

EDITORIAL

Essential ethics for those who dispense justice

Introduction: Ethics is a requirement for every citizen, and even more so for officials in charge of administering justice. Today, there is a tendency to give more credit to academic, professional and work degrees than to personal resumes. In other words, ethical and moral integrity is relegated to a secondary role in the face of the professional success of politicians, managers or public officials. In the context of the election of new justice operators, it is essential to keep in mind that ethical character is based on adherence to truth, justice and honesty. Decisions for or against a fair trial depend largely on the ethical and moral character of the judges.

What should be our position as citizens regarding the election of justice operators? It is our responsibility to be vigilant so that the exercise of their function adheres to the laws that govern the standards of ethical behavior of the judicial body according to the Constitution; and, above all, that we are clear about the ethical and moral demands of the values of the Kingdom of God. This implies remembering that God is interested in the moral integrity of all his creatures, and the correct application of justice because he is a just God, his actions are just and he demands that justice be done. For example, it is stated that the Lord is just, he loves justice and right, and that justice and right are the foundation of his throne (Ps. 11:7; 33:5; 89:14).

In order to make us reflect on the demands of imparting justice, we analyze the functions that Moses dictated to the judges in Israel. These judges were appointed after having been

wise, intelligent and expert people were found who accompanied Moses to lead the people. Although the context is different from ours, the demand to impart justice is transversal to all times and contexts. Moses gave the following instruction: “Hear every dispute between your brothers and judge fairly, both Israelites and foreigners. Do not be partial in judgment; consider the cause of the weak and the powerful alike. Do not be intimidated by anyone, for judgment belongs to God” (Deut. 1:16-17 NIV). We analyze these criteria to help us see what we should expect and demand from those who are in charge of imparting justice.

First, judges were to deal promptly with disputes between their brothers. In other words, judges are asked not to shelve complaints, lawsuits, or claims that arise among them. Moses specified the demand: “If there is a dispute between men and they come to court to be judged by the judges, the judges shall acquit the righteous and condemn the guilty” (Deut. 25:1). This command contrasts with the slowness and negligence that courts and judges incur in judging cases today. It is no secret that judges are often pressured by third parties to withhold sentences in order to evade justice, or to hinder the resolution of cases in favor of people who presume innocence in search of favors. The resolution of cases must be done with due attention to the benefit of those involved.

Second, judges must judge impartially. This means dispensing justice without any partiality toward their own people and in favor of foreigners. They must remember that they too sought justice when they were slaves and exploited in Egypt. And they must consider the cause of the weak and the powerful alike. That is, they should apply justice equally to all, especially in the face of the tendency to favor those who have power. The prophet Habakkuk exemplifies this tendency in his complaint before the Lord. He exclaimed: “Why do you make me see such iniquity? Why do you tolerate wickedness? The law is weakened and justice does not prevail. The wicked harasses the righteous, and justice is perverted” (Hab. 1:3-4).

The lack of impartiality is the Achilles heel of courts in Latin American society. Corruption has co-opted state institutions in many countries. The lack of justice is rooted in the absence of truth. Lies have shaped and corroded the cultural ethos (Octavio Paz, 1976). Impartiality in the application of justice is a great challenge for justice operators, and it is a citizen responsibility to make law and justice prevail. This implies rebuilding the place of truth within the family, school, church and society. It demands that all citizens form, model and act according to the truth in all fields of human endeavor.

Third, judges must not be intimidated when it comes to dispensing justice. The mandate exhorts judges not to allow their arms to be twisted in order to benefit people who, having been found guilty, seek to evade justice. Moses exhorts them not to be intimidated by anyone because the judgment is from God. That is, the sentence must be in accordance with God's laws given to the people, and based on truth, justice, and integrity. It should not be the result of their personal assessment, but based on the criteria of God's law and according to the objectivity of the facts. They should not change their verdict for any reason or influence of any person, be it the king, religious leaders, the powerful, or anyone else. In our context, judges are challenged to pass sentence based on justice according to the laws of the country, the verification of the facts, and their personal ethics as operators of justice.

Conclusion. Administering justice today requires judges to give the importance that personal ethics, commitment to the laws of the country and objectivity of the facts deserve. The impartiality that Moses demanded from the judges of his time should be distinctive of every justice operator. Is it possible to be an honest judge? Samuel, in a context of corruption, demonstrated this. He was found to be honest, impartial and attached to the truth. When asked if he had done anything wrong, the people answered: No! You never did anything wrong to us; you did not deceive us or steal from us (1 Sam. 3:19; 12-1-5). In a country that calls itself Christian, acting with integrity, truth and justice, should be part of the lifestyle of all citizens, and a fundamental requirement for justice operators.

