



FLOURISHING

Week of September 17

Flourishing through the Just, Prosperous, and Sustainable¹

Overview:

This sermon series has centered around the idea of *flourishing* in our relationships with God, with others, and ourselves. When we live in *shalom* with one another, we also bring wholeness, peace, and reconciliation to our city and our world. The word *shalom* in the Hebrew bible carries this idea of flourishing – not just living “at peace” with one another but calling out the best in others through justice, ethical economics, and sustainability. We are called to live in such a way that others are drawn into the abundant life that Jesus provides.

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups.

- Reflect on this past Sunday’s message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- To bring the kingdom into our communities through what is just, prosperous, and sustainable.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We are contributors, not consumers.* We do not attend church, we are the Church, and we exist in and for the world.
- *We are outrageously generous.* We are most like God when we are generous.

Conversation Starters:

- What stood out to you from this week’s sermon? Why was it so impactful?
- What comes to mind when you think of justice, prosperity, and sustainability?

Listening to God

- Where did you experience God last week? How were you able to join God on mission?

Learning from God’s Word: Bible Study Discussion

Flourishing as individuals is a healthy goal; Jesus came to give us an abundant life. But individual flourishing is not the END goal. According to scripture we are “blessed to be a blessing” (Gen 12:1-3). When we seek what is just, prosperous, and sustainable in our neighborhoods and cities, we see God’s kingdom break into the brokenness around us, bringing light and healing to the nations. We are to “seek the peace (shalom) and prosperity of the city” to which God has called us. Like the Israelites, we live in “exile” – in-between the fall in the garden (Genesis 3) and the full realization of the New Creation (Revelation 21).

¹ This discussion guide was written by Elaine Rodeck and edited by Rachel Vaughn and Dawn Gentry.

- **Read Exodus 19:3-6 and 1 Peter 2:1-5**
 - In Exodus 19:3-6, the Lord spoke to Moses who then spoke to the Israelites. Imagine you are one of these Israelites. You've traveled from your home to a new land, to live among a different people group. What do you feel? How do you think you might respond?
 - Why is God calling them a "kingdom of priests" significant? What do you think that meant for the average Israelite. What does it mean to us now?
 - In 1 Peter 2:1-5, we are commanded to put away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Further, we are to grow in our faith. As in ancient times, these commands are relevant today.
 - How can you apply these commandments to your life today?
 - How does living according to these values bring flourishing to our communities?
- **Seeking the Just**
 - The Just bring peace, justice, and unity in diversity. What does this look like in your everyday experience?
 - When we choose to help bring justice to those in our communities and the world around us, how might that change our interactions with others? Why does it matter?
 - *Suggested application:* Volunteer to help a refugee family or other oppressed group. How does working alongside someone like this broaden your understanding of biblical justice?
- **Seeking the Prosperous**
 - The Prosperous bring provision, abundance, and innovation, making life better for others. This could include financial prosperity by providing good jobs and being a fair/generous employer. This could also involve helping people make good financial decisions, which contributes to their financial stability.
 - How can you contribute to the prosperity of others? What are practical changes you can make today?
 - *Suggested application:* Help a neighbor or young person you know develop a budget.
- **Seeking the Sustainable**
 - The Sustainable bring wholeness, health, sustenance, and alignment/balance. Anyone in medical, environmental, agriculture, or counseling fields, contributes to the sustainable.
 - Sustainable also applies to our individual life. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. How might this passage help you flourish by bringing more balance to your life?
 - *Suggested application:* Visit a farmers' market this weekend and talk to the people who grow your food.

Leaning into Obedience

- How do you sense God calling you to respond to this lesson?

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share requests.
- Allow time for silent reflection on the following questions:
How can I bring more of what is "just, prosperous, and sustainable" into my community this week?

For further study:

- Amy L. Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society* (IVP, 2022)
- Lectio 365 - 24-7 Prayer International app for morning & night prayer/meditation
<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>