

“Haugen’s great good news is that Christian compassion combined with down-to-earth professional expertise—in investigations and advocacy, case by case—are forcing essential law-enforcement reforms, and that more and more Christians are coming forward to help achieve that.”

**Bob Abernethy**, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*

“This book is quickly becoming a classic for folks who have seen the good news, and who have seen the bad news . . . and yet who still believe, in spite of all the ugly things happening in the world, that in the end love wins, life conquers death, grace triumphs over hatred, and the good news is more compelling than the bad.”

**Shane Claiborne**, bestselling author, Christian troublemaker and recovering sinner

“People of faith have long been ambassadors for the poor and vulnerable in our world. Gary Haugen is a shining example, having worked on the front lines of injustice for more than a decade giving a voice to those who desperately need an advocate.”

**Jim Nicholson**, former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican and former Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs

“It’s easy when confronted with the suffering of the world to be overwhelmed with guilt, despair and their nasty friend, indifference—but when you hear or read Gary Haugen, something altogether different happens. You’re not just inspired, but you’re empowered to do something, and that can make all the difference in the world, which, of course, is literally what it’s doing.”

**Rob Bell**, author, speaker and founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church

“Haugen has seen lives changed as a result of the action taken in the name of the God of justice, and his testimony will likely provoke you to question your own inaction. His book pulls no punches about how dark the world can be, but will leave you with hope as it exposes the authentic light of this holy and urgent calling.”

**Father Jonathan Morris**, news contributor and analyst, *FOX News*, and theologian

“When I read the stories and the successes of God’s intervening justice on behalf of the abused and seemingly forgotten children created in his own image, I was aware of both eyes and heart opened afresh to the greatest truth of all—God cares for the forsaken, the abused, the oppressed and those countless numbers denied justice, and he is about making things right. . . . I highly recommend this book. It’s a must-read!”

**Phil Keagy**, Dove Award–winning recording artist

“Justice—the life-giving use of power in all relationships—is essential to God’s joyful vision for human flourishing. *Good News About Injustice* points us toward this intention and hope, and motivates us to join God and one another in a passionate and urgent pursuit of this vision.”

**Mark Labberton**, author of *The Dangerous Act of Worship*

“Few books deserve to be called ‘life-shaping.’ This book warrants that description! Through personal stories, biblical insights, humor and passion it makes God’s call for us to ‘do justice’ accessible, attractive and compelling.”

**Tim Dearborn**, director of faith and development, World Vision International

“How so many of us Bible-loving disciples have missed God’s passion for justice that is plain on innumerable pages of Scripture is a tragic mystery. God has used this classic to open the eyes of the blind and to ignite a movement of prayer and action to join him on his mission of releasing the oppressed. Read it and be changed.”

**Dr. Amy L. Sherman**, Senior Fellow, Sagamore Institute Center on Faith in Communities

“Gary Haugen is a prophetic voice to this generation. We are called to live courageously for the cause of Christ. *Good News About Injustice* will show you how. Prepare to be convicted, challenged and inspired.”

**Mark Batterson**, author of *Wild Goose Chase*

“Gary Haugen and International Justice Mission have helped ignite an inspiring movement of Christians fighting oppression around the globe. In so doing they have recaptured the spirit of great saints such as Carey and Wilberforce, who saw the gospel as good news both for now and for eternity.”

**Stan Guthrie**, author of *Missions in the Third Millennium*

“Gary Haugen tells us stories we need to hear about the injustices in the world, but he also convinces us that God is at work to counter these injustices, and invites us to be part of the struggle.”

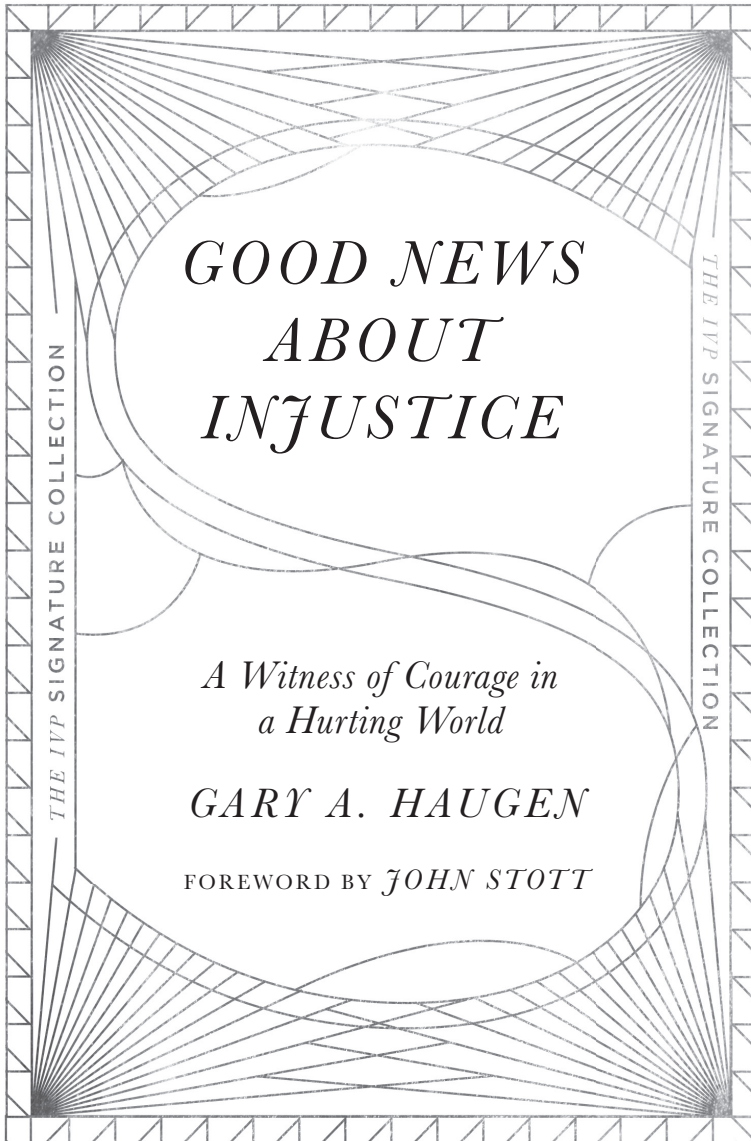
**Tony Campolo**, Eastern University

“This is not comfortable, but it is essential reading for us all.”

**Dr. Clive Calver**, former president, World Relief

“This book has opened my heart to a greater sense of compassion for those victims caught in the grip of severe persecution as well as given me newly directed passion to be a part of God’s redemptive work surrounding human injustice. Be careful—the contents of this book will inspire us all to take action. It will change both the reader and the world.”

**Dan Haseltine**, lead singer, Jars of Clay



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*For my father and mother*



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# FOREWORD

JOHN STOTT

Gary Haugen's book is a powerful combination of narrative and Scripture, of dramatic storytelling and biblical reflection, of human injustice and the justice of God.

One moment we are in the Rwandan killing fields, watching with mute horror the genocide of Tutsis, or in the red-light district of a large Asian city, whose brothels hold young children captive, while the next moment we are deep in Scripture, exploring the character and the will of God. And the interaction between these two perspectives continues throughout the book.

On the one hand, we are introduced to injustice, which always involves the abuse of power, and to the wide range of its victims. We are confronted not only with the cruelties of bonded labor, enforced prostitution, rape, torture, lynching and the misappropriation of land, but also with the frequent failures of the law to bring the perpetrators to justice because they are protected by the establishment.

On the other hand, we are confronted in Scripture by the true and living God, who loves justice and hates injustice, whose anger is roused by evil and rests on evildoers, and who is moved with compassion toward all those who suffer.

