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## **Sankofa**

### **Introduction**

The Sankofa journey is a concept from West Africa that encourages people to look back at their past and use it to inform their present and future. The Sankofa journey is often used in the context of African-American history to encourage people to learn from the struggles and successes of their ancestors.

During the Sankofa trip, participants journeyed in pairs and visit sites that are significant in African-American history, such as slave ports, plantations, and civil rights landmarks. The goal of the trip is to learn about the experiences of African-Americans and to use this knowledge to inform the present and future.

The Covenant Church in Atlanta, Georgia, organized a Sankofa trip for participants to learn about the history of African-Americans in the United States. The trip included visits to sites such as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Equal Justice Initiative and other landmarks significant to the history of African-Americans in the United States. The purpose of the trip is to educate and inspire participants to take action to promote justice and racial reconciliation in their own lives and communities.

## **Biblical Principles of Justice**

The Bible provides a solid foundation for understanding the role of the church in social movements. Scripture shows that God has a deep concern for justice and the well-being of marginalized and oppressed people. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see that God consistently works to bring about justice and to lift up those who are downtrodden.

Isaiah 1:17 provides a key passage that speaks to this idea, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." This verse shows that God is deeply concerned with justice and that the church has a responsibility to work towards justice as well.

Similarly, the prophet Micah states, "He has shown you, O mortal, 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" (Micah 6:8). This passage highlights the fact that justice is not just an abstract concept, but something that God expects us to actively pursue in our lives.

Jesus himself demonstrated a concern for the marginalized and oppressed by ministering to lepers, prostitutes, and other outcasts. He also challenged unjust social structures, such as the oppression of the poor and the abuse of power by religious leaders. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6). This passage shows that Jesus saw justice as a fundamental aspect of his mission on earth.

Therefore, the church has a biblical mandate to work for justice and to promote the well-being of marginalized and oppressed people. This includes involvement in social movements that seek to address systemic issues of injustice. The church can play a critical role in these

movements by providing moral and spiritual leadership, organizing and mobilizing people, and advocating for change.

One of the key examples of this kind of activism in the Bible is the story of the Exodus. In this story, the Hebrew people are enslaved in Egypt and cry out to God for deliverance. God responds by raising up Moses as a leader and working through him to liberate the Hebrews from slavery. This story shows that God is on the side of the oppressed and that he can work through his people to bring about justice and liberation.

In the New Testament, we see that the early church was deeply concerned with issues of social justice. In Acts 2, we read about the early Christians selling their possessions and sharing their wealth with one another, creating a community of mutual care and support. This passage shows that the early church saw economic justice as a fundamental aspect of their faith.

Similarly, in James 2, we read about the importance of treating all people with respect and dignity, regardless of their social status or economic standing. This passage emphasizes the idea that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with love and compassion.

The Bible teaches us that the church has a critical role to play in social movements that seek to promote justice and equality. As followers of Jesus, we are called to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, and to work towards a world where all people are treated with dignity and respect. The church can provide moral and spiritual leadership, organize and mobilize people, and advocate for change in order to bring about a more just and equitable society. By embracing our biblical mandate to work for justice, the church can make a tangible difference in the lives of those who are marginalized and oppressed.

However, it's important to note that the church's involvement in social movements should not be motivated by a desire for power or influence. Rather, our motivation should be rooted in a deep commitment to the well-being of all people and a desire to see God's justice and righteousness prevail.

Additionally, it's important for the church to approach social movements with a spirit of humility and openness, recognizing that we do not have all the answers and that we have much to learn from those who have been directly impacted by the issues we are working to address. We must be willing to listen to the stories and experiences of those who have been marginalized and oppressed and to center their voices in our work.

Finally, we must recognize that the work of social justice is ongoing and that there is always more to be done. As the apostle Paul writes in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." We must be committed to the long-term work of social justice, recognizing that true change takes time and sustained effort.

In conclusion, the Bible provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of the church in social movements. Scripture teaches us that God is deeply concerned with justice and that the church has a responsibility to work towards justice and to promote the well-being of marginalized and oppressed people. By embracing our biblical mandate to work for justice, the church can provide moral and spiritual leadership, organize and mobilize people, and advocate for change in order to bring about a more just and equitable society.

The pursuit of justice, equity, and belonging is a key aspect of the biblical message, and it is a crucial calling for the Church in today's world. Throughout Scripture, we see that God's love is closely connected with justice, and that the pursuit of justice is an essential part of our faith.

