



JUSTICE JOURNEY

for kids



Hyperlinks have been set on all URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF to easily access suggested videos and online resource.

A single list of all links is also available at:
covchurch.org/justicejourney/links.



The Evangelical Covenant Church

LOVE MERCY DO JUSTICE
MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES

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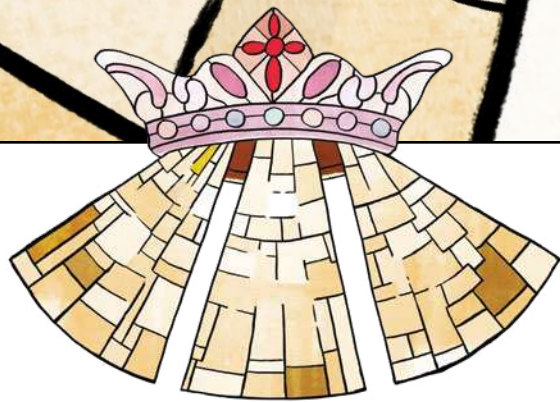
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WELCOME TO

Justice Journey for Kids!

FOR AGES 7-11

With the belief that children are fully a part of the body of Christ, and in the hope that the next generation will celebrate the diversity of God's kingdom and be empowered by the Spirit and the love of Christ to overcome the injustice inherent in a broken world, Make and Deepen Disciples and Love Mercy Do Justice have partnered to develop this resource.

Content

This resource includes seven modules with three sessions in each module for a total of 21 sessions.

MODULE 1: GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

Session 1: Creation and Diversity

Session 2: The Church and Diversity

Session 3: The Kingdom of Heaven and Diversity

MODULE 2: GOD OF JUSTICE

Session 1: Injustice

Session 2: God's Shalom

Session 3: How Sin Keeps Us from Loving
Our Neighbor and Hurts Our World

MODULE 3: IDENTITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER

Session 1: Made in God's Image

Session 2: Identity with God and Each Other

Session 3: Treating and Valuing Everyone Equally

FUTURE MODULES IN DEVELOPMENT

JESUS, THE ANSWER AND THE WAY

ONE BODY, MANY PARTS

JOURNEY OF BROKENNESS AND RECONCILIATION

JOINING WITH GOD TO DISRUPT INJUSTICE

Goal

Creating a resource that will advance children's journey to justice

Guiding Principles

TRUTH	BROKENNESS
God created a diverse world and called it good.	Individualism
Sin has resulted in systematic issues of brokenness.	Cultural captivity
This includes brokenness among ethnicities and cultures.	Structural barriers

Healing

ANSWER: Jesus brings restoration and reconciliation.

QUESTION: Will we accept Christ and Christ's way of living and giving across cultures and ethnicities?

CHALLENGE: Acknowledging that it's not easy living as a disciple of Christ.

Approach

DWELLING WITH GOD: Scripture introducing justice concepts.

DISCOVERY LEARNING: Exploration of concept utilizing active group discovery methods.

ASSURANCE: Christ came to make things right.

REFLECTION AND RESPONSE: How might we concretely live into what we have discovered?

CHALLENGE: Living and giving like Jesus. How might this be difficult?

CELEBRATION: Celebrating God and God's diverse creation. Giving thanks to God for what we have experienced. Asking God to help us live into what we have learned. Thanking God for creating a diverse world.



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 1

In this session, we will explore the biblical story of creation (Genesis 1) and examine the ways God created all people in his image. Each child will hear that they are made by God and loved by God; they will have opportunities to explore the ways that they themselves, as well as other people around them, reflect God's image through diversity.

KEY POINT: God purposefully created a diverse world and called it good.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

1

Creation and Diversity

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Sticky backed name tags
- Markers/coloring materials
- Drawing paper
- A Bible
- Magazine pages or printed images of several kinds of animals, plants, and land/water formations
- Pictures of cross-cultural creation stories, Christian based if possible, that show the first humans in a variety of ethnicities
- Index cards
- Play dough or clay, enough for each child to have a fist-sized lump
- Sticky notes
- Poster board
- Videos of families around the world:
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: [y2r2C26RCYs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2r2C26RCYs)
[youtube.com/watch?v=y2r2C26RCYs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2r2C26RCYs)
- ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH:
[PL8HqCrX4JFq28TVVxrVwZu0Iz2GpOa79p](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8HqCrX4JFq28TVVxrVwZu0Iz2GpOa79p)
[youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8HqCrX4JFq28TVVxrVwZu0Iz2GpOa79p](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8HqCrX4JFq28TVVxrVwZu0Iz2GpOa79p)
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PREPARATION

Write “God made...” on each name tag so kids can write their names. Put these, along with the markers, in the first place kids will see when they enter your environment.

