

Criminal Justice Resolution Discussion Guide

Related to "A Resolution on Criminal Justice, 2010" from the Christian Action Commission of the ECC

Purpose of the Discussion Guide

This discussion guide provides a suggested format for your church, Sunday school class, small group, or council to use along with the "2010 A Resolution on Criminal Justice" in order to better understand some of the complex issues that surround the topic of criminal justice. The CAC hopes that the 2010 resolution will be a starting place where the church can begin to learn about, pray for, and become engaged with the thousands of individuals affected by crime and by the justice system in our country – and that as a church we can continue to gather to discuss and reflect on how this issue may call the ECC to act with compassion, mercy and justice.

Discussing Criminal Justice as the Church

This discussion guide provides a suggested list of questions for a Sunday school class, small group, or other church group who want to examine the 2010 Resolution on Criminal Justice in more depth. Choose a format/timeline that works best for your group and select questions that fit your context best; the following list of questions is meant to be discussed after reading the corresponding section from the resolution. For the full text of the 2010 Resolution (and other resources), please visit CovChurch.org and search "Resolution on Criminal Justice".

A. After reading the Resolution "**Introduction**," discuss:

1. What adjectives come to mind when you hear the words "criminal justice"? Or "victim"? Or "prison guard"?
2. Do you know anyone whose life has been touched by the criminal justice system – what stories have you heard?
3. What Bible verses or concepts would you connect to the concept of punishment, victims, mercy & justice?

**Conclusion: This topic is sometimes an emotional and personal one; share any fears or questions that you bring to discussing the topic of criminal justice and pray for each other and for those who are victims of crime.*

B. After reading the Resolution section on "**Biblical Witness**," discuss:

1. The biblical witness tells us that God upholds both the cries of victims of crime and the potential for restoration for the offender – discuss how you see these two concepts & how they may affect one another.
2. Discuss # 3 and # 5 in the Resolution; how do *earthly* justice and *final* justice compare? How would you define "earthly justice" and "final justice"?
3. Discuss # 4 in the Resolution; how would you describe the church's priestly and prophetic roles in the world? Share examples that you know of the church serving victims? Offenders? Families/communities?

**Conclusion: God's call to the church is complex – we are to show mercy and justice, while waiting for God's final power to judge and restore. Share any questions you are left with & pray for both mercy and justice.*

C. After reading the Resolution section on "**Criminal Justice in Crisis**," discuss:

1. What facts in this section surprise you or what is new information? Do you know of other related facts to share?
2. What do you think is working in the system? What seems to not be working or need strengthening?
3. Discuss what connections you see between the biblical witness section and this section; what should the church's role be with victims/their families? Offenders/their families? Employees in the system?

**Conclusion: Many of us are unaware of the cost of crime and punishment on entire communities and on individuals; pray that God would open our eyes and our hearts to know how to be Christ's hands and feet.*

D. After reading the Resolution sections "**The Call**" and "**The Response**," discuss:

1. "The Call" section talks about responses to *individuals* and *systems* affected by criminal justice - share what area you think the church can be most effective; how do we relate to individuals? systems? What actions impact both?
2. Discuss the concept of "restorative justice" and your understanding of the term; what biblical connections does this term bring with it? What questions do you have about the term?
3. "The Response" section advocates several specific practices; is our church being called to any of these?

**Conclusion: This topic is a vast and complex one that we've only begun to explore; pray that the church and we each learn from this introduction some of where God is at work bringing healing, restoration, justice & good news.*