What this book obliges us to do is to ask ourselves some basic and uncomfortable questions that living in a comfortable culture may never have allowed us to ask before.

First, what sort of God do we believe in? Is he concerned exclusively with individual salvation? Or does he have a social conscience? Is he (in Dr. Carl Henry's memorable phrase) "the God of justice and of justification"? How is it that so many of us staunch evangelical people have never seen, let alone faced, the barrage of biblical texts about justice? Why are we often guilty of selective indignation?

Second, what sort of a creature do we think a human being is? Have we ever considered the unique value and dignity of human beings, made in the image of God, so that abuse, torture, rape and grinding poverty, which dehumanize human beings, are also an insult to the God who made them?

Third, what sort of a person do we think Jesus Christ is? Have we ever seen him as described in John 11, where first he "snorted" with anger (v. 33, literally) in the face of death (an intrusion into God's good world) and then "wept" (v. 35) over the bereaved? If only we could be like Jesus, indignant toward evil and compassionate toward its victims!

Fourth, what sort of a community do we think the church is meant to be? Is it not often indistinguishable from the world because it accommodates itself to the prevailing culture of injustice and indifference? Is it not intended rather to penetrate the world like salt and light, and so to change it, as salt hinders bacterial decay and light disperses darkness?

To ask ourselves these questions honestly—about God, Christ, human beings and the church—and to answer them biblically, as Gary Haugen does, is to expose ourselves to radical challenge and change.

This book does not leave us in suspense or with the doubts, the cynicism, even the despair which the world's monumental evil provokes in many Christian people. Instead, we are given solid grounds for hope. We are reminded of God's character, of his purpose to work

through his people and of some of the heroic social reformers of the past. We are not given utopian visions of a perfect society, but we are encouraged to expect some substantial success both in defending human rights and in bringing to justice those who violate them. Gary Haugen outlines practical ways in which his International Justice Mission has been at work since 1994 and in which members of the body of Christ can contribute their distinctive gifts and specialist ministries.

I heartily commend this book. It is well researched and well written. Its author faces the unpleasant realities of our fallen world and responds to them with a biblically developed mind and conscience. He has the sharp eye of a lawyer and the sensitive spirit of an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. He pulls no punches. We need to learn from him, to know what he knows, to see (at least in our imagination) what he sees and to feel what he feels.

I defy anybody to emerge from exposure to this book unscathed. In fact, my advice to would-be readers is “Don’t! Leave the book alone!”—unless you are willing to be shocked, challenged, persuaded and transformed.



## PREFACE TO THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



There is nothing quite as awkward as an enthusiastic but misplaced celebration. Indeed, I can vividly remember setting one off in the lunchroom of my elementary school as a small boy. Our principal had jammed all of us into the lunchroom for a special assembly and launched the festivities by asking the scores of squirming children if anyone had a birthday. Unable to wait for my shy best friend, Marty, to out himself as the day's Birthday Boy—I leaped to my feet and shot my hand in the air to share what I knew about Marty. Amidst the deafening clamor bouncing off the concrete acoustics of the lunchroom, our ever-eager principal blew past my stammering objections and immediately began leading the raucous throng in a rousing and seemingly endless chorus of “Happy Birthday” and “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”—to *me*. Needless to say, when all the whoops and hollers and applause finally died down, there I stood, all alone in the now-silent lunchroom, awkwardly pointing and explaining to a sea of staring classmates that, actually, no, it was not *my* birthday—but *Marty’s*.

The generosity and enthusiasm expressed for me was kind enough, but it was all just too awkward when expressed by mistake. I just

wanted people to celebrate Marty—but I ended up disastrously diverting unwanted and misplaced attention to myself.

This is the awkward little memory that came to mind as I began thinking about the tenth anniversary celebration of *Good News About Injustice*. I am so very eager to celebrate the miraculous things that the God of justice has done over this past decade, to honor the heroic frontline work of my colleagues at International Justice Mission, to testify to the valor of the victims we serve and to draw attention to the amazing transformation that has taken place in the church over the past decade since the book was first released. But obviously my intentions have backfired before. So this time, right from the start, I want to be very clear about whose day it is.

I am grateful for all the kind encouragement that has come my way as the author of this book, but my own experience of the last ten years has been one of riding a wave of much larger events and forces that have left me feeling rather small—wonderfully small. It is these larger events and forces that I hope draw wide attention and grand celebration, because they offer very great hope for the future. And that, after all, was the fundamental prayer behind the original book project. As I wrote ten years ago in the original preface to this volume: “My prayer will be answered if it conveys even a small measure of the hope and encouragement that the God of justice intends for his people.” Indeed, this book was meant to offer *good news* about what is perhaps the most painful and discouraging reality of human history—the aggressive, intentional, violent evil in our world. And now, ten years later, I have seen more good news than I ever imagined.

Here then, in four affirmations, is the testimony of hope that I—along with my IJM colleagues—have witnessed with our own eyes over this past decade.

**1. There is a God of justice who is active in the world.**

Our first affirmation of hope in a brutal world of injustice is simply about the nature of God. Over the last decade we have found the teachings of Christ and the Scriptures true and reliable—and we

have, at moments, literally staked our lives on the truth of these teachings. *Tens of thousands of times* over the last decade, my colleagues at IJM have confronted brutal men of great evil and great power: rapists, murderers, slave owners, sex traffickers, torturers, thieves, kidnappers, thugs and sadists (many of them wearing uniforms of official authority and power). In desperation we have cried out in prayer to the God of justice, asking him to rescue the victims of abuse when we could not, to protect us when we were too weak, and to bring down the arrogant men of violence and lies when they were too strong. And we have seen God answer these prayers—more frequently, more reliably and more powerfully than I ever dreamed I would see. Surely there has also been heartache and disappointment and painful loss. And certainly others will find more mundane explanations for the miraculous events we have witnessed, but we have no appetite to dispute with others. Rather, for those of us *who were there*, we found in the crucible an experience of God. We found mysteries consistent with the ancient words of the Scriptures, of Jesus and of the prophets—an experience so convincing that we are doubling down our bets and heading out for more.

At IJM we carry in our archives the names of tens of thousands of men, women and children who once were slaves, prisoners, dispossessed and abused. And now, quite simply, they are not. They are free, they are safe, they are restored. All we can say is what the blind man said in the Gospel of John when pressed by religious leaders to explain his healing from Jesus: “One thing I do know, I once was blind but now I see” (John 9:25).

Moreover, what my colleagues and I can very clearly affirm is that *we* could not have done this. I think I can safely speak for all my colleagues in saying that none of us have emerged from this remarkably powerful decade of justice with a convincing experience of our own power, ability, intelligence or courage. What is most palpably memorable from the experience for us personally is the way the confrontation with violent injustice took us to the limits of our own power and capacities—in a humbling and even humiliating way. In

the confrontation with injustice, we have experienced (painfully many times) our own weakness, incompetence, folly and fear. But as the apostle Paul promised us: God's power is made perfect in our *weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). For us, this familiar proverb is not a nice, humble thing to say; it's a painfully glorious truth about the way the spiritual universe actually works.

After a decade on the front lines, I have found profound comfort and encouragement in the fact that our Lord, Jesus Christ, described his ministry this way:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
 because he has anointed me  
 to preach good news to the poor.  
 He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
 and recovery of sight for the blind,  
 to release the oppressed,  
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

## 2. The Word of God has the power to change lives.

The second testimony of hope that we can affirm from this decade of struggle is about the power of the Scriptures to transform those who earnestly and humbly seek God.

