

# PREPARING FOR JUSTICE WORK

## I compare injustice to a fire.

I have three little boys so we spend a lot of time visiting the fire station. One time we were there when a call came in. As I was standing there holding my toddler, it struck me that this is the perfect picture of why we prepare for the work of justice. If we wait for the fire alarm to go off to figure out what we want to do, the house will burn down. If we run into a burning building without knowing what we're doing, things can go really wrong.

Injustice is the same way. We aren't born knowing what to do and we don't magically learn what to do once the need arises. When we're not equipped, we aren't able to do what's needed in the moment.

Without preparation, faith leaders and Christian communities not only delay or avoid responding but can also make situations ten times worse by diving in without truly understanding either the issues or the appropriate interventions.

It's like waiting for the fire alarm to go off to start thinking about what we need to do in an emergency. Fire doesn't wait—the house is almost sure to burn down.

So many of our houses have been burning down around us. People are leaving churches in droves as churches are increasingly seen as unsafe, unjust spaces. But it doesn't have to be this way. When we do the work to prepare, we can fight our natural tendencies toward panic, self-protection, and turning a blind eye by simply working the plan that is already in place.

## reflect + discuss

How prepared do you feel in general for the work of justice?

What training have you already done and found helpful?

Does your church, family, or workplace have a plan in place in case a situation or allegation of injustice comes up? Who could you talk to about this?

# TOOLING UP

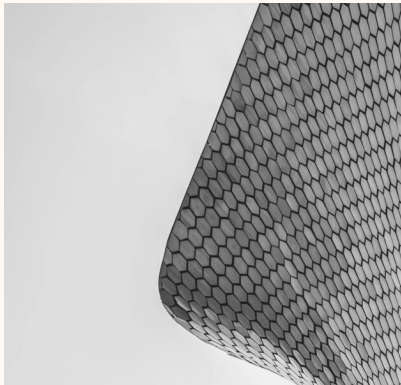
THAT you do justice and HOW you do justice are both so critically important.

Gentleness, kindness, faithfulness don't stop being important when you're doing the work of justice. Justice is God's work!



## Always be learning, growing, and humble

- Get specific training on the topics and approaches that interest you
- Learn, learn, learn. Read widely. Ask questions
- Bring in outside experts to learn from
- Learn about abuse tactics like grooming



## Prepare for justice work

- Overcome passivity and learn bystander intervention methods
- Be ready to stay involved for the long haul
- Learn to recognize the injustices that are right around you in your church, family, classroom, workplace, neighborhood, and local community
- Learn about the justice work already going on around you



## Learn to love the light

- Refuse to sweep things under the rug
- Commit to looking into accusations/rumors
- Don't get defensive when people bring up injustice
- Learn about the biases & blind spots we all have
- Be ready to speak up, even if you're the only one
- Prepare for backlash and internal discomfort

If you ask people where injustice is happening, we will all tend to point somewhere “out there.” Injustice can be the hardest to recognize in our own contexts – our own neighborhoods, churches, cities, schools, countries, classroom, and families. Even though these contexts are where injustice is the hardest to recognize and the scariest to speak up, that is where we have the most influence. And as Jesus said, we need to start with the logs in our own eyes.

May God give us eyes to see, courage to act, and wisdom to learn and discern as we go.

## Resources for churches + Christian justice resources:

There are some fantastic resources for churches that want to prevent abuse, address abuse, care for victims of abuse, & do justice. A few of those include:

“Community Justice Assessment” by the International Justice Mission (IJM)

<https://www.ijm.org/sites/default/files/download/resources/Community-Justice-Assessment-Tool.pdf>

“Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused” – Video and Workbook training materials from top experts on handling abuse in churches, schools, and ministries (workbook is also available in Spanish) [churchcares.com/](http://churchcares.com/)

The book *Something’s Not Right: Decoding the Hidden Tactics of Abuse – and Freeing Yourself From Its Power* by Wade Mullen helps with identifying and understanding the communication strategies of abusers and abusive organizations.

Helping churches prevent abuse (particularly focused on sexual harassment and abuse) [www.notinourchurch.com](http://www.notinourchurch.com), [www.notinourchurch.com/safechurch.html](http://www.notinourchurch.com/safechurch.html) is a treasure trove of resources for churches that want to prevent abuse

GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (particularly focused on child and sexual abuse) [www.netgrace.org/](http://www.netgrace.org/)

Diane Langberg is an incredible, clear-eyed advocate for the healthy place of power in churches. Her book *Redeeming Power* addresses authority and abuse in the church. Her website has many resources related to domestic, sexual, and spiritual abuse. [www.dianelangberg.com/redeemingpower/](http://www.dianelangberg.com/redeemingpower/)

*A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* is a book written by Scot McKnight and his daughter Laura Barringer. It explores several recent church implosions and abuses and looks at what could have prevented them.

The Veritas Forum’s video & podcast called “Can we reconcile justice and forgiveness?” is a great primer on this false dichotomy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTJNSQhBQQA>

“Justice Journey for Kids.” Created by the Evangelical Covenant Church for kids ages 7-11, 8 modules with 3 hour-long lessons (24 lessons total) in each that are all downloadable for free from their website (<https://covchurch.org/justicejourney/>).

Trauma Free World provides training and resources on the impacts of trauma on children. [traumafreeworld.org/](http://traumafreeworld.org/)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# SARAH DRIVER

Like you, I was not born knowing how to do justice. I was mostly oblivious to the need for justice at all. In high school, I was part of a Sunday school class where we read Isaiah 58 and it opened my eyes to the call of God's people to do justice.

I have worked for almost 25 years at local, state, and international levels on a range of justice issues from education reform and gender equality to human trafficking and spiritual abuse. I have also studied scripture with this lens for the past two decades. I have lived and worked on four continents and hold a master's degree in social policy and development from the London School of Economics.

You can find me at [www.justicedriver.com](http://www.justicedriver.com) and [instagram.com/justicedriver](https://www.instagram.com/justicedriver).