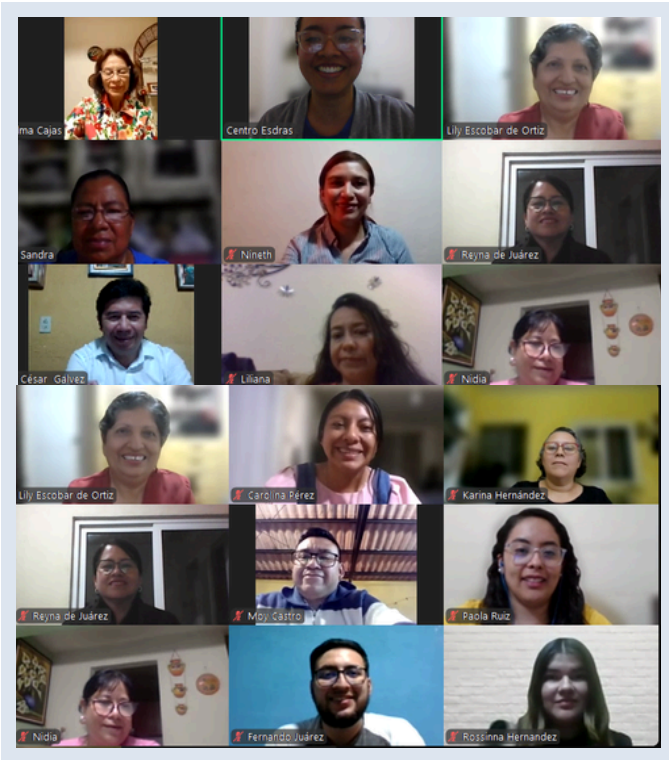
Israel Ortíz
Director, Centro Esdras

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Diplomas

Pedagogy of Jesus and Contemporary Education

In August we finished module 5, entitled “Contemporary Contributions of Pedagogy,” taught by our dear Lily Escobar de Ortiz. In addition, we had a visit from Thelma Cajas (the first person in the upper left corner of the photo) to share her testimony about the Inclusive School and her work there. These were weeks of much learning. The students are encouraged to use questions in their pedagogical methodology, just as Jesus did. We thank the Lord for his faithfulness to the students and teachers throughout the Diploma!



Diplomas

Upgrading church pastors

This course is held in Patzicía, Chimaltenango and is aimed at women and men who are part of the Pastors Network and Vida Association.

In July, Steffan Hochstrasser visited us from Switzerland to teach module 3: “Justice in the Bible and current challenges.” Key elements of God’s justice were studied in light of the Bible with the purpose of having pastors have a public impact in the name of Christ, in favor of promoting the common good in the local church and the community. In addition, Julianny Toalá taught the module “Conflict Resolution” and Paola de Ortiz shared the module “Use of digital media to enrich pastoral ministry.” We thank God for each student and teacher!



PROGRAMS

CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND FAMILY

Project: School for parents

We have been working on a project aimed at accompanying families in the crucial task of parenting. A series of modules have been worked on from the Biblical Worldview to guide them on connected, conscious and restorative parenting.

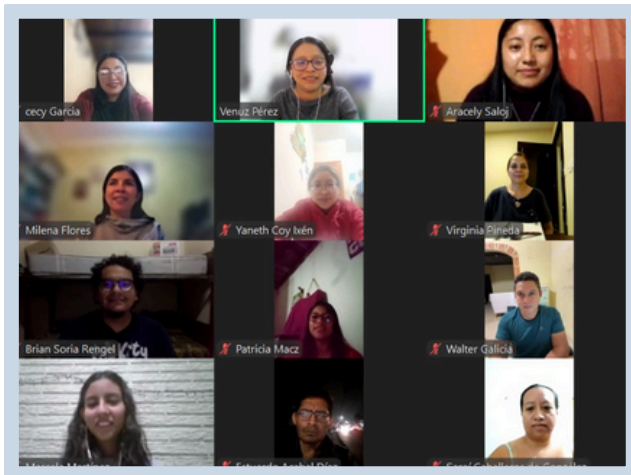
A group of families (6) from the village of El Cojobal, in Patzún, Chimaltenango, was chosen for the validation of this content. To date, three visits have been made with the following objectives: First, to form a small community of friendship and solidarity with these families in relation to raising their children and second, to offer training from the Word of God and encourage them from this perspective to review their parenting stories, their current methods and their challenges around this key task in their lives as Christian parents.

We are very grateful and praise God for the work team and the intercession team (GICE) who have worked and supported these initiatives. We have seen the Lord's support and have begun to see the fruits in family relationships and the personal growth of these parents and their children. Please continue to pray for this process that we hope to conclude in November.