Sadly, as we get older, it seems harder to hold out hope that people can really change. I know I get frustrated with my own stubborn weaknesses, fears and blind spots—and I imagine we all get discouraged by the obstinate habits, prejudices and insecurities that seem to shrivel and destroy the lives of so many people around us. It's hard not to grow cynical and resign ourselves to the fact that people don't really change; and if *people* don't change, then surely *the world* isn't going to change. This is bad news for those of us who so desperately want the world to change—to address the injustice, the violence, the abuse and suffering. We have a vision for the way the world might be changed if people cared, if they were willing to stand up, to be brave and to actually *do* something. But so many people clearly do not meaningfully care about injustice in our world, and it's just as clear

that they are not doing anything about it. And worst of all, they are not going to change. How hopeless.

This discouraging narrative sounds realistic and right, but honestly this simply has not been our experience. On the contrary we have seen vast numbers of people actually change. When it comes to the struggle for justice, people have moved from apathy to passion, from obliviousness to responsible knowledge, from helpless paralysis to courageous action, from numb fear to liberating joy. We have seen hundreds of thousands of people transformed in their minds, hearts and souls. And where has the change come from? From what I can tell, through an encounter with the Scriptures. People have come to the Word of God with what Jesus called “that good and noble heart” (Luke 8:15)—people “who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.” They have rediscovered God’s passion for the work of justice in the world, and they are changed. They see the way God cares about justice, and they see what he promises to those who *do the work* of justice. And the truth sets them free—free to actually look at the reality of injustice and to do something about it. We have indeed seen the truth that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in *dikaiosynē* [*dikaiosynē* being a Greek word for justice]” (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB).

Because the Bible teaches that “God loves justice” and calls his people to “seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17 NRSV), pastors who hadn’t preached on justice in twenty-five years now do; seminary professors who had never offered courses on biblical justice now do; missions committee elders who had never supported the work of justice now do; Bible study groups who had never studied justice now do; prayer warriors who had never prayed for the work of justice in the world now do; lawyers, investigators and social workers who found no calling in the work for justice among the poor now do; artists who had never rendered the truth about justice now do; students who never imagined they could free slaves now do.

We have seen the Bible’s teaching on justice not only change people’s

minds and hearts but change *the way people live*. Moms and dads actually open themselves up to see what is happening to other people's children and allow themselves to weep. Families live on budgets to make sure they can pay for the rescue the poor cannot afford. Lawyers leave lucrative jobs and safe neighborhoods to stand with the oppressed in the darkest streets. Parents release and bless their children to seek justice in violent places. Decorated and accomplished criminal investigators reject a smooth path to professional ease and instead put their lives on the line one more time. Social workers who have seen a lifetime of trauma and pain return to the breach to train others in the steady stonework of healing. And now, because the Bible changes the way these people live, tens of thousands of other people around the world get to live. The Word of God has the power to change lives.

*Good News About Injustice* is a story based on the Scriptures about the fallen world, the God of justice and his work of rescue and redemption through his people. The two books that followed over the next decade—*Terrify No More* and *Just Courage*—are mostly about the way that simple Bible stories change lives. And because the Word of God still has the power to change lives—there remains great hope for changing the world. For indeed, since the beginning of time, God has been transforming the world through transformed people—usually through very small bands of people—who manage to “turn the world upside down.” And according to Jesus, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 KJV).

### 3. God redeems and restores the victims of injustice.

The third testimony of hope I would like to offer from our experience is the affirmation that good has the power to triumph over evil—even the darkest and most brutal evil. Again, this is not, for us, a thin slogan of wishful thinking. This is the miracle that my colleagues and I have witnessed in the lives of those who have endured unspeakable violence and abuse, and have been resurrected from death by the love of their Maker.

- We have seen a child scrawl Bible verses on the walls of the brothel where she was being serially raped, and pray to Jesus for rescue.

We have seen Jesus bring rescue and resurrect his child to life. We have seen her restored to her family, graduate from college and boldly speak before crowds of thousands in the public fight to end sex trafficking.

- We have seen a man rescued from nearly four years of illegal detention and police torture find his voice as a gentle, passionate poet and become a full-time community outreach director for justice.
- We have seen a police commander and the son of another police commander brought to justice after raping impoverished girls. And just as powerfully, we have seen both girls grow up as dignified young women who now lead a movement of former victims who provide hands-on mentoring for child victims of sex crimes.
- We have seen former slaves from rice mills, rock quarries and brick factories take their freedom in hand, build businesses to feed their families, proudly send their children to school and even help rescue others held in slavery.
- We have seen girls once curled up in fetal positions from abuse in brothels grow up to be young women of great dignity and beauty, get married, raise families and lead us on raids to rescue other children.
- We have seen destitute widows thrown off their land by bullies, restored to their homes, finding their dignity. We have seen them grow food for their children and run a school for the village—and even train the leaders in their community on how to protect other widows from violent dispossession of their land.
- We have seen a man maimed by police abuse and illegal detention rise up with an indomitable spirit of love, become a student of legal advocacy and return to his community to successfully bring rescue to the vulnerable in his neighborhood.

For those who look at the deep ravages of injustice and find themselves descending into despair, I do not have adequate words. In such dark waters, words can rarely do the required work. But I can usher you into the places where we have been over this last decade—into

the holy spaces where we have met these survivors, by the tens of thousands, and allow you to be awed by their stories. There is little about the agony and humiliation of evil that they do not understand, but in their harsh struggles they have also testified to the mysteries and mercies of God in a way that, to me, makes despair or cynicism seem like an indulgence, a lie and a dishonor.

#### **4. Christians are embracing the biblical call to justice.**

Our final affirmation of hope is a testimony to the historic movement of justice that we are witnessing in the Christian community in this era. What we have witnessed over the past decade is surely just the beginning of what is yet to come, but perhaps a better glimpse of the power and glory of what may yet unfold will emerge most vividly from an appreciation of what has already taken place. And for that, a bit of personal perspective may help.

First, the reason for writing *Good News About Injustice* was very simple: in 1999 there were very few articles about justice and a few chapters on the subject scattered in academic volumes—but there was no book-length treatment of the problem of injustice in the world, God's view of it and the role of God's people in addressing it. This seemed an absurd state of affairs considering the magnitude of the problem in the world (i.e., the number of people who suffer because of intentional abuse and oppression) and the massive portions of the Bible that address this problem. Imagine if we had no books on love, evangelism, grace, discipleship, mercy, compassion and so forth. Yet there can be no doubt that justice is just as fundamental an aspect of God's character and our calling as his people.

Moreover, discussions among Christians in the United States about the global challenges of violent injustice were relegated to a small number of Christian circles—religious liberty activists, mainline Protestant denominational offices, groups like Evangelicals for Social Action, Catholic social justice advocates and a few academic groups. There were a microscopic number of self-identifying Christians serving in the traditional human rights agencies and a few more Christians engaging human rights through the important but narrower

cause of religious persecution. Certainly Christians who were talking about international issues of violent oppression and injustice ten years ago had a “prophet crying in the wilderness” experience.

In 2009, however, we must acknowledge that a sea of change has taken place. A transformation of stunning speed and breadth is altering the Christian community—a transformation that offers great hope for the body of Christ and the world. Discussions of biblical justice are bursting into the mainstream of Christian dialogue, church leadership and ministry. Mainstream evangelical movements like Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven Connection, Willow Creek’s Leadership Summit, InterVarsity’s vast Urbana Student Missions Convention and Youth With A Mission’s Discipleship Training Schools are giving a prominent place to the biblical call to the work of justice in the world. But this movement is also propelled by the commitment and passion of small neighborhood churches in suburban America, by Christians in the developing world, by mothers and fathers training their children in justice even as they teach them about mercy and love. Even a casual Internet search of Christian books, magazine articles, conferences, blogs, music and church activities will produce an avalanche of justice-related discussions, ministries, course and educational materials that did not exist a decade ago. *Christianity Today*, the flagship publication of evangelical Christian leadership, not only shows a significant increase in articles related to broad themes of justice over the past ten years but a more than 500 percent increase in the proportion of articles that discuss the specific problem of violent oppression and abuse in our world.