Gather the magazine or printed images of animals, plants, and land/water formations.

Familiarize yourself with the creation story in the Bible you have chosen.

Set the creation storybooks and Bible in your storytelling area, a place where all the children can see and hear you.

Set out more markers or crayons and drawing paper in this area. If there is no table where you are telling the story, consider using hardbound books or clipboards to give kids a surface to draw on.

Write several words on index cards: love, family, truth, beauty, joy, imagination, bravery, hero. Set these aside for an activity with the play dough. Choose one or two words for the whole group to make if you have mostly younger kids.

Write a T-chart on the poster board: on one side, write “All People.” On the other side write “Some People.” Hang it on the wall on one side of your room.

Write characteristics on the sticky notes: have brown hair, wear glasses, think, plan, have a house, dream, need rest, have brothers and sisters, like pizza, have brown skin, need food, etc. Make sure to list things for all people that will help kids see that everyone reflects God’s image; and use specific things from your community that some people—those around you or those who are different from you—have, look like, or do.

Prepare to show one of the videos.

Have extra sticky backed name tags to use during closing.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: sticky backed name tags, prepared as described; markers

As kids arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them a name tag to personalize.

Spend time with them, asking questions like,

- How did you get your name?
- What is the best thing about being born in your birth month?
- What is your favorite food/game/YouTube channel/school subject?
- Who do you like to spend time with on the weekends?

The point is to show interest in the children as individuals, who are made and loved by God, and to notice their communities of family and friends—the people around them who also have been made and loved by God.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: several pictures for each category, such as animals, plants, natural water/land formations

Arrange kids into three groups and give each a set of pictures. Let them talk about what their pictures have in common and how they are different. Encourage each kid to contribute a thought to the group.

EXPLAIN: Your pictures all are of the same type of thing—animals, plants, the earth. But they have diversity: varieties in that type of thing. Talk in your groups about why diversity is so good in your category. What are you glad there are more than one type of animal/plant/nature?

Listen as kids talk, and repeat ideas that stand out: how boring it would be to have the same kind of flowers at your house as everyone else; how monotonous to eat the same kind of plant every meal for every day; how sad if everyone only had one kind of pet!

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, drawing paper, crayons, flat surfaces for kids to write on, other creation accounts or pictures

Gather kids in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible and to draw what they hear.

READ GENESIS 1:1-24.

ASK: What kinds of things has God made so far? Encourage them to share their pictures. Emphasize what each child noticed (not the quality of their drawing skills). "God has made a lot of things in our Bible story! He must be powerful and creative!"

EXPLAIN: Now we're coming to a really important part. Turn over your paper and put your markers down so you won't be distracted.

READ GENESIS 1:26-27.

ASK: What does it mean to be made in God's image?

Allow for answers, but recognize that most kids won't know what that means.

EXPLAIN: People were made special compared to all other creation. We are made to show what God is like. The rest of creation shows that God can do anything and make anything. But people are different. We can do a little bit of what God does. We can think because God thinks; we can love because God loves. We can plan and dream and decide. We can have a relationship with God, we can help and love other people and take care of creation, because God helps and cares for all of creation. Every single person is made to do these things—

that's what it means to be made in the image of God. This is God's gift to us, that we can reflect God's love to each other, and the rest of creation. That's amazing!

Bring out the pictures of creation/stories. No one knows what the first people looked like, sounded like, or smelled like. We don't know their skin color or hair color, but it's clear that all the variety we have in humanity are the results of God's plan for creation. Some people have brown eyes, some have blue eyes, some have green eyes. Some people have purple or yellowish eyes. There are short people and tall people; people with skin colors that are every shade from black to brown, golden, and cream. (Show pictures.)

No matter how they look, humans were created in diversity. Remember that word? It means variety. We love having diversity in nature because our lives are better for having cats and dogs and chinchillas and bearded dragons as pets; we like climbing mountains and swimming in lakes; we like strawberries and tomatoes and french-fried potatoes. Diversity in humanity makes our lives and our relationship with God better too. We're going to learn more about that today.