Lily Escobar de Ortiz
Parenting School Coordinator



PROGRAMS

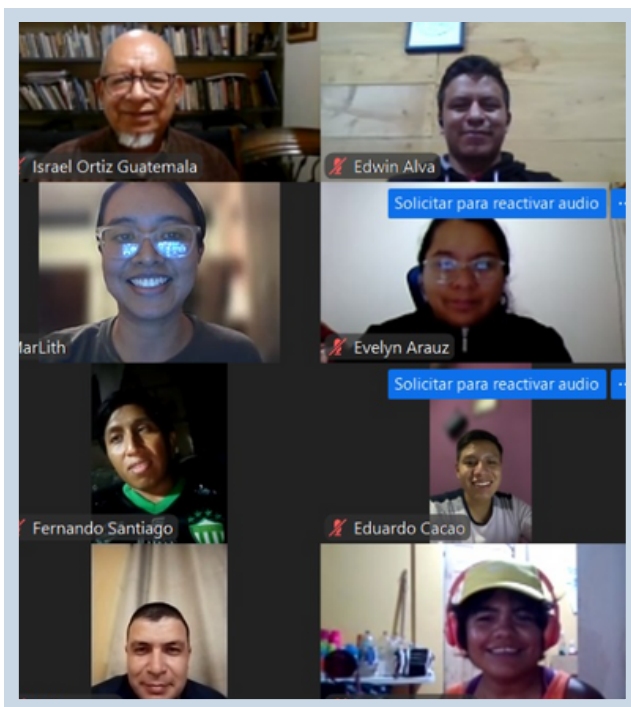


ENVIRONMENT
Diploma for Facilitators
"Hope for all Creation"

In September we began the Diploma with a group of 28 students from Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Guatemala. The Diploma aims to deepen the theological perspective of the Environment and how it relates to the Christian faith.

After an introductory session on the tools that will be used throughout the course, on September 18, the first thematic session was held: "God and creation / Created biodiversity and the current state of the environment" by Eng. Cynthia Carranza.

The diploma seeks to enable facilitators to make a difference in their communities and churches by promoting hope and care for our creation. We are grateful for the collaboration with Canadian Baptist Ministries that makes this diploma possible together with Centro Esdras!



Venuz Pérez López
Environment Program Coordinator

NEWS

The book “Rethinking the Church in the 21st Century” is distributed in San Salvador

In August, our director Israel Ortiz and his family had the opportunity to visit El Salvador and share with friends and leaders of the MUC university movement, who acquired copies of the book.

They also had the honor of visiting the Nazareth Baptist Church in Santa Tecla, where Pastor General Jorge Llanes received a copy of the book.

We heartily thank the Argueta family for their warm hospitality toward the Ortiz family, and our brother Tony Gonzales for his valuable help in distributing the book.

The book is also available through:

- Semillas de Nueva Creación- Director: Gerardo Reyes
- Iglesia Nazaret Centroamericana - Pastor: Carlos Galán



Participation in the Annual Training Program for Student Work (PAFOE) in Mexico



Israel Ortiz taught the subject "Discipleship and Pastoring" to the team of student advisors of the University Movement Student Fellowship of Mexico. There were four enriching virtual sessions for all participants.

We thank God for this opportunity and we hope that the model of Jesus will encourage university students to disciple according to his model!

We thank the PAFOE team and their Coordinator Hendi Espino, Regional Advisor of the Mexican

student Movement. We pray that the Lord continues to spread the gospel in Mexican universities!

COOPERATION WITH OTHERS MINISTRIES

Compassion Guatemala



In conversations with representatives of Compassion Guatemala, an agreement was reached that Centro Esdras will provide the diploma course “Mission in the way of Jesus and social challenges.” The diploma course is aimed at potential leaders of churches in the central region associated with Compassion. It will take place in the capital city from November 2024 to April 2025. We thank the Lord for this opportunity to work together with our brothers from Compassion in favor of the formation of youth.

GRATITUDE

- We thank the Lord for his faithfulness in the three Diplomas that we are currently offering: “Diploma in Pastoral Updating”, “Pedagogy of Jesus and Contemporary Education” and the “Diploma for Facilitators Hope for All Creation”. We give thanks for the life of each of the students and teachers.
- We thank the Lord for the different projects and goals in conjunction with other ministries and organizations.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Please pray for the development of the Strategic Plan.
- For the evaluation of the Center's theological proposal.
- For the new Diploma with Compassion. Let us pray for the teachers, the students and the dynamics of the diploma.
- For the course "Facilitators for the care of Creation", for Venuz López (Coordinator of the Environment Program), each facilitator and student.



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