In many ways this transformation reflects the next great movement in the Christian community’s understanding of mission. A hundred years ago Christian mission was largely understood as the *verbal proclamation* of the gospel—an outreach of Christian love through evangelism and discipleship that was meant to meet the needs of those who were alienated from their Maker. Then in the 1950s the Christian community expanded their vision to add ministries of *relief and development*—an outreach of Christian love that met the needs of those who

were suffering from deprivation—to their work of evangelism and discipleship. Before 1950, World Vision, Compassion International, Catholic Relief Services, World Relief, Samaritan’s Purse and Habitat for Humanity did not exist. But by the beginning of the twenty-first century these ministries of compassion for the global poor had become thoroughly mainstream in the North American church.

Now, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, Christians are coming to understand that the ministries that meet the needs of *alienation* and *deprivation* do not meet the needs of those suffering from *oppression*. These neighbors require a ministry of *justice*. Thus Christians in the twenty-first century are drawn into the mission described in Micah 6:8:

He has told you, O man, what is good  
and what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

Or as Jesus summarized: “justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23).

What an extraordinary era in which to be alive! In this epoch God is mobilizing his people into perhaps the most robust and holistic witness of his love that the world has ever seen.

At International Justice Mission we see this movement most dramatically in what we have been calling “the Justice Generation”—the generation of younger Christians who find their hearts beating fast with their Maker’s passion for justice, who show little tolerance for a gospel that does not embody Christ’s call to serve the oppressed, and who are eager to discover how they can use what God has given them to bring a humble and courageous witness for God’s justice into an aching world. I believe they will take what God has begun in the last decade and fashion a fundamental shift in the ministry of the global church to “seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17 NRSV). And perhaps most gloriously, they will do so in a way that is quite new for the Western church—in relationships of

mutual respect, in shared leadership and in common sacrifice *with* their brothers and sisters in the developing world, where the gravitational center of the Christian faith is increasingly shifting.

Finally, this emerging movement of Christian justice ministry will, I believe, begin to find its momentum just as the broader world is waking up to a fundamental flaw in a half century's worth of development assistance among the global poor—the neglect of justice. As a 2008 landmark report from the United Nations made clear in a stunning finding, *most poor people in the world live outside the protection of the law*. This is a statement of such startling implications that we must pause over it to fully absorb its meaning. Imagine if you and your family lived outside the protection of the law. Imagine living in a state of lawlessness in which there is no one to call on to protect you, your family or your property from being assaulted. Indeed, this is the brutal reality for most of the world's poor. In fact, “four billion people around the world are robbed of the chance to better their lives and climb out of poverty because they are excluded from the rule of law.”<sup>1</sup> Or, as a global study conducted by the World Bank found, “Police and official justice systems side with the rich, persecute poor people and make poor people *more* insecure, fearful, and poorer.”<sup>2</sup>

Over the last fifty years the affluent nations of the world have been pursuing poverty alleviation programs in countries—without first helping recipient nations to establish a basic platform of law and justice that will allow poor people to hold onto the benefits of these programs. We can give all manner of goods and services to the poor, but if we do not restrain the hands of the bullies from taking it all away, then poor people simply stay poor. This explains why hundreds of millions of poor people in the world are enslaved, imprisoned, beaten, raped and robbed with ferocious regularity—they simply do not get the protection of basic law enforcement.

This also explains why a whole generation is emerging to say enough is enough. As Bono, the rock star antipoverty activist, told a vast Christian audience in Washington, D.C., “fighting poverty is not a matter of charity; it's a matter of justice.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in this next

decade, International Justice Mission is seeking to lead Christians in an urgent movement to help empower poor people to build public justice systems in their communities that actually protect their families and neighbors from oppression and violence. IJM is seeking to leverage what it has learned from working tens of thousands of cases among the poor to help targeted communities not only diagnose what is broken in the public justice system, but to serve with them in building structures of police, courts and social services that actually protect the poor from violence and abuse.

This is an ambitious goal that will require great miracles from God, but I have never been more energized with hope. Why? First, over this last decade I have seen the God of justice “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:2). Second, over the centuries, Christians were at the forefront of building the systems of justice that most of us now enjoy in the Western world. Third, Christians have never had such great resources and capacities to share this legacy of justice with the world as they do now. As I said more than ten years ago, “I believe that God has indescribable mysteries and miracles stored up for his people who seek justice in his name.” Truly, after a decade of watching the God of justice at work through his people, like the apostle John, I simply want to declare “what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands” (1 John 1:1 NASB). For in this good news about injustice, “we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete” (1 John 1:3-4).

Indeed, celebrations are about joy, and this tenth anniversary is no different. By his mercy we have been witnesses to God’s great love, faithfulness and power in the world. And the day is his. May we each therefore eagerly join him in the banquet he is preparing in this next decade, and may we seek from him our own witness of courage in a hurting world.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION



As the father of four small children I find myself thinking more and more about the core gift I would like to give them to take into the world. I don't actually know the degree to which this gift is mine to give, but if I had one essential provision to grant as they were going out our door, I think I know what it would be. More and more I pray that our children might leave our home as men and women of courage. As C. S. Lewis wrote:

Courage is not simply *one* of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty or mercy which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky.<sup>1</sup>

Courage, however, is an odd gift because it's one we rarely think we'll want or need. It's like trying to get my preschoolers to put on their coats when there is no hint of winter's bitter cold inside our toasty home. Squirming and objecting, they doubt that it's as cold as all that outside, and more to the point, they're not sure they even want to be going out.

Similarly, as a North American Christian I am not all that eager to

accept the gift of courage that my God extends to me. I'm not all that sure I want to go to the places where I'll need it—to the places where virtues become risky. Sometimes staying indoors feels risky enough.

But then Jesus gently lets me know that I'm not living with a domesticated God. His prodding sounds much like the appeal my wife and I give to our own children to get them out the door: "Mom and Dad are going outside. We'll help you with your coats if you want to come with us." Likewise, I hear Jesus calling, "I'm going outside to a world that needs me. I'll help you with the courage you'll need if you want to be with me."

This book is an attempt to articulate something of the courage and hope that God is yearning to bestow on those who want to follow Christ into a world that needs his love. But it is the courage to extend the love of Jesus to a particular category of persons: the men, women and children who are victimized by the abuse of power.

As Christians we have learned much about sharing the love of Christ with people all over the world who have never heard the gospel. We continue to see the salvation message preached in the far corners of the earth and to see indigenous Christian churches vigorously extending Christ's kingdom on every continent. We have learned how to feed the hungry, heal the sick and shelter the homeless.

But there is one thing we haven't learned to do, even though God's Word repeatedly calls us to the task. We haven't learned how to rescue the oppressed. For the child held in forced prostitution, for the prisoner illegally detained and tortured, for the widow robbed of her land, for the child sold into slavery, we have almost no vision of how God could use us to bring tangible rescue. We don't know how to get the twelve-year-old girl out of the brothel, how to have the prisoner set free, how to have the widow's land restored to her, or how to get the child slave released and the oppressors brought to justice.

It is perhaps more accurate to say that as people committed to the historic faith of Christianity, we have *forgotten* how to be such a witness of Christ's love, power and justice in the world. In generations

past the great leaders of Christian revival in North America and Great Britain were consumed by a passion to declare the gospel and to manifest Christ's compassion and justice. But somewhere during the twentieth century some of us have simply stopped believing that God actually can use us to answer the prayers of children, women and families who suffer under the hand of abusive power or authority in their communities. We sit in the same paralysis of despair as those who don't even claim to know the Savior—and in some cases, we manifest even *less* hope.