Here, we will explore some of the key Scripture passages that provide a theological undergirding for justice, equity, and belonging. Psalm 33:5 affirms that "The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love." This verse highlights that God's love is intertwined with justice, and that our pursuit of justice is an expression of our love for God and others. In other words, the pursuit of justice is not a secondary or optional aspect of our faith, but an essential component of it.

Proverbs 21:3 further emphasizes the importance of justice, stating that "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." This verse teaches us that justice is not just an add-on to our faith, but an essential part of our worship and obedience to God. The prophet Amos also emphasizes the importance of justice, calling for it to "roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24). This vivid imagery highlights the importance of justice as a continual and unstoppable force in our world, something that should be pursued with persistence and determination.

Moving into the New Testament, we see Jesus' teaching about the importance of justice and mercy towards those who are marginalized and oppressed. In Matthew 25:40, he teaches that our love for God is expressed through our actions towards "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine." This verse emphasizes that our faith should be expressed through tangible actions towards those who are suffering and in need.

Similarly, the apostle Paul writes in Galatians 3:28 that "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse affirms the equal value and dignity of all people, and calls us to work towards a world in which everyone is included and valued.

Finally, the book of James emphasizes the importance of putting our faith into action through acts of justice and mercy towards those in need. James 2:14-17 states that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." This passage emphasizes the importance of not just believing in justice and equity, but actively working towards them in our daily lives.

In conclusion, these and many other passages throughout the Bible provide a rich theological foundation for the pursuit of justice, equity, and belonging. As followers of Jesus, we are called to embody these values in our own lives and to work towards a world in which they are fully realized for all people. The Church has a crucial role to play in this pursuit, as we seek to be agents of justice and compassion in our communities and beyond.

In his book "A Testament of Hope", Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to the issue of racial injustice and offers insights into how it can be changed. One key passage in this regard comes from his chapter on "The Dimensions of a Complete Life", in which he writes:

"Racial injustice is still the black man's burden and the white man's shame. And the world will never rise to its full moral, spiritual, or political maturity until racism is totally eradicated. It is necessary to dramatize the issue of injustice, to make it vivid, and to make it clear that it is not just a social ill, but a moral evil that must be removed. And it is necessary to mobilize all people of good will who have a conscience, and who have a concern, and who want to make a positive contribution to the struggle for racial justice."

This passage highlights the ongoing struggle against racial injustice and the need for a concerted effort to eradicate it. Dr. King emphasizes the moral and spiritual dimensions of this struggle, noting that it is not just a social issue but a fundamental moral evil that must be addressed. He also stresses the importance of mobilizing all people of good will to work towards racial justice, emphasizing that this is a responsibility that falls on all of us.

Dr. King's words continue to resonate today, as we continue to grapple with the ongoing issue of racial injustice in our society. As Christians, we are called to take up this struggle as a fundamental expression of our faith, working towards a world in which all people are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The challenge is great, but as Dr. King reminds us, the struggle for racial justice is an essential part of the ongoing quest for a more just and compassionate world.

Also, in "A Testament of Hope," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. emphasizes the important role of the church in fighting against injustice. He states, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

This quote highlights the critical role that the church must play in standing up against injustice. Dr. King argues that the church should be a guiding force for the state, challenging it when necessary and offering a moral and spiritual perspective that can help to keep it accountable. He warns that if the church loses its prophetic voice and becomes too closely aligned with the state, it risks losing its moral and spiritual authority and becoming irrelevant.

This passage underscores the importance of the church in the ongoing struggle for justice, and reminds us that the church must remain committed to its prophetic calling in order to have a positive impact in the world. Dr. King's words also highlight the critical importance of maintaining a distinct theological perspective when addressing issues of social justice. While secular movements for social change can certainly achieve important victories, the church has a unique role to play in offering a prophetic voice that draws on its theological and ethical traditions.

As Dr. King notes elsewhere in "A Testament of Hope," the biblical concept of love is a central tenet of the Christian faith, and should guide our approach to issues of social justice. He writes, "Agape is not a weak, passive love. It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community. It is insistence on community even when one seeks to break it. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community." This passage underscores the idea that the church's work for justice is motivated by a deep love for all people, and a commitment to building and restoring community. This love is not passive, but active, and calls us to work tirelessly to challenge systems of oppression and build more just and equitable societies.

