

## A Prophetic Community

*“Throughout his ministry Jesus confronted injustice and hypocrisy. He also challenged human concepts of power, wealth, status and security. Radical commitment to Jesus therefore implies a suspicion of the dominant trends in society, religion and culture.”*

**Read Luke 4:14-30 and 6:20-31.**

The quote above suggests that Jesus taught in such a way as to challenge the accepted values of society. What examples of that do you find in these passages?

Can you think of other examples of Jesus confronting political or religious authority?

Doesn't the Bible encourage us to be law-abiding members of society? Is this in conflict with the calling to be prophetic?

Why should society listen to Christians speaking out about injustice?

**Read Amos 5:1-24**

What injustices do you think need to be addressed in our own society?

How can our church play a part in addressing them? What should we do?

**Read Case Studies (pp36-37)**

What lessons do you think these stories have for us?

## An Inclusive Community

*“Since Jesus exemplified the Kingdom values expressed by the Old Testament prophets, and specifically identified caring for the needy as service to Him, we should reflect his unfailing love for the fallen, the excluded, the poor and hungry, the oppressed, voiceless and powerless.”*

### **Read Luke 14:15-24.**

Often our impression of the Old Testament is that God seems to be concentrating on just one community, the Jews, and desires to keep that community pure and separate.

- Can you think of Old Testament examples of God including those who were not ‘the chosen people’?
- Why did God choose ‘a people for himself’? What were they meant to do?

What does the parable of the Great Banquet say to you about Jesus’ attitude to the outcast? Can you illustrate that with specific examples from his ministry?

### **Read Acts 15:6-21**

Acts 15 is the account of the early Church trying to decide how non-Jewish believers should be integrated into the Church. Did they have to become Jews first? Paul insists that God does not require this.

- Do you think that the Jerusalem Church leaders lost their nerve? Or was their compromise a good solution?
- Do you think we expect things of new believers that are beyond what God looks for?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

In the developing world, the gospel often has a great appeal to the poor, the outcast, the dispossessed and the voiceless. Yet in the West, ‘Church’ is much more middle class. Why do you think this is?

- Which groups of people around our church would be considered ‘outsiders’? How can we include such people?
- What barriers can you identify that might exclude people in such groups?

### **Read Case Studies (pp38-39)**

Talk about the first two situations there - how would you respond?