

Human Rights

We live in a world where the term “human rights” is thrown about like a pawn in debates on education, health, freedom and equality. Do they exist? If they do, should Christians claim them? If they exist, should Christians defend the rights of others? Can we learn anything from the concept of human rights for our life in the world?

Written by Tess Holgate, writer for Eternity Newspaper.



**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: NIV

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
1	<p>If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?</p> <p>But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.</p> <p>...</p> <p>I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast.</p>	1 Corinthians 9:11-12, 15	<p>Paul knows that he is entitled to ask the Corinthians for material support. It is his right as the one who preached the gospel of Christ to them. He had rights; he laid them down. No one forced him to give them up, it was his free choice, and he made it for the sake of the Corinthians. He wanted to ensure that nothing in his behaviour would stop them believing in Jesus.</p> <p>What “right” would you be willing to give up if it meant seeing more people believing in Jesus?</p> <p>What “right” would be hard to part with?</p>	<p>Everlasting Father,</p> <p>Teach me that all I have is a gift from you. Create in me a spirit that does not hold on to my rights when they run contrary to the good of others.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
2	<p>What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel. Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.</p>	1 Corinthians 9:18-19	<p>Paul is a free man, but he lives as though he is not. He sacrifices his freedom to live as a slave, serving and loving others. Paul's slavery is different from the millions of people in the world who are enslaved. They are forced into slavery for someone else's gain. Paul chooses to be a slave.</p> <p>Why would Paul choose to be a slave? Would you?</p>	<p>Loving Father,</p> <p>Thankyou for freeing us from sin. Give us the courage to submit ourselves to you and others as slaves.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Human Rights (continued)

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
3	<p>He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.</p> <p>He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.</p> <p>Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.</p> <p>Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.</p>	Isaiah 53:2-4	<p>Isaiah's prediction of the coming Messiah is a bit bleak. "He had no beauty, he was despised and rejected, we held him in low esteem." But this is the very same Messiah that God will declare to be righteous; the same Messiah who will receive a portion among the great (Is 53:12). God's Messiah appears lowly, but is granted the highest dignity in the land. Appearances can be deceptive.</p> <p>What does it look like to have dignity in the world today? Would Jesus have matched your description?</p>	<p>Gracious God,</p> <p>You have bestowed dignity on even the lowliest human being. Thank you for creating humans, and for loving us.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
4	<p>"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet."</p> <p>In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.</p>	Hebrews 2:6b-9	<p>"What is mankind that you are mindful of them?" The question almost expects a resounding, "NOTHING!" But this isn't true. God bestowed dignity and honour on human beings just because they're human. Dominion over the world is an expression of human dignity, but in Jesus we see that dominion is not the only measure of dignity. Jesus was given dignity because of his death.</p> <p>Why is it easy to equate power with dignity? Are you guilty of this?</p>	<p>Lord God,</p> <p>Show me where I have confused power with dignity. Forgive me when I have erred. Teach me to truly treat all humans with dignity.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Human Rights (continued)

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5	<p>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!</p> <p>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,</p>	Philippians 2:8-9	<p>We're in trouble if we think that dignity is expressed through powerful leadership. It is not. Dignity is given to all human beings upon their entry into the world. Nothing shows us this more clearly than Jesus – given dignity as a human creature, he then humbled himself to death. He laid down his dignity to die, for us, and in his resurrection was given it back. We can defend and protect those who do not have dignity in the worlds eyes, and because it is not exclusively tied to dominion or rulership we need not fear that those who are treated unfairly are no longer persons.</p> <p>How do you express your God-given dignity? How can you encourage dignity to shine forth in others?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Thank you for giving all people dignity. Help me to treat all people with the dignity that you have given them.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
6	<p>Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?</p> <p>From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have borne your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken from me friend and neighbor— darkness is my closest friend.</p>	Psalms 88:14-18	<p>Freedom is one of our most treasured concepts. It is easy for us to think that if we are not free then we cannot truly be ourselves. The Bible doesn't share our view. The Psalms picture people trapped in any number of different ways.</p> <p>The Psalmist is emotionally overwhelmed (Ps 88:3); he is lonely (Ps 88:8, 18); and he is afflicted and physically oppressed (Ps 88:4, 15). This is not a free man.</p> <p>In what ways do you feel trapped? Would total freedom be the solution?</p>	<p>Gracious God,</p> <p>I am stuck in many different ways. I am not free as I long to be. Thank you that you are with me.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Human Rights (continued)

