



LESSON FOUR

GIVING VOICE *to the* VOICELESS

OVERVIEW

Scripture calls all followers of Jesus to imitate Him in word and deed. Sometimes that means doing more than feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. It requires us to truly give voice to the voiceless, to speak out for those who have not yet had an opportunity to develop their own voice, to be present in places where they have no representation, or to walk alongside the voiceless to empower them to speak for themselves.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Proverbs 31:8-9
Micah 6:8

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do we advocate for our brothers and sisters in need?

LESSON GOALS

- » Develop a greater understanding of God's call to advocacy.
- » Learn what it means to be an advocate for justice.
- » Explore tools and practical steps to become a voice for those in need.
- » Reflect on God's personal call to each of us, and our response.

MATERIALS

Pen, Bible, computer with Internet access

ONLINE RESOURCE

"Hoops of Hope" video, available at www.hoopsofhope.org

AGENDA

- » Introduction and opening prayer
- » View "Hoops of Hope" video (part 1: 5 minutes 41 seconds; part 2: 6 minutes)
- » Reflect on Scripture
- » Consider ways to advocate
- » Explore the situation in our world today
- » Choose a personal response
- » Close in prayer



INTRODUCTION AND OPENING PRAYER

1. Take some time to share or journal about the following question:

» In what way have you advocated for something or someone this week?

2. Offer a prayer. Pray for guidance as we learn to advocate with our brothers and sisters in need. Spend a few minutes in silent meditation, concentrating on opening your hearts and minds to using your influence and voice to help others.



VIEW VIDEO

1. Consider the following:

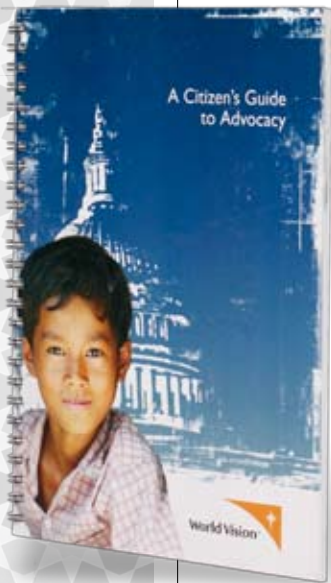
A Citizen Guide to Advocacy offers the following on the practice of advocacy:

“Simply put, advocacy is a ministry of influence using persuasion, dialogue, and reason to affect change. Advocacy seeks to address the structural and systemic causes of poverty [or oppression] by changing policies, practices, and attitudes that perpetuate inequality and deny justice.”

The most significant audience for advocacy is citizens—not government. The best advocacy occurs by educating and empowering citizens and groups to press for change as part of a functioning civil society.

2. Watch part 1 of the “Hoops of Hope” video. Then, share or journal your responses to the the following questions:

- » What is your reaction to Austin and his work?
- » How does Austin’s advocacy work affect the future of the village?
- » What do you think motivates people like Austin?
- » How might Austin’s advocacy work reach beyond the particular village he’s trying to assist?



Simply put, advocacy is a ministry of influence using persuasion, dialogue, and reason to affect change.



SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

1. Consider this:

If we want to study a biblical model of advocacy, we can look to a peasant woman and her uncle. Esther's story takes place during Israel's captivity in Babylon. After being raised by her uncle Mordecai, she was conscripted as a member of the palace harem of the Persian emperor Xerxes. Xerxes banished his queen for failing to submit to him. Esther, with her beauty and grace, pleased Xerxes so thoroughly that he named her queen. Even with that title, however, Esther's safety was precarious. Though she was inside the courts of power, she was outside of true security, because she lived with a secret—she was a Jew.

Xerxes' second-in-command, Haman, was power-hungry and devious. Because of his grudge against the Jews, he convinced Xerxes to order their execution. That's when Esther knew she must take action.

The Book of Esther offers an example of the steps involved in advocacy. These steps include:

Step 1: Personal engagement—begin with passionate concern and personal engagement.

Step 2: Public outrage—generate a movement of public indignation and personal engagement.

Step 3: Provide accurate information.

Step 4: Accept risks and recognize that you are replaceable.

Step 5: Mobilize a campaign of prayer.

Step 6: Credible influence—work through a person with credible influence.

Step 7: Strategic process—proceed with a strategic plan to achieve specific results.