Review Activity

SUPPLIES: Prepared T-chart and sticky notes

Divide your group into two teams and distribute the sticky notes evenly into two piles. Line up the two teams at one side of your room, across from where the poster is hung and give each team a pile of sticky notes.

The first player on each team will run to the poster, read their note, and stick it on the side they believe describes that characteristic of humanity. Then each player runs back and tags the next player in line. The game is played until one team runs out of sticky notes first.

Gather the whole group around the poster and read each note. Ask if they think all the notes are on the correct sides, and change any that need to be changed.

EXPLAIN: Some of these things—like riding a bike or having blue eyes—are traits or abilities that describe some people. That’s diversity. But other things—like being able to make plans or needing rest—are common to all people. That’s because all people, no matter what they look like or sound like, are made in the image of God. All of us are important, special, unique, and loved because God made us and loves us. And we can love others because we are made in the image of God.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: prepared index cards, play dough

Give each child some play dough and an index card. Invite them to use the play dough to make something that shows or represents the idea on the card. If time allows, let kids swap cards to show even more the differences in how we see/reflect those ideas.

EXPLAIN: Turn to a friend, read their card, and check out what they made. Would you have made the same thing? Why or why not? We need other people to help us reflect what that idea is; all of our sculptures show something a little different and help us as a group to understand more about the diversity of God’s creation. God made each of us to reflect God’s love and show what God is like. Every single person on earth who has ever lived and ever will live is made unique by God. Each of us can share God’s love in a unique way.

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: A selected video, a media player

Gather your group around the media player and show the selected video.

ASK:

- How did the people in this video look like you? How were they different?
- Did you see any different styles of clothing, houses, school, or food than yours?
- What do you think those different things tell us about God’s image?
- How were the people in this video like you/your family/your friends?
- What do you think those same things tell us about God’s image? Why did God make us both different and the same?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Sticky backed name tags, markers

Set out blank name tags and markers. On each tag, direct kids to write something like: God made you! God loves you! You are special! You are loved!

Encourage kids to think of a place to put these, or a person to give them to, who is both different and the same as they are—someone who shows God’s image in a different way than they do. This could mean leaving one at the grocery store cart corral in your neighborhood to be found by a stranger or giving one to a neighbor or younger sibling. Guide children to be creative in their planning.

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Thank God for the diversity in creation and among humans. Ask for God’s help so we can see how others reflect God’s love.



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 2

In this session, we will read the account of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-12. This passage is commonly regarded as the birth of the church. We will discover why diversity in culture, ethnicity, gifts, and roles in the church are vital to its expression as the body of Christ on earth. Each child will hear about different cultural and denominational practices in churches worldwide and affirm their own place in the local church.

KEY POINT: All are welcomed by Jesus into the church.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

The Church and Diversity

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Markers/coloring materials
- Drawing paper
- Human Bingo page, one for each child, like this one (or make your own) scholastic.com/content/dam/parents/migrated-assets/blogs/body-text-images-5/meet-new-friend-bingo-game.png
- A Bible
- Maps:
Known world at the time of Christ generationword.com/framework_images/81_map_lands_pentecost.gif
Modern-day map of where the countries mentioned in Acts 2 google.com/maps/place/Mediterranean+Sea/@36.6223748,-2.9445746,4z/
- Provide a set of the above maps for each pair of kids.
- Magazine pages or printed images of several different church buildings and services. If your church has access to missionary/outreach/evangelism magazines or bulletins, consider using these.
- Poster board, glue sticks, and scissors

- Uncooked spaghetti noodles
- Small marshmallows
- Paper plates
- Computer, tablet, or smart TV
- Video of people singing praise from around the world.
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: S-x7Yu-3cF8
[youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8)
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PREPARATION

Make copies of the Human Bingo page.

Familiarize yourself with Acts 2:1-12. Make sure you can point out where the mentioned countries would be located on the ancient world map as well as on the modern map. (You may need to practice some of the countries' names out loud a few times.)

Make copies of the two maps.

On the poster board, draw a large outline of a cross for kids to fill with pictures of the diverse churches.

Use the masking tape to mark out a large rectangle on the floor of your room. Make it large enough for your whole group to stand inside.