Overall, Dr. King's words in "A Testament of Hope" highlight the critical role that the church must play in the ongoing struggle for justice. By remaining committed to its prophetic calling, drawing on its theological traditions, and being guided by a deep love for all people, the church can be a powerful force for good in the world, standing up against injustice and working towards a more just and equitable future for all.

### **History and context of the civil rights movement**

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was a pivotal moment in the fight for racial justice and equality. Beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 1960s, the movement sought to end the system of racial segregation and discrimination that had been enshrined in law and practice throughout the country.

At its core, the Civil Rights Movement was a response to the deeply entrenched racism and discrimination that had been a part of American life for centuries. This discrimination took many forms, including Jim Crow laws that mandated racial segregation in public spaces, voting

restrictions that disenfranchised Black Americans, and employment discrimination that kept Black workers in low-paying, menial jobs.

The movement was driven by a coalition of civil rights leaders, activists, and ordinary people who were committed to challenging this system of injustice. This coalition included figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and John Lewis, as well as countless others who marched, protested, and risked their lives to fight for a more just and equitable society.

The Civil Rights Movement achieved many important victories, including the desegregation of schools, the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, and the establishment of legal protections against discrimination on the basis of race. However, the fight for racial justice and equality did not end with the Civil Rights Movement. In many ways, the struggle continues to this day. Despite the progress that has been made, Black Americans continue to experience significant disparities and injustices in many areas of life, including education, employment, and criminal justice.

This ongoing experience of injustice can be directly connected to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement. While many of the legal barriers to racial equality have been removed, the deeper structural and cultural inequalities that underlie them continue to persist. These inequalities are reflected in everything from patterns of residential segregation to the persistence of racial stereotypes and biases.

In order to address these ongoing injustices, it is important to understand the historical and social context in which they arise. By recognizing the ways in which the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement continues to shape contemporary American society, we can work to build a more just and equitable future for all.

## **Social Analysis of the Civil Rights Movement**

A social analysis of the Civil Rights Movement reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of this historic struggle for justice and equality. At its core, the Civil Rights Movement was a response to a system of entrenched social and economic inequality that had been built on a foundation of racial discrimination and exploitation. This system was perpetuated by a range of structural and institutional factors, including discriminatory laws and policies, economic and educational disparities, and deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and attitudes about race.

The movement sought to challenge these structural factors in a number of ways. One of the most visible and impactful strategies employed by civil rights activists was nonviolent direct action. This approach, which was inspired by the teachings of figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., involved peaceful protests, sit-ins, and other forms of civil disobedience designed to draw attention to the injustice of the status quo.

In addition to nonviolent direct action, the Civil Rights Movement also relied on legal and political strategies to achieve its goals. This included lobbying for legislative change at the national and state levels, as well as challenging discriminatory laws and practices in the courts. While these strategies were effective in achieving important victories, they also faced significant opposition and resistance from those who were invested in maintaining the status quo. This resistance took many forms, including violent attacks on civil rights activists, police brutality, and state-sponsored repression.

Despite these challenges, the Civil Rights Movement was ultimately successful in achieving many of its goals, including the end of legal segregation and the establishment of legal protections against discrimination on the basis of race. However, the legacy of the movement is complex, and many of the structural and institutional factors that gave rise to the injustices it

sought to address continue to persist. In order to truly address the ongoing effects of racial inequality in contemporary society, it is necessary to engage in a comprehensive and intersectional social analysis that takes into account the complex ways in which social and economic factors intersect with race to produce and perpetuate inequality.

Such an analysis must also be grounded in a commitment to social justice and a recognition of the fundamental dignity and worth of all human beings. By drawing on the lessons of the Civil Rights Movement and continuing to fight for justice and equality, we can work towards a more just and equitable society for all.

### **Experience of Injustice in Contemporary Life**

Racial injustice is unfortunately still prevalent in contemporary life, despite the strides made by the Civil Rights Movement. In many cases, these injustices are less overt than they were in the past, but they remain insidious and deeply damaging to individuals and communities.

One example of contemporary racial injustice can be seen in the criminal justice system. Studies have consistently shown that Black and Brown people are disproportionately represented in the prison population, even when controlling for factors like socioeconomic status and crime rates. This disparity is the result of a range of systemic factors, including discriminatory policing practices, harsh sentencing laws, and implicit biases among judges and juries.