2. Read Esther 4:1-2.

Advocacy involves challenging existing power structures. Consider how this Scripture relates to step 1 noted above. Then share or journal your response to the following question:

» What risk does that involve for Esther and Mordecai?



3. Read Esther 4:3.

Advocacy requires public movement fueled by more than the passion and outrage of one or two people. Mordecai shared his concern and took it “to the streets.”

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 2 (previous page). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

» What other sorts of advocacy actions you might encounter today?

Advocacy requires public movement fueled by more than the passion and outrage of one or two people. Mordecai shared his concern and took it “to the streets.”

4. Read Esther 4:7-8.

Mordecai had the facts straight; he could provide proof for his concern. This points to the importance of having more than personal opinion and zeal.

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 3 (previous page). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

» What are some sources of accurate information you call on when trying to learn about an issue?

5. Read Esther 4:11-14.

Esther faced great personal risk. Yes, the Emperor had chosen her. But she had replaced his former queen. He could choose a replacement again. Mordecai knew that, but he did not back away from asking for Esther’s help. In fact, he reminded her that perhaps this was the moment for which God had set her on her royal path.

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 4 (previous page). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

» How do you decide when a risk is worth taking?



6. Read Esther 4:16 and 6:1.

People of faith have a very important source of help to call upon—prayer.

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 5 (chart page 3). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

- » How might prayer help you when making decisions about advocacy?



7. Read Esther 5:2-3.

Esther had both access to and credibility with the king—two important elements for advocacy.

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 6 (chart page 3). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

- » How might you build relationships with those who have influence (media, politicians, etc.) so they will see you as credible?

*Justice is about relationships.
It's also about planning each step that needs to happen to reach the desired end result.*

8. Read: Esther: 5:6-8 and 7:2-4.

Esther wisely approached her “campaign” by working to build a better relationship with the king. Justice is about relationships. It’s also about planning each step that needs to happen to reach the desired end result.

Consider how this Scripture relates to step 7 (chart page 3). Then share or journal your response to the following question:

- » What do Esther and Mordecai model that you would like to embrace in your own life?



9. Read Psalm 103:6. Then consider the following:

The Hebrew and Arabic words for justice and righteousness share common roots. They describe the quality of character and conduct necessary for people to flourish in relation with God and one another. Justice literally means “to make right” and righteousness is “to be right.” Justice is for life to be right socially; righteousness is for life to be right personally.

“The goal of biblical justice is not to punish but to make safe ... we are asked to walk humbly rather than arrogantly, gently rather than with anger, united in compassion rather than divided in fear.”

—Tim Dearborn

People who live in poverty and oppression don’t just need charity—they need justice. Merely giving alms or rescuing them temporarily won’t make life right and resolve the multiple problems that contribute to the difficult circumstances. The poor need justice, expressed in structural change, protection from exploitation, and access to opportunity.

10. Read Matthew 5:38-45. Then consider the following:

Anyone who is a follower of the life of Christ knows He did not always choose the easiest path through the world. He confronted people, He turned old teachings upside down, He lived a truly radical way of life. Many of us are uncomfortable with the idea of being “radical.” We associate it with doing things that will cause others to look askance at us. It sounds risky and frightening.

But if we open our hearts and fully embrace the passage from Matthew with a spirit willing to follow where God wants to lead us, then we see that doing justice requires us to walk in those radical footsteps of Jesus.

11. Share or journal your response to the following question:

» What does it mean to you to be a radical advocate for justice, following the example Jesus set?

“The goal of biblical justice is not to punish but to make safe ... we are asked to walk humbly rather than arrogantly, gently rather than with anger, united in compassion rather than divided in fear.”

—Tim Dearborn



EXPLORE OUR WORLD TODAY

1. Consider the following:

“Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” —Isaiah 1:17

“We stand in solidarity with the poor in a common search for justice, seeking to understand their situation and working alongside them to experience fullness of life. We strive to facilitate engagement between the poor and the affluent in ways that open both to transformation. We respect the poor as active participants, not passive recipients, in this relationship. They are people from whom others may learn and receive. The need for transformation is common to all. Together we share this quest for justice, peace, reconciliation, and healing in our broken world.

“This is accomplished when we represent the interests of the poor to decision makers who then formulate legislation and policy that prioritizes their needs. Our response to poverty and injustice requires us to work for policy change and challenge those who withhold justice. Effective advocacy addresses the root causes—whether with governments, religious institutions, the general public, or all of these.”

