

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

—Isaiah 58:9-10



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“Come, follow me.”

The first and most consistent cadence of discipleship surfaces in Jesus’ invitation: “Come, follow me.” We are formed into God’s character as we imitate Jesus, and some of the ways we are invited to imitate him are through the spiritual practices of justice and mercy. Justice and mercy practices usher us into the patterns of loving others that Jesus Christ declared were central to his mission (Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 4:14-21). These practices serve as tools through which we learn to imitate Jesus so that his image is formed in us (Galatians 4:19), thereby cultivating God’s character in us.


As we practice justice and mercy, we become immersed in working out what it means to love particular neighbors in their particular circumstances, and we become more aware of the challenges and barriers that often contribute to injustice. In this

way, practicing justice and mercy tangibly teaches us what it looks like to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:28-34).

As the apostle John emphasizes, this formative work in loving our neighbors is essential in understanding and living out what it means to love and know God (1 John 4:7-12). Throughout Scripture, God’s heartbeat of justice and mercy guides, confronts, comforts, and forms the people of God.

How might your congregation begin or continue to meet the needs of the oppressed and “do away with the yoke of oppression”? What practical steps might you take?

You are invited to check out the Faith Practices Project’s justice resources at crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject.

 **Thrive** Thrive is an agency of the CRCNA that encourages and equips churches in the areas of faith formation, abuse prevention, disability inclusion, racial reconciliation and diversity, pastors and church support, chaplaincy, biblical justice, and worship.



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