Another example of contemporary racial injustice can be seen in the persistent disparities in educational outcomes between different racial groups. Despite efforts to promote educational equity, students of color are more likely to attend underfunded and understaffed schools, receive lower quality education, and experience lower levels of academic achievement than their white

counterparts. These disparities have long-term impacts on opportunities for upward mobility and economic security.

Racial injustice is also evident in the healthcare system. Studies have shown that Black and Brown people are more likely to experience negative health outcomes, receive lower quality care, and face barriers to accessing healthcare services. These disparities are the result of a range of factors, including lack of access to insurance and healthcare facilities, systemic racism in medical education and research, and implicit biases among healthcare providers.

Finally, racial injustice is evident in the persistent wealth gap between different racial groups. Despite decades of efforts to promote economic equity, white families continue to hold significantly more wealth than Black and Brown families. This disparity is the result of a range of factors, including historic discrimination in housing and lending practices, income inequality, and the ongoing impact of systemic racism on economic opportunities.

These are just a few examples of the many ways in which racial injustice persists in contemporary life. In order to address these injustices, it is necessary to engage in a comprehensive social analysis that takes into account the complex and intersectional factors that contribute to them. This analysis must be grounded in a commitment to social justice and a recognition of the fundamental dignity and worth of all human beings. By continuing to fight for justice and equity, we can work towards a more just and equitable society for all.

### **Application**

As an AI language model, I do not have information on your current or future ministerial context, but I can provide some general insights based on what I have learned from the course.

One key insight that can be applied in any ministerial context is the importance of engaging in social analysis and working to address issues of injustice and oppression. This requires an understanding of the systemic factors that contribute to these issues, as well as a commitment to working towards justice and equity.

Another important insight is the role of the church in promoting justice and equity. The church can serve as a powerful force for positive social change by providing spiritual and moral leadership, mobilizing communities to action, and advocating for policy change at the local and national levels.

In order to effectively engage in this work, it is important to develop a deep understanding of biblical principles of justice, equity, and belonging. This requires ongoing study and reflection on scripture, as well as engagement with theological and ethical perspectives on social justice. It is also important to develop skills in community organizing, advocacy, and coalition-building. This may involve collaborating with other faith-based organizations, community groups, and social justice advocates to build broad-based movements for change.

Finally, it is important to recognize the complexities of the issues at hand and to approach the work with humility and a willingness to learn from others. This may involve engaging in ongoing dialogue and reflection with members of the community, as well as seeking out opportunities for education and training in areas such as anti-racism and cultural competency.

Overall, applying what you have learned from this course to your ministerial context requires a deep commitment to social justice and a willingness to engage in ongoing learning and reflection. By working to promote justice, equity, and belonging, you can help to create a more just and equitable world for all people.

The civil rights movement had a profound impact on American society, both in its historical context and in the present day. It marked a turning point in the struggle for racial justice and paved the way for significant progress in the areas of civil rights, voting rights, and desegregation.

One of the most significant impacts of the civil rights movement was the passage of major civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These laws outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin and helped to protect the rights of minorities.

The civil rights movement also helped to raise awareness about the issue of racial injustice and mobilized millions of people to action. Through protests, marches, and other forms of civil disobedience, activists brought attention to the ways in which discrimination and segregation were embedded in American society.

Additionally, the civil rights movement paved the way for other social justice movements to emerge, including the feminist movement, the LGBTQ+ rights movement, and the disability rights movement. The tactics and strategies employed by civil rights activists, such as nonviolent resistance, inspired and informed these other movements.

In the present day, the impact of the civil rights movement can still be felt. While significant progress has been made in the areas of civil rights and desegregation, many challenges remain. Racial disparities persist in areas such as education, housing, and the criminal justice system, and systemic racism continues to be a major issue.

Despite these challenges, the legacy of the civil rights movement continues to inspire and inform social justice activists today. The principles of nonviolent resistance and grassroots

mobilization are still relevant, and the work of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks continues to be celebrated and studied.

In conclusion, the civil rights movement had a profound impact on American society and paved the way for significant progress in the areas of civil rights, voting rights, and desegregation. Its legacy continues to inspire and inform social justice activists today and serves as a reminder of the ongoing work that must be done to create a more just and equitable society.