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7	To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."	John 8:31-32	<p>Jesus promises true freedom, but not before he points out that all people are slaves to sin. True and lasting freedom comes through knowing the Son and abiding in His word. The freedom of being a son in this way (John 8:35) will ultimately be realised at the final redemption of our bodies.</p> <p>Are you truly free?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Praise you Lord that you have released me from my slavery to sin! Thank you for setting me free. Help me to use my freedom to worship you.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
8	But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.	Romans 6:17-18	<p>Freedom is related to who we are. What is freedom for me is not necessarily freedom for you, and vice versa. But whatever freedom looks like for you, if you're a Christian, it has to include a kind of slavery to righteousness. This isn't slavery in the trafficking sense, but is rather the dogged pursuit of righteousness. Your freedom is a gift so that you can devote yourself to righteousness.</p> <p>What will it look like today for you to use your freedom in the pursuit of righteousness?</p>	<p>Loving Father,</p> <p>I love my freedom, but know that sometimes I don't use it to pursue righteousness. Please forgive me when I use it selfishly. Teach me what it means to be a slave to righteousness.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Human Rights (continued)

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9	For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.	Romans 8:19-23	<p>Though as Christians we are now free as sons of God, this will only be fully and properly realised at the final redemption of our bodies. In the meantime we will struggle with feeling trapped in sin, and stuck in situations and with people we don't like. But hope in the "freedom and glory of the children of God" is a firm and secure hope! We will get there, one day.</p> <p>What secret sin are you trapped in? Are you looking forward to getting rid of it on that final day?</p>	<p>Great God,</p> <p>Help me to know you are with me when I feel trapped. Give me the strength to hope in the future redemption of our bodies.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
10	What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.	Romans 3:9	<p>Equality is a bit of a buzzword at the moment – we are all for equality. But we don't see this longed for equality in our churches, let alone in the world. Inequality was rife in the early church (Jews over Gentiles, freemen over slaves, men over women). Into this context, Paul reaffirms the equality of the Bible in a new way: all are under sin.</p> <p>Is this a comforting reality? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Lord God,</p> <p>Create in me a heart that treats all people as equal. Forgive me when I treat people as less than I.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Human Rights (continued)

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11	This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.	Romans 3:22-24	<p>Yesterday we learned that biblical equality – on one level – means that all are equally under the power of sin. But here is the good news: sin, the great leveller, is defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus! So just as all who were under the power of sin were powerless to escape it, so too, all have access to the grace of God in Jesus Christ! We are all equal before God, even if this reality is not reflected in the world.</p> <p>How can you stand up for human equality in your workplace/home/school today?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Give us grace to work towards achieving equality for all, but help us to never forget that you have declared all human beings equal, even when the world tells us something different.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
12	He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their ancestors— a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.	Psalm 78:5-8	<p>Education does open up the world and broaden people’s perspectives. Oprah says, “education is the key to unlocking the world: a passport to freedom”. Psalm 78 affirms the need for education, specifically the role that parents play in teaching their children the glorious decrees of the Lord.</p> <p>Is Oprah right? Is Psalm 78 right? What kind of education do you value?</p>	<p>Gracious God,</p> <p>Thank you for the education that we have received. Please show us how to use what we have been given to serve others.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

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13	<p>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.</p>	Proverbs 9:10	<p>Knowledge and wisdom are good, but Proverbs renovates our approach by showing that they begin with fear of the Lord. Education as an end in and of itself is not sufficient in the economy of God's kingdom. Everything we have – even our very education – is to be put to use serving others.</p> <p>Have you ever been tempted to idolise your educational merits? How can you use your education to serve?</p>	<p>Lord God, Please give us not merely knowledge but wisdom. Amen.</p>
14	<p>Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.</p> <p>Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,</p>	Proverbs 2:9-12	<p>Wisdom is not merely the accumulation of facts, but the internalisation of wisdom into a heart that then acts as a moral compass. This is the point of education. Teaching God's words and helping people inwardly digest wisdom is what will 'unlock the world'.</p> <p>Are you educated or are you wise? How can you become wise?</p>	<p>Loving Father, Thank you that you choose to grant your people wisdom. Please teach us what it means to be wise in your world. Amen.</p>