

WIN WITH JUSTICE VIDEO SERIES

***A Bible-Based Discussion about
Ministry in a Time of Mass Incarceration***

Study Guide with Discussion Questions

Thank you for downloading the discussion guide to accompany the videos of the *Win With Justice Video Series*, featuring Maya Moore Irons and Jonathan Irons with host Rasool Berry. We pray the videos, podcast episodes, and this guide will help you facilitate deep, transformational discussions to encourage you and your community to think biblically about prison ministry and advocacy for criminal justice reform. Maya and Jonathan have shared their experiences and wisdom regarding the injustices they have seen and experienced in society and how the Bible challenged them and calls all of us to respond. This guide is meant to serve as an outline and help as you work with others to understand and act. We've included some guidelines below for group leadership. Use them to create a comfortable environment that promotes engagement, Bible study, and reflection as your small group journeys toward justice. Of course, feel free to add anything that you think might be important to encourage honesty and vulnerability.

Jonathan Irons's story made international news when Maya, compelled by her faith, sacrificed her successful basketball career to fully support his exoneration. Meanwhile, Jonathan's faith grew during his incarceration due to faithful involvement in a prison ministry. When Jonathan was freed, they both knelt in prayer and worship. Justice resulted in praise.

This guide is meant to serve as an outline and help as you and your community explore their story and go deeper into Scripture's framework for why Christians should engage in prison ministry and reform work. If you're using this in a small group, we suggest you begin with the first video, which explores the "why" of prison ministry, before getting into the second video, which digs into the "how."

Also note that there are two additional one-on-one videos that go more in depth into the personal stories of Maya and Jonathan. You can find those at experiencevoices.org/winwithjustice.

How to Create a Safe Space for *Win With Justice* Discussions

1. Establish an Expectation of Confidentiality

Use a foundational rule for the group: “What is shared in the room stays in the room.” It is crucial for everyone to know that they can be honest without fear of gossip or that their stories will get back to other people without their permission. Many of us have personal encounters with the carceral system (police, courts, prisons, etc.), and some of those we don’t feel ready to share broadly. Make sure everyone knows that their stories, life experiences, and struggles won’t leave the discussion group. Prepare those who participate to respond in generic ways when someone asks, “How was the discussion?” Their responses can get into detail about their personal insights but must not describe other group member’s personal testimonies without permission. If there is a story or lesson that someone in the group believes will benefit others, then the person who shared should be asked if they are okay with sharing that testimony in another context. Remind the group: “Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered” (Proverbs 11:13 *ESV*).

2. Model Vulnerability

Be sure to let your small group know that you would like to create a safe place for everyone to be authentic and transparent. The best way to create an authentic environment is to set the example by being open and transparent as a leader. Share some of your personal story—some of the trials you have gone through in life and how the Lord was with you in and through them.

Sharing current struggles shows that you are not perfect, and it helps create a place where it is okay to share vulnerably with one another—a place where imperfect people can be themselves.

The more vulnerable and authentic you can be as a leader, the more open your group will be.

Be sensitive to the needs of the group while keeping everyone engaged.

3. Value Time

As a small group facilitator, you honor everyone in your group when you are sensitive of everyone’s time. Be sure to start on time and end on time. If you run into a situation where you are behind on time, as a courtesy stop the group at the closing time and let the group members know that if anyone needs to leave, they are free to go.

Be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit to know when you need to venture off script or extend your time.

4. Facilitate Group Discussion

Remember that facilitating is not the same as preaching or teaching. Be sure that when you facilitate your group time, you spend less time teaching and giving instruction and more time asking questions and drawing the members out. As a facilitator, you are there to stimulate good discussion among the group members and encourage everyone to participate. Teaching may come out during the time, but be sure you are giving quality time for each group member to participate. That will involve being okay with awkward silence. Some people are internal processors and take time to form their opinions. Others are external processors and will immediately respond. Let them know you are okay with silence to allow all to process. You can even do this right after screening the video. Allow for some time (about 2 minutes) for everyone to simply reflect.

Help people be aware of the need to create space for others to share as needed. This could be before the session or even during the session if you notice someone is dominating the conversation.

5. Prioritize Prayer

Prayer is a vital part of any ministry. Spend time praying for each of your group members by name. Pray for clarity, transparency, healing, and wholeness as you embark on this journey together.

Adding a time for prayer to each group meeting is something to consider and is a way to bring the group closer to one another.

6. Study the Bible

Encourage the group members to read and review the Scriptures introduced in the videos for each section. Utilize some of the group time to read the Scriptures and answer questions people may have. Remember that everyone will be at various places in their biblical knowledge, and some teaching may need to be done to help some understand the concepts. Be prepared with a central passage to pull from. Review the primary Scriptures in the discussion guide below for the two videos.

PART 1

Why Should We Care about Criminal Justice?

Part 1 of the *Win With Justice Video Series* examines the biblical basis for why we should care about criminal justice. Watch the video featuring Maya Moore Irons and Jonathan Irons.

Read Micah 6:8.

Reading Micah 6:8 inspired Maya to start Win With Justice. What can it look like for you to apply that passage when it comes to mass incarceration?

Read Exodus 3:9–10.

Jonathan shared that he was encouraged when he felt seen compassionately by Maya. In Exodus 3:9–10, what does seeing result in? What have you seen when it comes to the criminal legal system?

Read Luke 23:42–43.

Jonathan shared how much Jesus's interaction with the thief on the cross meant to him. How might Jesus's response inform how we engage with those who are incarcerated?

Read Leviticus 19:33–34, Hebrews 13:3, and Matthew 25:35–37.

Based on these passages, why and how should Christ followers participate in prison ministry and criminal justice reform efforts?

PART 2

What Can We Do to Help?

This section focuses on what we can do to help. Watch the video featuring Win With Justice founders Maya Moore Irons and Jonathan Irons.

Read Luke 4:18–19 and James 1:19.

When Jesus introduced himself to the world in Luke 4:18–19, what did he say that relates to freedom?

Maya said the “easiest thing to do is to have a conversation with someone.” Who is someone impacted by the prison system that you can have a conversation with?

Jonathan mentioned that “prison ministry is the lifeblood of justice within that space.” What was so impactful to him about the prison ministry he experienced?

Read Matthew 9:36–38.

What could more “laborers” do to help returning citizens with reentry?

Jonathan said more opportunities for personal development and rehabilitation are necessary because taking someone in a bad situation and putting them in a worse situation is not helpful. How do you see that happening today?

Why do we need both prison ministry and criminal justice reform efforts like educating the public about the role of prosecutors? (Who is your local prosecutor? What is their approach to diversion programs to prevent criminal convictions? What is their vision for rehabilitation?)

In what ways was hope important for Jonathan while he was wrongfully incarcerated? Why is it important for us as we seek to do justice?

[Visit the Win With Justice website.](#)