In response this book has one simple message: it need not be this way. We can recover a witness of Christian courage in a world of injustice. We can rediscover our Maker's passions for the world and for justice—passions that may have grown unfamiliar to us. We can come to know the compassion of Jesus like never before as we go with him to look into the eyes of those who are in need of rescue. Moreover, we can be restored to the conviction that God is prepared to use *us* to “seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17 NRSV).

Fundamentally, therefore, this book is offered as a testimonial, a reflection of what I have been learning about the world and about my Maker. And there has been much I've needed to learn. To be honest, few people could have grown up farther from the realities of injustice and oppression in our world than I did. I was raised in a wonderfully happy home. My loving family lived in an affluent suburb in a civil society—for which I am, frankly, enormously grateful. The realities of terror, oppression, abuse and injustice were kept far from my door. Not surprisingly, I came to understand God in ways that fit my experience. God seemed intensely interested in my life of personal piety and seemed most needed as a Savior from the only negative eventuality which I could not control—death. This is an oversimplification, of course, because I had the entire biblical revelation to draw on, but it serves to illustrate how relatively little I knew about a holy God who spent his days weeping beside children in brothels, prisoners in pain or orphans in trauma—a God whose core hatred of injustice was

rivaled only by his hatred of idolatry.

I knew little about the needs of the world or how God regarded such suffering. I knew even less about what those needs had to do with me or how I could make a difference. But eventually I left home. I lived in places where there was no escaping the raw realities of a world in rebellion against its Maker—apartheid in South Africa, guerrilla war in the Philippines, genocide in Rwanda, to name a few. In these contexts I met followers of Jesus Christ who knew God more deeply, knew the Bible more thoroughly and lived life more courageously than I ever had. They didn't judge me or dismiss me for my limitations; they simply loved me and shared what they had learned, frequently the hard way, about the God of hope and power and joy. In time I found that I had developed some skills as an investigator and a lawyer that could actually be used to "seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." I discovered that God was more than prepared to use his people as his instruments of truth and justice. He was prepared to work miracles through our modest offerings of compassion and obedience.

My personal introduction to the abuse of power in our world began shortly after my graduation from Harvard University. I spent a year working with South African church leaders on the National Initiative for Reconciliation during the brutal state of emergency of 1985 to 1986. After returning to the United States and studying law at the University of Chicago, my exposure to the pain of oppression in the world was deepened through my work for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, investigating the atrocities of abusive soldiers and police in the Philippines. Eventually I took a job as a trial attorney in the civil rights division of the United States Department of Justice. There I served on the police-misconduct task force. While at the Department of Justice I was detailed to the United Nations in the fall of 1994 to serve as the director of the U.N. genocide investigation in Rwanda.

In the midst of these various overseas assignments I was struck by three simple but powerful facts. First, there were vast numbers of

men, women and children in the world who were suffering. Second, within the communities where these abuses took place, Christian workers (missionaries, doctors, relief-and-development workers, and the like) knew a tremendous amount about these abuses yet felt helpless to do anything about them and had no idea where to turn for help. Finally, there were Christians who had the professional training, experience and resources to document these abuses and seek relief for victims—but there was no vehicle to bring their gifts and energy to bear on these needs.

In response to this need a number of Christian friends and colleagues came together to form International Justice Mission in 1994. This organization makes available a corps of Christian public justice professionals (lawyers, criminal investigators, social workers, diplomats, government-relations experts and the like) to serve global Christian workers when they encounter cases of abuse or oppression in their communities. International Justice Mission documents the abuses and seeks relief for the victims, either directly or in partnership with indigenous advocacy groups or through other international human rights organizations. Through the grace of God, International Justice Mission has been able to bring effective advocacy and relief to hundreds of victims of abuse throughout the world—girls released from forced prostitution, children rescued from illegal bonded servitude, prisoners released from illegal detention and abusive police brought to account.

This then is the story of that journey, and my prayer will be answered if it conveys even a small measure of the hope and encouragement that the God of justice intends for his people. In expressing this prayer I hasten to add that this modest volume is not an exhaustive treatment of anything. It is not a thorough survey of injustice and human rights abuses in the world, for many of the most severe may not even be mentioned. Sadly, there is just too much material to work with. Neither is this a full theological treatment of the character of the God of justice, for, happily, there is too much biblical material to work with. My modest aspiration is to stimulate reflection not on

sophisticated biblical arcana but on some of the most arrestingly blunt declarations of Scripture. Finally, I have not set out to write a complete manual on human-rights advocacy but merely to provide some concrete pictures of the practical difference Christians can make in rescuing the oppressed, and to offer starting principles for overcoming the forces of injustice.

This book is a simple introduction to three things: the injustice of our world, the character of our God, and the opportunity for God's people to make a difference. Part one opens with an overview of the reality of injustice, suggests how we can prepare spiritually to combat it and offers examples of how other Christians have tackled the task.

Since in the face of suffering we can easily be immobilized by despair, in part two, I deal with four affirmations that God makes about justice, which offer us hope to get beyond that despair. In looking at God's character we can see how he feels about injustice and those who suffer under it. Part three provides some answers to the difficult questions injustice raises for us as Christians and some real-world tools for understanding how injustice works, investigating the deceptions of oppressors, intervening for victims and doing what each of us can, given our talents and resources, to rescue the oppressed.

It should be noted that for reasons of security and personal sensitivity, pseudonyms have been used to obscure the identities of some of the individuals whose stories are shared in this book.

In preparing this work I have been profoundly assisted by the research and editorial support of my colleagues at International Justice Mission, particularly Jocelyn Penner, Leslie Grimes, Daryl Kreml, Kristin Romens, Lindsey Etheridge and Ryan Cobb. I am also grateful for the editorial assistance and encouragement of Gary Albert, Joan Albert and Ann Haugen Michael. While I was preparing the book, Sam Dimon, Art Gay, Clyde Taylor and Vera Shaw kindly and faithfully upheld me in prayer. I am very grateful for the personal encouragement of Dr. Luis Lugo and the financial support of the Pew Charitable Trusts. I have also been the beneficiary of much kindness

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My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Jan. Words are too poor to express the measure of love and joy you have extended to me in your companionship throughout this project and the larger journey. My joy has been walking closely together in thought, in words, in heart, in laughter and in faith. You have been that sheltering tree of grace from which courage proceeds. You are abiding faith, hope and love.

Finally, whatever may be the strengths or weaknesses of this work, these words will be of little note and short remembrance in the scope of God's grace and work in our world. What will last is the Word of God and his work of love among us.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (Philippians 3:7-9)

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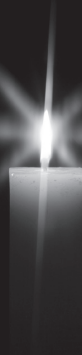
I would also like to thank the IJM staff who assisted me with this tenth anniversary edition: Pamela Livingston, Lori Poer, Larry Martin, Sharon Cohn Wu, Bethany Hoang, Sean Litton, Kathy Stout-Labauve, Christa Hayden, Holly Burkhalter, Susan Conway and my colleagues in the field, whose work inspires much of the hope in this volume.

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PART ONE

TAKING UP  
THE CHALLENGE





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# THE RAGE IN RWANDA

A SUBURBAN CHRISTIAN

CONFRONTS GENOCIDE



I remember looking up from my newspaper during my bus ride to work one morning in the fall of 1994 and finding everything oddly in place. The AT4 bus was proceeding apace at 8:17 a.m. in the carpool zone. I was comfortably settled in my usual seat one row from the center double doors. My good-natured but nameless neighbors were sitting where they ought and respectively sleeping, reading or talking too loud, according to schedule. The low morning sun was where it should be, creating the glare that always forced me to look up from my paper at that point in the route. In that moment, pausing and looking around at all that American commuter normalcy, something inside me wanted to say, “Excuse me, friends, but did you know that less than forty-eight hours ago I was standing in the middle of several thousand corpses in a muddy mass grave in a tiny African country called Rwanda?”

