

SNARING THE POOR

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A Bible Study Lesson on Economic Justice for Small Discussion Groups

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READ ALOUD THIS PASSAGE:

For wicked men are found among My people, they watch like fowlers lying in wait; they set a trap, they catch men. Like a cage full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich. They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor. Shall I not punish these people? Declares the Lord, on a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?

Jer. 5:26-29 (NASB)

BACKGROUND:

In this passage Jeremiah, known as "the weeping prophet," bewails the grievous economic injustice found in his tribe of Judah. He preached (his assistant Baruch chronicled what he said) during the rule of the last five kings of Judah (627 to 586 B.C.) with the message that captivity under foreign kings would certainly follow unless the people repented of their idolatry and injustice. He suffered much for his ministry, being at various times threatened, imprisoned, put in stocks, tried for treason, publicly humiliated, and forced to flee from rulers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- In your own words, describe the conditions in Judah about which Jeremiah complained.
- Give some examples of legal financial "traps" or "snares" that oppressors use to catch people today.
- What does it mean that "their houses are full of deceit"?
- What benefits accrue to persons acting in this way? Give current examples.
- What would they be doing if they pled "the cause of the fatherless"?
- How do we plead the cause of the fatherless today? (Think single moms and their families).
- What rights do the needy have that are not being defended?
- Do we today unknowingly participate in any of these actions to snare the poor?
- What punishment, if any, do you see accruing to those who oppress the poor today?
- How can we as Christians minimize our participation in snaring the poor?

PRINCIPLES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- The same economic oppressions as troubled the ancient tribe of Judah also trouble us today.
- The various stratagems used to snare the poor, even if legal, are still sinful in God's eyes.
- There is divine retribution for people directing these evils.

REFERENCES:

Isa. 10:1-4, 14; Micah 6:11-12; Hab. 1:2-4; Zeph. 3:3-4; Isa. 32:5-8.