

## Love-Driven Justice: *Part Two*

### Light + Life Group Conversation and Study Guide

Based on *Love-Driven Justice* by Bishop Matt Whitehead  
in Light + Life Magazine, March 2021



### Recommitting ourselves to model Jesus' love-driven way

This is the second study guide in a series of four. Be sure to download [part one](#), [part three](#) and [part four](#).

The values of *The Free Methodist Way* include *Love-Driven Justice*. Bishop Matt Whitehead, in this second in a series of four Light + Life Study Guides, focuses on our need to recommit ourselves to love others as Jesus loves them – and us.

### Begin with prayer.

A simple scan through the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible will reveal the use of the word justice 130 times. The highest number of instances is found in the writings of Isaiah the prophet with 30 mentions of justice. His words can be difficult to read, but God's heart can be clearly discerned.

**“People blindness.”** That’s what Dr. Delia Nüesch-Olver called us to recognize in a Light + Life magazine article from March 1997:

In America we don’t like to talk about issues of race or class, but there is an epidemic of people blindness. We need to learn to see the uniqueness of different people groups and use different methods and styles to reach different people. It takes effort to connect with people who are different from ourselves. But if we don’t do that, in reality we are saying that everybody needs to be like us, to do things our way if they want to find Jesus Christ in the Free Methodist Church. If we want to be like Jesus we need to take part in restoring sight and vision to those who have people blindness — helping them to see those people

groups that are ignored in the past because of their accents, traditions, skin color or economic status.

Nearly 24 years later, her message is equally as compelling. We need fresh, loving eyes that see opportunities for gospel transformation among the many people groups that God has brought to live among us.

In a proper understanding of Love-Driven Justice, modeling Jesus focuses on the recipients of the gospel proclamation: the poor, the prisoners, the disabled, and the oppressed. Remember, it was in the synagogue in Nazareth that Jesus quoted Isaiah to announce His mission and who was to receive His good news:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)*

This declared prophecy was Jesus' commission from the Father, His assignment to His disciples –

which extends to us. These are our marching orders, and holy love is the cadence to which we march.

Additionally, in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus challenges us with a vivid reminder that our judgment hinges on how we treat those in need. Using the imagery of sheep and goats, Jesus makes the startling statement that as we minister to those in need, we are ministering to Him!

Dr. Nüesch-Olver begins this portion of the article with discussing “people blindness.” To what degree are we *people blind*? Who do we pay particular attention to and who would we rather ignore? Why is this?

Consider for a moment that Jesus overlooked us. That we, somehow, were left out — not befriended by Him, loved by Him, or seen by Him? Can you even dream of such a thing? If Jesus is not blind to our needs, why are we, who call Jesus Savior and Lord, quite blind to the needs of others?

What is broken in us that we can ignore brokenness in others? What can we do about that?

Bishop Matt mentions Matthew 25:31-46. Let's read it together and respond to this gospel reading:

**Matthew 25:31-46** “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (34) “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ (37) “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? (39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ (40) “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (41) “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ (44) “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ (45) “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ (46) “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

What acts of ministry did the sheep (those on the right hand of Jesus) do? (See v.35-36.)

How would you feel if someone ignored, snubbed, or harmed — physically or verbally — your spouse? Your child(ren)? Would you take it personally? Why?

Why does Jesus seem to take it personally when the “least of these brothers and sisters of mine” are ignored? (See v.41.)

One of the most striking comparisons in this passage is the reactions of the two people groups. Those on Jesus’ right hand act as if they are undeserving of such a reward! They are humble and can’t recall when they “fed,” “clothed,” or “invited” Jesus in. In contrast, those on Jesus’ left try to justify themselves. They are aghast that Jesus is condemning them! They seem to have no idea why or to what they are being held accountable.

What drove those on Jesus’ right hand to minister so humbly to the least?

What drove those on Jesus’ left hand to ignore the least?

## Selective Neighboring

If that weren’t enough, Jesus says this in His Sermon on the Mount:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43–48).*

The people of Jesus’ day talked themselves into selective neighboring by misinterpreting Scripture, which led to the self-justified hatred of “outsiders” (non-Jews). The Word of God said “love your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:18) but never said to hate one’s enemy. That was a human add-on. We cannot hide any longer behind false smoke screens of misinterpretation of Scripture, believing that we are somehow self-justified by our inequitable treatment of others through selective neighboring.

Jesus must be our primary source of interpreting what the Scriptures ask of us.

Consider for a moment that we may misinterpret Scripture to justify our in-action to pursue love-driven justice for the least of these. Do you believe we have done so? How? Can you think of an example?

What kinds of things can we do — individually and collectively — to act more and more lovingly to the *least of these* in our own neighborhoods?

Close in prayer.