**ASCENSION: COMING BACK FROM A HELL ON EARTH**

The Scriptures do not tell us very much about Jesus’ ascension, his

sudden transport from earth to heaven. But there have been moments in my life when I wish they did. All we know is that he was standing with his rather earthy friends on an earthen hill trying as ever to explain something, when “he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). That is all there is to it: one minute earth, the next minute heaven.

The very suddenness of it has always seemed to me something to ponder. What was it like for Jesus, as a man, to be transported in an instant from a horrifically fallen earth of darkness and death to a heavenly country of light and life—to a city that “does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light” (Revelation 21:23)? What sort of mental adjustment, if we may call it that, was required to move so suddenly from the nightmarish world of the cross—a world of betrayal and torture, of blood lust and wailing women—to paradise? What was it like for the divine Man in heaven to exchange in a moment the stench of death and his own encrusted grave clothes for the very fragrance of life, a white robe, a golden sash and a seat at the right hand of the throne of God—to be home at last with his Father, where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4)?

These may be idle questions, but they have come to me with particular force as I have struggled with the unreality of my own ascension experiences—moments when I have been transported with almost ethereal speed from a hell on earth to a heaven on earth. In a matter of hours I have traveled from the slippery mud and corpses of mass graves in Rwanda to my usual seat at the right hand of my neighbor on our dependably boring and climate-controlled bus ride to my office in Washington, D.C. I remember reclining on a comfortable living-room couch, among friends and family in California, talking about soaring real estate values in Orange County when only days before I had been exhuming the remains of a woman raped and butchered by soldiers in the Philippines. Similarly, I recall watching from my train window as a low summer sun cast a Norman Rockwell glow across Little League fields in Connecticut

when only days before I had been in a country where boys of a similar age but of a different color were being beaten like animals by the South African police.

I don't know whether Jesus experienced dreams while he was here on earth or whether he felt as if he had awakened from a particularly bad one when he found himself back in heaven after his ascension from the earth. But I have certainly felt that dreamlike separation from reality when I have returned from these hellish places around the world. In no time at all it begins to feel as if the nightmare I came from in Rwanda or the Philippines or South Africa has taken place not in another country but on another planet. Back home, it simply does not feel *real* anymore.

Thus my sudden urge to make that announcement about the Rwandan genocide to unsuspecting fellow bus commuters came not from a desire to shock them but from a desire to somehow affirm for myself the human reality and relevance of my own experience. Could it really be true, and could it really have anything to do with me, that in a period of about six weeks in the spring of 1994, nearly one million defenseless women and children were hacked to death by their neighbors in the towns and villages of Rwanda?

I remember very well what I was doing in the spring of 1994. I was trying to assemble cribs for twin girls who were coming into our home, ready or not. I was trying to match wits, and losing, with the class clown in my sixth-grade boys' Sunday school class. I was seeking every advantage, and losing, in my effort to trade in our Honda Civic for a Taurus station wagon. I was prevailing in my arguments in a trial in federal court in Alabama, enjoying an occasional jog along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., and denying that I had ever watched *Melrose Place* on TV.

Like most Americans in the spring of 1994, I was also starting to see horrible stories in the newspapers about some kind of "tribal warfare" in an African country I had never heard much about. Then I saw pictures on the evening news of bloated bodies floating down a river and heard commentators talking about genocide. Apparently thousands,

maybe even millions, of Tutsis were being slaughtered by their Hutu compatriots in a genocidal hysteria sweeping across Rwanda. But like most of the great ugliness transmitted by TV across the world and into my living room, the terror in Rwanda just did not seem real. It seemed *true*, but not real—not to me. I did not dispute the accuracy of the reports, but they might as well have been pictures from Sojourner on Mars or reports about people who lived in ancient Rome or statistics about how many bazillion other solar systems are in the Milky Way—all true enough, but not real. Not real like my kids when they are sick, not real like my job when I am behind in my work, not real like my neighbors when one of them has been in a car accident, not even real like my Midwestern compatriots when they have been flooded out of their homes.

#### MEETING THE TRUTH IN RWANDA

But then in the fall of 1994 I went to Rwanda. Only forty-eight hours before taking my seat on the AT4 commuter bus, I had been in Kibuye, Rwanda, a beautiful town sprawling on the banks of Lake Kivu and clinging to the green highlands of eastern Rwanda—and a horrible town—where thousands of Tutsis (mostly women and children) were hacked and beaten to death by their Hutu neighbors over a period of several days. I was in Kibuye directing the U.N.'s genocide investigation in the country, on loan to the United Nations from the U.S. Department of Justice. My job was to march down a list of mass grave and massacre sites provided by U.N. military intelligence and deploy international investigative teams to gather preliminary evidence against the perpetrators. The evidence would eventually be turned over to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which was just being established to bring the murderers to justice. There in Kibuye and in scores of other towns and villages across the country, the nightmare became real for me.

Kibuye was my last mass grave site before I was to head back home to America. One of my twin infant daughters had been stricken with meningitis, and while our worst fears had passed and she was on the

mend, it was time for me to return to my family. For this final project in Kibuye I brought four other members of my U.N. investigative team: Luc, a jovial, bear-sized criminal lawyer from French Canada; Jim, a delightfully wry police officer from Northern Ireland; Thaddi, a Rwandan school teacher who served as interpreter; and Nehemiah, our U.N. military officer from Zimbabwe who mostly missed his family back home. We arrived in Kibuye after a jarring, five-hour, four-wheel-drive journey from our headquarters in Kigali.

Once we arrived, the most dangerous part of our assignment was over. Though low-level civil war still claimed the country, land mines peppered the fields and bandits roamed the land, the greatest danger was simply traveling on the roads. Narrow, mud-washed trails over sheer mountain cliffs wound their way over the eastern highlands and delivered us to the banks of Lake Kivu—one of the great, deep-blue lakes of Africa—separating Rwanda from Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Of course, the breathtaking beauty of the lake and its lush tropical shores were marred by human horror, for we knew that many corpses found their way to the placid waters during the genocide only a few months before.

Murder investigations generally begin where the bodies are, and as we arrived in Kibuye, I knew this meant that we would be heading for the biggest church in town—the Catholic cathedral and the adjoining Home St. Jeans, a complex of residential and educational buildings. The large, rough-hewn stone cathedral stood sturdy and squat on a peninsula over the lake. The stone and concrete interior had been scrubbed out, but as we stepped inside, we found the lingering, overpowering essence that could not be cleansed from the stones—the stifling, unnatural odor of a mass sepulcher. For within these walls and on this floor, hundreds of defenseless children, mothers, brothers and grandmothers had been hacked and clubbed to death in a murderous binge of torture and slaughter just months ago. Now the cathedral was empty, except for a lone, deranged man in rags, who had made the empty hall his home and was seen spending hours on his knees mumbling before the altar.

### GATHERING ALL THE FACTS

Our task in the coming days was to conduct an investigative site survey, locate survivors and other witnesses and begin to account for the bodies. The story that emerged was a familiar one. On April 6, 1994, the president of Rwanda was killed in a mysterious plane crash in Kigali, the capital city. Almost immediately extremist Hutu factions within the government and the military joined with extremist Hutu paramilitary groups across the country to incite a murderous hysteria against Tutsis and moderate Hutu. The quasi-ethnic divisions between Hutu and Tutsis in Rwanda had been highly politicized over the years, with each side viewing the struggle as a zero-sum game between governance and extinction. Claiming that Tutsis had killed their president and were now coming to slaughter all Hutu, these fanatical Hutu leaders used government military forces, citizen militia and local mobs to start hunting down and killing the Tutsis in their communities. In the days following the plane crash Tutsis in and around Kibuye began to hear of prominent members of their community being dragged from their homes and murdered. Disheveled Tutsi corpses began to appear in the streets.