Optional: arrange a Skype or FaceTime call with a church who is different from your congregation in some way—ethnically, linguistically, generationally, or geographically (urban vs. rural, portable vs. stationary, etc.).

Welcome

As kids arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them some markers and drawing paper.

Ask them to draw the best part of being at church.

Spend time with them, asking:

- Do you remember (last year's VBS, being in the preschool class, etc.)?
- I remember the first time you came to church/when we first met. I felt ...
- What is your favorite thing we do here at (Sunday school/children's church/ kids' club)?
- Have you ever visited a different church? What was the church or experience like?

Prompt kids to share positive memories and experiences with your church and other worship gatherings they may have attended.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Human Bingo sheet for each person, markers, small prizes (optional)

Hand each child a sheet and encourage them to ask friends to sign a square that could apply to them. If you have a very small group, you could do this in the beginning of church when parents are doing drop off and there's a larger cross-section of your community. Or consider printing it in your bulletin/ order of service for adults to work on as well, to show the kids they support their learning.

You could offer a small prize to the person who gets bingo or who fills their sheet completely.

EXPLAIN: We have a lot of diversity right here in this church! Do you remember that diversity means variety and difference? I'm glad we have lots of different kinds of people in our church, because that reminds us that God loves all different kinds of people. What might it look like if only one kind of person—who liked the color red, or ate pancakes every day for breakfast, or hated mornings—were allowed in the church? Take a minute and talk with your neighbor about how our church would be different if that was so.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, maps, markers

Gather kids in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible.

READ ACTS 2:1-12

Go slowly so that kids can hear all the different places people came from at Pentecost. Use the ancient map and the modern map to show these places. Mark each location with a marker.

Pair the kids up and give each pair a set of maps and two markers. Encourage them to work together and mark the places on the maps as you read.

When you finish, explain: This is a really big story! Before this story, people had to go to one kind of place to worship God—the Temple. The priests leading the services spoke only one language, and only one kind of service happened there. If you didn't speak that language, or didn't understand that service, you couldn't worship God with God's people.

In fact, the reason all those people from all those countries and cities were gathered in Jerusalem is because of a big festival—it was like a worship holiday. People traveled from all over to worship God at the Temple and celebrate what God had done for his people.

But when God sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus's followers, God was doing something new. God was saying that from now on, people can worship God anywhere they are. They don't have to become a citizen of a specific place or learn a new language or travel to a far country to worship God; God wants a loving relationship with all people—that's why Jesus came to earth. Peter and Jesus's other followers now had power and boldness to travel and tell everyone the good news about Jesus and that God had given us a new way to worship.

This new way to worship and know God swept everywhere in the world. On our maps, all the

countries and cities that our Bible story mentioned seem clumped up in one tiny spot, but if you look at the ancient world map, it looks like God wanted to have a relationship with people literally all over the world. The Romans, who were in charge when this part of the Bible was written, hadn't explored the whole planet, just some areas in Asia, Africa, and Europe. But the roads and harbors they built made it possible for the disciples to tell others outside of Palestine about Jesus.

That's why people call this passage in Acts 2 "the birth of the church," because it's when God let everyone know that the new plan for worship and relationship was for everyone. From there, people who worship God and followed Jesus began to gather wherever they were to celebrate what God had done through Jesus. Those groups were called churches—and they still are!

DISCUSS

- What do you think it means that God planned to reach out to the whole world with the good news of Jesus?
- What kinds of people do you think God wanted to be part of these new churches?
- Who does God welcome into the church?

Review Activity

SUPPLIES: prepared poster board, glue sticks, scissors, and magazine pages or printed images of several different church buildings and services. (If your church has access to missionary/outreach/evangelism magazines or bulletins, please consider using these.)

Invite kids to look through the magazine pictures or printed images and talk about what kinds of churches they see there. What are the buildings like? What are people wearing? What languages are their signs/lyrics in?

When kids gravitate toward a certain picture, encourage them to cut it out carefully and glue it onto the poster board, around the cross outline. Try to fill up all the negative space around the cross outline.

EXPLAIN: We are all different kinds of people in different kinds of churches. God planned for diversity when he started the church, but we all have one thing in common. Guide kids to talk about ways that churches worship God that are the same everywhere and different everywhere.

