, or mental limitations. All lives matter.

Reflect on how Christians are readily equipped to advocate for those facing unjust death. What actions are you taking to rescue and protect innocent people facing death?

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List excuses you have used in the past for ignoring the needs of others, noting how each excuse falls short. Confess your past excuses to God, committing to take action in the future.

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Discuss as a group what you can do to protect the innocent. Identify individuals or groups who need your group to stand with and for them. What will your group do in the next week to address these needs?

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MEMORY VERSE

If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited.
—Proverbs 24:10