

**ECONOMIC INEQUALITY:  
A Christian Perspective**

***Discussion Questions***

Produced by the Economic Inequality Subgroup  
Desert Southwest Conference Board of Church and Society



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## SESSION 1

### **What is going on?**

1. What is your reaction to the video presentation? Were there any surprises?
2. Do you agree or disagree that economic inequality is a defining issue of our time? Why?
3. For three decades after World War II, the economy boomed and income inequality was low. What factors influenced that? What factors brought those favorable trends to an end?
4. Is it possible to have a "free" market, uninfluenced by government? Why or why not? If the government is not regulating the economy, what other entities influence the market in the government's absence?

### **Why should we care? *A political perspective***

1. What is your reaction to the video presentation?
2. What obstacles prevent the economically disadvantaged, or anyone but the very wealthy, from taking an active, effective role in the political process?
3. What happens when large numbers of people are excluded from meaningful participation in politics and self-governance?
4. Is education beyond high school affordable for you, your children, or your grandchildren? Would your parents have answered this question differently? How is this related to current political and economic realities?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### SESSION 2

#### **Why should we care? *An economic perspective***

1. What is your reaction to the video presentation?
2. Is greed a virtue? Will our market-based economy transform unregulated desires for gain into a force for the common good, "lifting all boats" and benefiting everyone? Or, is greed a human failure, a separation from God's desires as defined in the scriptures, resulting in excessive indulgence for some, and lack of resources and opportunities for others? Explain.
3. Does faith in free markets contribute to ever-increasing economic inequality? How?
4. How do tax laws contribute to economic inequality?
5. What are the measures of social well-being that are present in societies with greater economic equality?
6. How is the American dream of upward mobility thwarted by economic inequality?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### SESSION 3

#### **Why should we care? *A prophetic perspective***

1. What is your reaction to the video presentation?
2. What did Dr. Brueggemann mean when he stated that that Pharaoh had immense power to draw people into slavery? What form did that power take when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt? What form does that power take today?
3. What is the hope that mainstream culture gives us today? Does prophetic hope offer an alternative vision? How is it different?
4. How do our scriptures indicate that economic inequality was a problem in Israel after the Exodus? Give some examples.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### SESSION 4

#### **Why should we care? A Kingdom perspective**

1. What is your reaction to the video presentation?
2. Are there powers at work today which seek to dissuade people from dreaming and imagining the Kingdom of God - from seeing alternatives to the status quo? Explain.
3. The presenter states that inequality is a part of life. How is this so? In what ways does unavoidable inequality differ from the radical inequality present in contemporary society? In what ways is inequality acceptable and unacceptable?

#### **Why should we care? A Wesleyan perspective**

1. Wesley was concerned that the Church of England was not proclaiming the good news to the impoverished in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Britain. How could good news be shared with parents working endless hours for the basic needs of food and shelter for their children? Or, with young people, convinced that even their best efforts will never lead them into a stable, secure future?
2. Why has the growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots been tolerated? Do Christians accept this disparity less than the general population?

#### **Why should we care? A United Methodist perspective**

1. The mission of our denomination is to “Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” How does the inclusion of the phrase “for the transformation of the world” in this mission statement change its meaning?
2. Mainstream culture in the U.S. often teaches that social injustice arises from *individual* shortcomings. Why have our churches been so reluctant to acknowledge that social injustice is also rooted in *corporate* sin—in our society’s silent, if not enthusiastic, acceptance of our economic and political systems’ ongoing fueling of increasing inequality?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## SESSION 5

### **What should we, the Church, do about it?**

1. What are your reactions to this presentation? Are you ready to act?
2. How does contemporary society shape our thinking to make economic inequality more acceptable? What can your congregation do to help people recognize and grow beyond these influences, which prevent seeing the injustice of radical inequality?
3. If the church has a responsibility to advocate for political and economic justice for those who have little or no voice, power, or economic resources, what specific steps can your congregation take to become an effective advocate for them?
4. How can your congregation collaborate with other churches and institutions in seeking a more equitable society?