DISCUSS

- What are some different ways we can worship God? (Option: Do this as a charades game.)
- Why is it good that Jesus can be worshiped in many ways?
- What might we learn from the way others worship Jesus?
- Do you think God delights in the many ways people worship? Why?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: uncooked spaghetti noodles, small marshmallows, Bible

Divide into groups of three and give each small group several noodles and marshmallows. Tell them their goal is to build the biggest strongest structure they can build with those materials.

When all the teams have made their structures, remark on what is the same and what is different about each one.

EXPLAIN: When God began to build a church with people who would tell the whole world about the good news, he used a lot of different kinds of people so there would be a lot of different kinds of churches. They all do some things the same—worship God,

help each other, tell people about the good news—but they all do it a little differently. How is that like your marshmallow buildings?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27.

ASK: What role do they play in the body of Christ? Do they help others? Do they love to share answers and talk about the Bible? Are they artistic or athletic and able to create movies or games to help us understand God and others better?

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: a media player

If you've planned a Skype or FaceTime session with another church, do that now.

ASK the other group:

- Where they are located? What kind of place do they meet in? What language do they speak?
- What is their favorite part of worshiping together?
- What is their hardest part about going to church?
- What is their favorite Bible story or song?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: the selected video, a media player

Play the video and ask kids to reflect on what is the same and different about these churches and their own. Say, "I'm glad that church is a place where all different people can worship God."

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Thank God for the diversity in churches and the way God planned for the good news to spread to all people. Ask for God's help so we can see how others in the church—locally and globally—and can work together to show all people the good news.



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 3

In this session we will focus on the marriage feast in Revelation 19:5-9 as God's ultimate goal of reconciling all people. Our diversity will not be erased but will be used as it was always intended: to show the goodness and creativity and splendor of God.

KEY POINT: Diversity demonstrates the goodness, creativity, and splendor of God.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

The Kingdom of Heaven and Diversity

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Drawing paper and markers
- Paper bowls, one per child
- Plenty of cheese balls (for playing with and a few for eating!)
- A Bible, preferable NIV version
- A tablecloth
- Dishes for place settings, napkins, silverware, a vase of flowers, and small candles
- Paper plates
- Glue sticks and scissors
- Magazines or grocery store flyers
- Picture books from around the world and your local newspapers
- Video: Travis's Feast
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: u3-Px7JqAow
[youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow)
- Blank cards
- Stickers
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

Mark the Bible in the following places:
Revelation 19:5-9; 21:1-4; 22:1-5.

Read the passages so you're comfortable with the language. Consider using different voices as you read so that kids get a sense of who is speaking during the Revelation songs. You might want to invite a friend with a different speaking voice or accent to help you.

Look through the picture books and your newspapers for people who have various jobs, wear different items of clothing, or are eating food.

Watch the video of Travis's feast so you're ready to discuss it.

If you have a community meal, a small group, or a church supper coming up, be prepared to make invitations with the kids so these can be used to welcome your community to your local version of the great feast!

Welcome

As kids arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them some markers and drawing paper. Ask them to draw pictures of the biggest celebration they have ever been invited to—a wedding or anniversary party, a birthday or quincenera or bar mitzvah.

Spend time with them, asking:

- What was this party celebrating?
- Who was there?
- Who was the guest of honor?
- What did you do? What kinds of foods did you eat?
- What did you wear?

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: paper bowls, cheese balls

Divide your group into pairs and line the pairs up facing each other, around four feet apart. Put some cheese balls into bowls and hand them to the partners on the left. Give empty bowls to the partners facing them. On "Go," the partners with the empty bowls must hold the bowls in their mouths by biting the rim. The partners with the cheese balls must try to toss them into the empty bowls from their position four feet away. The pair with the most cheese balls in the far bowl wins.

Explain: This would be a terrible way to feed people at a feast! It would be messy and inefficient and just plain unfair! What if there were people who couldn't hold a bowl in their mouths, or who couldn't move their arms to toss their partners the snacks? Some people would end up with full bowls and many others would go away hungry. What would be a good way to serve all kinds of people at a big party? Talk with your partner about it.

Discuss a fair way to share resources and honor party guests.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: a Bible marked as described earlier, tablecloth, and table settings

Gather kids in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible.

