

*This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of social concern. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Social Concern

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. (Micah 6:8; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Thess. 3:12).

**1 Social concern is one significant way we fulfill the command to love our neighbors.** (Lev. 19:33-36; Micah 6:8; Zech. 8:16-17; Matt. 22:37-39)

#### Read Matthew 22:37-39.

- ▶ *What is the first, greatest commandment? What is the second-greatest commandment?*
- ▶ *What does it look like to fulfill the second-greatest commandment?*
- ▶ *How high would you rank caring for the poor and seeking justice for the oppressed when it comes to loving our neighbors?*

#### Read Leviticus 19:33-36.

- ▶ *What familiar command do we see in this passage?*
- ▶ *In the original context, whom did God want the Israelites to treat as themselves?*
- ▶ *Why does this make the command to love others as oneself surprising?*
- ▶ *If we look at verses 35 and 36, how specifically were the Israelites to love the foreigner?*

The measures refer to economic transactions of weighing out grain and gold, and the Israelites were told to treat them fairly in regard to the way they handled these resources.

- ▶ *What does Leviticus 19:33-36 look like in our culture? Who are the foreigners? How can we, as both individuals and as the church, ensure that they are treated with just balances?*

#### Read Micah 6:8.

- ▶ *This text was written 700 years or so after Leviticus. What priority has not changed?*
- ▶ *How would the text be different if we only had to do kindness, not love it? How does the “love kindness” command indicate our need for the Holy Spirit?*

We need Him to give us a new heart to enjoy doing good to the oppressed, and not just do it.

**2 Our social concern shows the world who God is and what He has done for us.** (Deut. 10:17-19)

Both Ann Landers and Samuel Johnson have been attributed as saying, “The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good.” What does that quote mean?

- ▶ *Who would be the down-and-out (those who can do no good to others because of their low position) in our culture?*

Examples may include: Minorities, the oppressed, the forgotten, shut-ins, the homeless, the physically handicapped, the mentally handicapped, the poor, and so on.

#### Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

- ▶ *How does God treat those who can do Him absolutely no good?*
- ▶ *According to this text, for whom does God have a particular concern? Does His concern for them surprise you? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *If God has such concern for the downtrodden and forgotten, shouldn't we? What might such concern look like?*
- ▶ *According to verse 19, what is another reason we should care for those outside the spotlight of our culture? In what sense were we once aliens, downtrodden, and poor? How did God provide for us and meet our needs? How can we do so for those in need?*

**3 Social concern is not merely for the recipients; it also is a means of God blessing us.** (Isa. 58:6-12; Amos 5:10-15)

- ▶ *Why should we make social justice a priority?*

#### Read Isaiah 58:6-12 and Amos 5:10-15.

- ▶ *What promises did Isaiah and Amos hold out to us to compel us to social mercy?*
- ▶ *Who benefits from social concern? Is it just the poor and forsaken? Is it just the recipients?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What social concern are you interested in helping with individually? As a group? How might you stir up your church to good works for social justice in the name of Jesus (Heb. 10:24)?*