

EXERCISE 3

Sabbath and Jubilee Principles

(15 minutes total)

Biblical Principles of Economic Justice

(3 minutes)

Exodus 23:10-12

“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat...Six days shall you do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the foreigner may be refreshed.”

Leviticus 25:39-42

“If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold.”

Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 7-8

“At the end of every seven years, you must tell those who owe you anything that they do not have to pay you back. This is how you must do it: Everyone who has loaned money must cancel the loan and not make a neighbor or relative pay it back. This is the Lord’s time for canceling what people owe...If there are poor among you, in one of the towns the Lord your God is giving you, do not be selfish or greedy toward them. But give freely to them, and freely lend them whatever they need.”

Discussion Questions: 10 minutes

1. One Jubilee principle is liberation for the working poor from debt and forced servitude. In a globalized economy, the working poor might labor down the street or in a foreign country. What humane limits do these Biblical excerpts set on debt and labor for the poor, and how would you envision the establishment of humane limits in our national and global economy?
2. Sabbath principles outline a mandatory rest on the seventh day of the week for all who labor, including animals, in an



effort to revitalize even the most vulnerable laborers.¹ In a market economy, why does it make practical and ethical sense to build rest into our labor, especially for the working poor?

3. According to theologian Richard Lowery, the king’s honor was tied to the welfare of the poor.² As divine monarch, God was celebrated by Israel as one greatly concerned with the poor. What do you think the roles of our government and our communities of faith should be in caring for the most vulnerable in our society?

Facilitator Wrap-Up: 1 minute

*God of the Jubilee
 We give thanks that we are all
 Part of your family circle,
 Forgiving one another,
 Loving one another
 Because you first loved us.
 We give thanks that your Spirit
 Has banished distinctions
 Between Jew and Greek
 Between slave and free
 Between female and male,
 Between those who are in power
 And those who are powerless.
 We give thanks that we are one
 In the love of the one
 Who loves in us,
 Forever and ever.
 Amen.
 –adapted from Miriam Therese
 Winter³*