—*A Citizen’s Guide to Advocacy*

» Each year, malaria kills nearly 1 million people; approximately 85 percent of them are children.

» An estimated 15 million children under age 18 have been orphaned due to AIDS, and the number is rising.

» Approximately 854 million people across the world are hungry.

» More than 1 million children around the world are abducted, forced, or coerced into sexual slavery each year.

From the World Vision Advocacy Center at www.worldvision.org.

World Vision and other organizations are committed to reversing these staggering statistics. An important aspect of that work is recruiting Christ-centered people who are committed to advocating on behalf of those affected by these and other world crises.

Advocacy is primarily a ministry of influence, using persuasion, dialogue, and reason to obtain change. This happens first by educating and empowering citizens and groups to press for change; secondly by influencing policy makers to change laws or policies or ensure implementation of laws or policies as part of a functioning civil society. This second type of advocacy is also called lobbying.



*“Learn to do right!
Seek justice, encourage
the oppressed.
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—Isaiah 1:17*

To strengthen advocates, World Vision offers online advocacy resources. These resources include fact sheets and talking points on current issues that demand attention. Congressional updates are also available to inform advocates about governmental proceedings that can have an impact on solving some of these world problems.

2. Watch part 2 of the “Hoops of Hope” video, then consider the following questions:

- » With your deepened understanding of advocacy, do you have different responses to any of these questions? How?

- » Whom has Austin influenced with his advocacy?



CHOOSE A PERSONAL RESPONSE

Share or journal your responses to the following questions:

- » Which one issue would you most like to work on?

- » What form of advocacy do you feel is right for you at this time in your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

The United Nations General Assembly has created eight Millennium Development Goals that set out a concrete plan for addressing some of the world’s most pressing issues. Close this study by praying the Litany for the Millennium Development Goals on the next page.



LITANY FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In the spirit of the Millennium Development Goals, let us pray that God's justice and peace will prevail in the world.



Let us pray for the poor, hungry, and neglected all over the world, that their cries for daily bread may inspire works of compassion and mercy among those to whom much has been given. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Let us pray for schools and centers of learning throughout the world, for those who lack access to basic education, and for the light of knowledge to blossom and shine in the lives of all God's people. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to achieve universal primary education.

Let us pray for an end to the divisions and inequalities that scar God's creation, particularly the barriers to freedom faced by God's children throughout the world because of gender; that all who have been formed in God's image might have equality in pursuit of the blessings of creation. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to promote gender equality and empower women.

Let us pray for the health of women, children, and families around the world, especially for an end to maternal and child mortality, that in building healthy families, all God's people may be empowered to strengthen their communities and repair the breaches which divide nations and peoples. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to improve maternal health.

Let us pray that God's justice and peace will prevail in the world.

Let us pray for an end to pandemic disease throughout the world, particularly the scourges of HIV and AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; that plagues of death may no longer fuel poverty, destabilize nations, and inhibit reconciliation and restoration throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to combat HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.

Let us pray for an end to the waste and desecration of God's creation, for access to the fruits of creation to be shared equally among all people, and for communities and nations to find sustenance in the fruits of the earth and the water God has given us. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to ensure environmental sustainability.

Let us pray for all nations and people who already enjoy the abundance of creation and the blessings of prosperity, that their hearts may be lifted up to the needs of the poor and afflicted, and that partnerships between rich and poor for the reconciliation of the world may flourish and grow. Lord, in your mercy, give us the will to develop a global partnership for development.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read World Vision’s advocacy handbook—*A Citizen’s Guide to Advocacy*, available free at www.womenofvision.org

2. Learn about current advocacy campaigns and successes at www.seekjustice.org. Search out other organizations active in justice and advocacy, such as Sojourners and the International Justice Mission.

3. Learn about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

4. Commit to the next *Heart of the Matter* study: “Communities Transformed with Change That Lasts.” The six lessons examine how transformational community development brings hope and lasting change to communities and individuals. Topics include asset-based community development, the use of appreciative inquiry, and specific interventions that have tremendous impact. Issues include water, food, health, literacy, microfinance and economic development, and more. This is excellent preparation for traveling or serving in developing communities. See a preview at www.womenofvision.org/heart.



