

### WARM-UP

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “integrity”? How do you know if a person has integrity or not?
- Who is the most honest person you know? Why do you think honesty is important?
- Why is it important to select people in positions of leadership who will uphold impartiality, equity, and integrity?

**WORD** *18“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. 20Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”* **DEUTERONOMY 16:18-20**

Moses reminded the Israelites that it was God who was the giver of land and inheritance to each tribe. It was the job of the appointed judges and officers to act justly, so that the tribe could continue to live in the land and pass it on to the next generations. The people should take justice and the choosing of their leaders seriously. The land itself, and the inheritance of the next generation, depended on following God’s justice. What kind of leaders should we choose? What kind of leaders should we be?

## 1 | Leaders should not pervert justice.

*"You shall not pervert justice. . . ."* **DEUTERONOMY 16:19**

To pervert something is to change the direction of something away from its original goal. Leaders have power, position, and often wealth in order to uphold justice, to give each person what they are due. Changing this in any way, by a little or a lot, perverts justice and prevents fair treatment of everyone involved. Have you seen or experienced a perversion of justice? What was that like for you?

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## 2 | Leaders should not show partiality.

*". . . You shall not show partiality . . ."* **DEUTERONOMY 16:19**

To be partial is to show favoritism to one person over another, no matter what is actually due to them. However, God requires righteous leaders to justly treat every person according to their due. In these decisions, they should only fear God and His authority to correct injustice. What does Psalm 98:9 say about how God is as a judge?

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### 3 | Leaders should not accept bribes.

*“... you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.”* **DEUTERONOMY 16:19**

To subvert is to do something that weakens a righteous cause. In this case, subverting means taking payment of any kind to change an outcome from a just one to an unjust one. A wrong outcome that is paid for is not justice at all. It increases the vulnerability of the vulnerable and lessens trust or belief in the leadership. Have you seen or experienced a similar situation? What was the outcome? How did you respond?

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Anyone who has the authority to make a decision about another person, or the influence to affect decisions about other people, is in a position of leadership. This includes us, even for seemingly small decisions that involve others.

We should practice righteous leadership no matter where we are or who we are leading. We should uphold justice, show no favoritism, accept no bribes, and fear only God in our decision-making. In fact, we can choose and raise leaders who demonstrate these godly qualities. When we do this, God promises us continued blessing and a lasting inheritance.

## APPLICATION

- What instructions did God give to the people through Moses about governance, power, and justice? What were these instructions for? How does this apply to you today?
- What specific qualities are we asked to look for when choosing leaders? What qualities should leaders practice? How can you practice this when choosing the right leaders to appoint?
- Leadership is practiced no matter where we are and who surrounds us. How can you practice the qualities of righteous leaders this week?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for those who are currently in government office and positions of leadership, trusting God's purpose for their lives and roles.
- Pray and ask God for leaders who fear Him and resist any temptation to pervert justice, show favoritism, or receive bribes.
- Ask God for our governing authorities to ensure we live *a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way* (1 Timothy 2:2).



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