By April 17 the violence and hysteria had reached a full boil in Kibuye. Seeking safety in numbers and following the orders of the provincial governor and the mayor, hundreds of Tutsi men, women and children huddled together at the cathedral and the Home St. Jeans complex. During times of ethnic conflict in years past, many Tutsi had found sanctuary within the sacred walls of churches across the country. So as the fever of violence escalated in Kibuye and across Rwanda, the churches became packed to the rafters with thousands of trembling women and children seeking refuge. For the hundreds huddled in the Kibuye cathedral, however, there would be no refuge, only a lure, a trap and a grave.

On that day in April the provincial governor and mayor, who had ordered all Tutsi to the cathedral (ostensibly for their safety), ordered that the complex be surrounded. Eventually a force assembled from members of the Gendarmerie Nationale (the national police), the

local police from the commune, Interhamwe (the extremist Hutu militia group) and an armed mob of local civilians. The governor then unleashed this combined army upon the defenseless people.

Working largely with machetes, metal rods, spears and wooden clubs with nails partially embedded at the head, the mob cut the Tutsis—men, women and children—down by the hundreds and bludgeoned them to death.

In the days that followed, the Gendarmerie Nationale, Interhamwe and armed civilians hunted down and killed any survivors they could find. One survivor we interviewed, a young father of three children, said that he had seen his entire family murdered around him. He survived, but for three days he crawled among the dead on the cathedral floor, wounded and desperately thirsty. He said he nearly smothered a surviving child from another family who wanted to cry out when the murderers returned to beat more survivors to death.

When the orgy of murder had exhausted itself, the killers moved on to the Kibuye stadium where an even larger group of frightened Tutsis had gathered for protection. The brick-walled stadium sat between the town's main road and a steep hill made of the same red clay. By April 18 the police, Interhamwe militia and local mob had surrounded the stadium and were killing anyone trying to escape. Huddled by the thousands within the stadium walls and between the brick grandstand and the thick green grass in the oval, the Tutsi men, women and children cried out for rescue and for mercy, but found none. According to reports it was once again the provincial governor, Clement Kayishema, who raised his pistol to the air and fired off the signal to attack.

With a rush the blood-lusting mob waded into the sea of screaming and scrambling villagers. All day the mob hacked and blasted its way through its Tutsi neighbors—most deaths coming ultimately with a massive machete blow to the head. The exhausting task could not be completed in a single day, however, so with the police and militia sealing off the stadium during the night, the attackers took their evening rest, returning the next morning for another full day of

mass murder. Thus by the end of the next day the stadium, like the cathedral, was silent with death and heaps of broken bodies.

#### BEYOND THE FACTS: ARTIFACTS AND SURVIVORS TELL THEIR STORIES

By the time I arrived in Kibuye to direct the U.N. military in digging up the two mass graves where all these broken bodies had eventually been flung, it was easy to think of them as exactly that: nameless, faceless, decaying and disconnecting body parts. I had a job to do—to turn over enough of the mass grave at the cathedral and the stadium to corroborate the testimony of our witnesses, and then to move on. It was a filthy, stinking job, but it had to be done. We were busy, and it simply did not pay to think very hard about any particular story represented by any particular set of the remains I was now rearranging for forensic photographs. It had not seemed worth thinking too much about months ago when I saw the pictures at home on TV of Tutsi bodies floating down a river somewhere in Africa. Now that those same anonymous corpses were at my feet, it still felt more comfortable to think of them as a tragic mass rather than as anything like the individual people that I knew and cared about back home.

But at Kibuye, as at every massacre site in Rwanda, a painful glimpse of the truth always came through. This was not an undifferentiated mass of lifeless clods on the inevitable dust heap of a fallen world. In truth each body, now dull and limp in the mud, was actually a unique bearer of the very image of God, a unique creation of the divine Maker, individually knit within a mother's womb by the Lord of the universe. For as difficult as it was to imagine, each crumpled mortal frame had indeed come from a mother, one single mother who somewhere in time had wept tears of joy and aspiration over her precious child—a child endowed with the mysterious spark of Adam and an immortal soul. We would never number all the mother's children in these mass graves, but their Father in heaven had numbered even the very hairs of their heads.

It made my job infinitely more difficult to look at the dead this way, but day after day, pieces of the truth would work their way into my heart. These mass graves might appear as vague, dark images of generalized evil in an unjust world, but in truth they were an intimate family portrait with a story for every face—each member of the human family having lived and died as one individual at a time.

These stories gradually emerged from the artifacts and survivors. Every massacre site had stories to tell from what was left behind. Tutsis had fled their homes from miles around to seek safety in these churches, stadiums and schools. Many brought with them their most cherished personal possessions, and it was these items that now testified to their humanity in a way that their lifeless forms could not. Of course, anything of value had long been stripped away, leaving only those things that people clutch in death but robbers do not steal—pictures from a wedding day, a French Bible with a loving inscription, a small calendar with pictures of faraway places.

And then there were the stacks of government-issued, mandatory identity cards. In sites where we had only skeletal remains, the identity cards said everything that needed saying. Each card featured a fading black-and-white photograph, a picture of just one person, with a face different from all the rest, looking tired, proud, embarrassed or caught off guard. And each bore a check in the box next to the word *Tutsi*. Despite the mind-numbing scale of the genocide, these little pale-green cards spoke the truth about injustice in the world. Just as with famine, despite appearances, people really do die one person at a time.

Yet it was still hard for me to connect myself to these people—these people who were no more, people I never knew, people who must be so different from me and mine. It certainly made my work more tolerable to view them this way.

In the end it wasn't the remaining artifacts but the survivors in Rwanda who took me across a mysterious bridge that allowed me to behold the same human heart, eyes and hands of these, my departed neighbors.

**THE TRUTH OF INJUSTICE BECOMES PERSONAL AND REAL**

Some time ago I stopped being surprised by the existence of survivors from such massacres. As I have learned, human beings are strangely easy, and strangely hard, to kill. And each survivor has a miraculous and horrible tale to tell.

I once took testimony from a woman in the Philippines who had been shot in the torso several times by a high-powered firearm at short range. She had the scars to show for it. This woman, called Rose, and seventeen other members of her little village in Northern Luzon had been rounded up by angry soldiers and gunned down in the middle of a rice paddy. She was pregnant at the time of the massacre, and she and the baby were in good health when I met them more than a year after the incident. She was, in fact, a charming young woman—engaging, funny, clever—who had a certain guarded melancholy, no doubt, but no despair. She was a hard-working, generous mother and neighbor. She cared for many, and many cared for her. The resilient spark in her eyes and the life in her smile made one wonder how brilliant that sparkle must have been before her nightmare with the Philippine Army.

Nevertheless, had one of the bullets taken even a slightly different course through her abdomen, I would have never known of Rose. I would have only known of eighteen, rather than seventeen, lifeless victims of an ugly, dirty war in the Philippines. Rose told the truth about a mass grave and about massive injustice in our world, and so did the survivors I met in Rwanda.

Two little girls in Kibuye, with shy smiles of perfect and brilliantly white teeth, showed us the thick, pink scars across the neck of one and across the head of the other. They were being interviewed by Luc and Thaddi in a dilapidated schoolroom when Jim and I joined them after a very long day at the mass grave near the stadium.