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

- » John 14:12
- » Psalm 82:2-4
- » Corinthians 9:6-11
- » Isaiah 61:1-8

Lectio Divina or “Divine Reading”

Using the Scriptures above, try this traditional contemplative practice to listen deeply to what God has to say—to “hear with the ear of our hearts.”

1. Read one Scripture each day. Read aloud if you can.
2. After the first reading, sit in silence for a few moments.
3. Slowly read the same passage a second time. Listen for a word or phrase that touches your heart. Reflect on the word or phrase during the silence that follows.
4. Read the passage a third time. Where do you see or hear Christ in the text? Is there an image that comes to your mind?
5. Read a fourth and final time. What is Christ calling you to do or be, today or this week, through this text?

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Many who participate in these studies want to respond when they become aware of the harsh realities that their fellow sisters and brothers around the world are facing every day. Whether that response is prayer, financial support, volunteering, or educating others about the needs, there are opportunities for everyone to do something.

Educate yourself. Request information about another *Heart of the Matter* study. Each study focuses on a different area of concern related to poverty and oppression, including a biblical understanding of poverty and our role in serving those in need; issues specific to women in poverty, advocacy, and social justice; and helping children develop a heart to serve and give. To preview all three studies in the series, go to www.womenofvision.org or www.worldvisionresources.com.

Sponsor a child. For about \$1 a day, you can help a vulnerable boy or girl survive, grow, and reach his or her God-given potential. Your gift will help demonstrate God's love by providing your sponsored child and his or her family and community with access to life's most basic necessities—things like clean water, better nutrition, health care, education, economic opportunities, and most of all, hope for a better future. Go to www.worldvision.org for more information.

Give a gift. World Vision's Gift Catalog allows you to give life-changing gifts to children and families in need—things like goats, clean-water wells, or seeds—in the name of someone special. The Giving Toolbox makes group fundraising easy. Families, school groups, Sunday school classes, and others can work together to make an impact for children around the world. www.worldvisiongifts.org.

Educate the next generation. Ending global poverty and injustice begins with education: recognizing the extent and causes of poverty, comprehending its effect on human dignity, and realizing our connection with those in need around the world. World Vision Resources is the publishing ministry of World Vision, providing learning materials to help prepare Christians to live in an increasingly globalized world and become active citizens who can help shape a better future. Check out World Vision Resources' growing selection of global education resources at www.worldvisionresources.com.

Become a Women of Vision partner. Receive the latest news and updates; join monthly telephone briefings with subject experts from all over the world; receive invitations to local, regional, and national conferences; and help support your local, regional, or global Women of Vision projects. For partnership information go to www.womenofvision.org.

Join the conversation. Subscribe to the latest news and information affecting the poor around the world. Sign up at www.womenofvision.wordpress.com.



Join or start a Women of Vision chapter. Women of Vision is a volunteer ministry of World Vision that unites Christian women called to invest their time, intellect, compassion, creativity, and finances so that impoverished women and children might find hope and experience a tangible expression of God’s love. We are women of diverse ages, backgrounds, and circumstances—united in Christ to serve and walk alongside those in need so that, together, we can experience life in all its fullness. Recognizing the enormous needs in our world, we seek to educate and motivate women in our communities to become women of action in helping create a brighter and healthier future for suffering women and children.

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ABOUT WORLD VISION

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, World Vision serves alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God’s unconditional love for all people. We see a world where each child experiences “fullness of life” as described in John 10:10. And we know this can be achieved only by addressing the problems of poverty and injustice in a holistic way. That’s how World Vision is unique: We bring nearly 60 years of experience in three key areas needed to help children and families thrive: emergency relief, long-term development, and advocacy. And we bring all of our skills across many areas of expertise to each community we work in, enabling us to care for children’s physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Partnering with World Vision provides tangible ways to honor God and put faith into action. By working together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of children and families who are struggling to overcome poverty. To find out more about how you can help, visit www.worldvision.org.

ABOUT WORLD VISION RESOURCES

Ending global poverty and injustice begins with education: understanding the magnitude and causes of poverty, its impact on human dignity, and our connection to those in need around the world.

World Vision Resources is the publishing ministry of World Vision. World Vision Resources educates Christians about global poverty, inspires them to respond, and equips them with innovative resources to make a difference in the world.

For more information about our resources, contact:

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