I had been picking through human garbage almost all day. I was exhausted, sunburned and dirty. Jim and I pulled up one of the frail, narrow school benches in the back of the room and watched the conversation between Luc, Thaddi and the little girls. They told stories

about where they lived, the animals they liked, the families they used to have and the neighbors who were caring for them now. Through it all they were the picture of courage, sadness and sweetness. At the end of the interview they were dismissed and left the room tugging each other close with whispers. Luc finished his notes with Thaddi.

As Jim and I waited, I had too much time to think. I was pierced again with the true identity of the rubbish I had been forced to wallow in all day. These two little girls—they were the rubbish. Though “fearfully and wonderfully made” (like my own two little girls at home), the awfulness of evil, the remoteness of Rwanda and the lifelessness of death had conspired to very nearly rob these little ones of their human face. I found myself trying to blink back the wave of emotion and the tears in my eyes. I stared hard at the smooth concrete floor and started quietly whistling through my teeth.

After a moment, I heard my own idle tune: “Jesus loves me / This I know / For the Bible tells me so / Little ones to him belong / They are weak / But he is strong.” In another moment, I heard Jim whistling a soft harmony behind me. Apparently he too had been to Sunday school. We sat waiting a bit longer for Luc to finish, walked back to the truck and rode silently home to our base camp. Jim and I never spoke of the moment to one another.

#### SEEKING JUSTICE: GOD’S COMPASSION, COMMANDMENT AND COMMISSION

These were tough moments for me, but there was no longer any question about what this horrible injustice in Rwanda had to do with me, a suburban American lawyer who rode a bus to work during the week and taught sixth-grade Sunday school on the weekend. It had everything to do with me because of what my God loves and what my God hates. To quote another Sunday school chorus: “Jesus loves the little children / *All* the children of the world / Red and yellow, black and white / They are precious in his sight.” Rwanda might seem far away, and these Rwandan children might seem different from my own, but I do not know anything about my God or the truth of my own

childish choruses if I do not understand that, truly, “red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.”

Moreover, this has everything to do with me because God hates injustice.

The LORD examines the righteous,  
but the wicked and those who love violence  
his soul hates. . . .

For the LORD is righteous,  
he loves justice. (Psalm 11:5, 7)

The Bible says that when officials are acting like “wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain,” the Lord looks for someone to “stand in the breach,” to “intervene” and to “seek justice” (Ezekiel 22:27, 30; Isaiah 59:15-16; 1:17 NRSV). By the time I arrived in Kibuye, I was much too late to stop the killing. I couldn’t bring the dead back to life or back to their families. But it matters to God whether the evildoers are brought to justice:

[The wicked man] lies in wait near the villages;  
from ambush he murders the innocent,  
watching in secret for his victims.  
He lies in wait like a lion in cover;  
he lies in wait to catch the helpless;  
he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net.  
His victims are crushed, they collapse;  
they fall under his strength.  
He says to himself, “God has forgotten;  
he covers his face and never sees.”  
Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God.  
Do not forget the helpless.  
Why does the wicked man revile God?  
Why does he say to himself,  
“He won’t call me to account”?  
But you, O God, do see trouble and grief;  
you consider it to take it in hand.

The victim commits himself to you;  
you are the helper of the fatherless.  
Break the arm of the wicked and evil man;  
call him to account for his wickedness  
that would not be found out. (Psalm 10:8-15)

It matters to me, therefore, that the leaders of the Kibuye massacre (the governor, the mayor and their accomplices) have been captured and indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. As I sat down to write *Good News About Injustice* in 1998, they were being “called to account.” The prosecution had presented closing arguments and recommended four terms of life imprisonment on counts of genocide and crimes against humanity, and a minimum of forty additional years on violations of the Geneva Convention. This was partly through the testimony of survivors and witnesses that we interviewed inside that little schoolroom—including those two little orphans with shy smiles of perfect teeth. Over the next few years the Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal Courts found these men guilty of aiding and abetting genocide, committing genocide and conspiring to commit genocide. They were each sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in prison.

Of course, convicting the war criminals of Kibuye ultimately cannot bring true justice and healing to Rwanda or to those little girls. Nor can it or any other human mechanism promise ultimate peace and salvation for the human race. But by calling these men to account we can hope that the next generation of wicked “princes” will think twice about perpetrating such abuses, and the dead will not be mocked by impunity for their murderers.

In any case, seeking justice is a straightforward command of God for his people and part of Christ’s prayer that his Father’s will be done “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). At least for me as a Christian, it is part of my testimony about the character of the God I love:

You hear O LORD, the desire of the afflicted;  
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,

defending the fatherless and the oppressed,  
 in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.  
 (Psalm 10:17-18)

The great miracle and mystery of God is that he calls me and you to be a part of what he is doing in history. He could, of course, with no help from us proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with lifeless stones, feed the entire world with five loaves and two fish, heal the sick with the hem of his garment, and release all the oppressed with his angels. Instead God has chosen us—missionaries, agricultural engineers, doctors, lawyers, lawmakers, diplomats, and all those who support, encourage and pray for them—to be his hands in doing those things in the world that are important to him.

When Christ ascended into heaven, he left behind only two things for the fulfillment of all his aspirations for the world: his Spirit and his followers. With the Holy Spirit we have been commissioned to demonstrate Christ's love for all the world: to disciple the nations, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the broken and even to rescue the oppressed. When we sing that all children are "precious in his sight," we must not forget that he, of whom we sing, has declared himself to be the God of justice. Scripture describes the one who follows God:

He will deliver the needy who cry out,  
 the afflicted who have no one to help.  
 He will take pity on the weak and the needy  
 and save the needy from death.  
 He will rescue them from oppression and violence,  
 for *precious is their blood in his sight.* (Psalm 72:12-14,  
 emphasis added)

The Scriptures promise that "a scepter of justice will be the scepter of [God's] kingdom" (Psalm 45:6). And while the kingdom of God will be complete only in the coming of Christ, today our great joy and privilege is to work as collaborators with the Creator in extending his kingdom over one more life, one more family, one more neighborhood, one more community. The people of God will find in Christ the

compassion and courage to engage the call to justice, for we know God *promises* that we who do not “become weary in doing good . . . will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

**WHEN WE SEE INJUSTICE, WE HAVE A CHOICE**

Many who lack faith will shrink away from the distant, dark world of injustice. Still others will water down the Word and imagine that they can love God without loving their brother, or wanting to “justify” themselves, they will invent elaborate quibbles with Jesus about who is and is not their neighbor (Luke 10:25-37; 1 John 3:10, 16-18). To these the Lord says:

When you stretch out your hands,  
I will hide my eyes from you;  
even though you make many prayers,  
I will not listen. . . .  
learn to do good;  
seek justice,  
rescue the oppressed,  
defend the orphan,  
plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:15, 17 NRSV)

Others, by contrast, recognizing the voice of their good Shepherd will respond with joy: “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). They will embrace the orphans and widows of the world, as their Savior did. With the hurting, the oppressed and the abused in mind, these people will come to the Master with their meager offering, their widow’s mite, their inadequate loaves and fishes, and simply say, “Jesus, can you do anything with these?” And while the men “close” to Jesus will scoff, “How far will they go among so many?” Jesus himself will say, “Bring them here to me” (John 6:9; Matthew 14:18).

To be witnesses to the love of Christ in such a large, brutally unjust world seems overwhelming and beyond our calling. Even so, Jesus speaks to us. When he departed this earth for heaven—so suddenly, so mysteriously—he left much unexplained. But he wanted us

to know one thing: we will receive from him power, the power to be his witnesses in word and deed “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8-9).

For the little Filipino girl abducted into prostitution, for the Pakistani boy chained to a weaving loom, for the Latin American widow pushed off her land and even for the African father rotting in his prison cell without a charge or a trial, we share Christ’s saving love on the cross and the servant love of our hands. As it was in days of old, “it will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them” (Isaiah 19:20).

“Here am I, Lord. Send me!”