EXPLAIN: We've heard about the beginning of history, when God created our beautiful and diverse world; and we've talked about the middle of history, when Jesus sent out his friends to make disciples from every country and tribe on earth, and that includes us! Now, we'll talk about the end of history.

Remember that God started everything by creating the earth and people, and then people messed up? Ever since then, people have been divided by the things that should unite us. Instead of appreciating how God made everyone different, some people decided that our diversity was a bad thing. People have even gone to war and killed other humans because they didn't like the color of their skin, or eyes, or the way they talked, or the style of their church. Even more than that, people all over the world hurt each other with words and actions because they are afraid of how we are different. That is called racism and prejudice. Many people are sad and hurting, or angry and hateful, because of those things. Do you think God is happy with that situation?

Allow for responses.

EXPLAIN: No, I don't think God is happy about that either. God is not part of racism or prejudice at all. God is the one who made us all different in the first place. Diversity was God's own idea!

God sent Jesus to save all people from all places, all over the world. We know that. But what you might not know is that God's plan doesn't stop there.

At the very end of the Bible, a man named John saw a wonderful dream from God and wrote it down. In this dream, John saw what would happen at the end of time, when Jesus comes back to earth to show all people that he loves them and rescues them. John saw the big throne room of heaven, where God rules as a king over all the earth. Here's what he saw.

READ REVELATION 19:5-9.

EXPLAIN: So in heaven people of all countries and tribes and languages were all worshipping God together. They were wearing the same white clothes that reminded everyone of the way they followed Jesus. The only thing that was different about them was the way God had made them: individual and unique, diverse and special. But they were all following Jesus and praising God. And, the end of that, verse 9 says they were all invited to a feast!

Begin to spread out the tablecloth and set it with the place settings, flowers, and candles.

EXPLAIN: My table here isn't big enough for that many people. But do people who are at war, or who hate each other or are terrified of each other, sit down at a big feast together? No. A feast means a celebration with people who love each other! So, at the end of history, people of all countries and colors will sit down at a table together, at the same feast.

The most important guest will be God, who will be at the feast. The Bible says this about what it will be like.

READ REVELATION 21:1-4.

EXPLAIN: God will end all fighting and war; there will be no more death or sadness or pain. Do you think there will be things like racism or prejudice there?

Allow for answers.

EXPLAIN: No, of course not! The end of John's dream, what God showed him, goes like this.

READ REVELATION 22:1-5.

EXPLAIN: A garden and rivers? That sounds like creation, like where God made all people in the first place! We will all be one people—God's people. Just as God made us all different in the beginning at creation, God will rule over all the different kinds of people as our king at the end of time.

DISCUSS

- Why do you think God showed John this dream of all people from everywhere worshipping God together?
- Why do you think that God wants to throw a big feast for all God's people? Do you think there are people who would not want to come? Why or why not?

Review Activity

SUPPLIES: paper plates, glue sticks, scissors, grocery store flyers or magazines

Give each child a paper plate, and lay out the other supplies. Encourage them to cut out and glue the food pictures on their plate to create their idea of a feast. As they do this, talk about the Bible lesson:

These feasts all look different! Why do you think having lots of different foods at a feast would be a good idea?

Who would you like to share a feast with? Why?

When the activity is finished, set the plates aside to dry and guide the group to work together to clean up.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: picture books showing people from all over the world as well as your local newspaper

Look through the books and newspaper with the group. Point out all the people doing, wearing, and eating different things. Play a game similar to “I’m going on a picnic.”

To begin say, “I’m going to a feast and I’m inviting someone who (name an action, food, or clothing from the pictures).” For example, “I’m going to a feast and I’m inviting someone who eats tortillas.” The child next to you must say, “I’m going to a feast and I’m inviting someone who eats tortillas and (their own choice.) Continue this way until either kids start forgetting the previous answers or until everyone has had a couple of turns.

EXPLAIN: Since we know that God has invited everyone from every place on earth to his great feast, it seems silly to exclude people now.

Would you be whiny and rude to someone who was

a guest at your holiday meal? How can we be kind to people now, and treat everyone with respect, as if we were getting ready to sit down to a feast together?

What should we do when we see others being treated unfairly or unkindly because of their differences? As fellow future guests at the table, how can we stick up for them?

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: a media player

Gather the kids around the video player and play the video: Travis’s Feast

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: u3-Px7JqAow
[youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow)

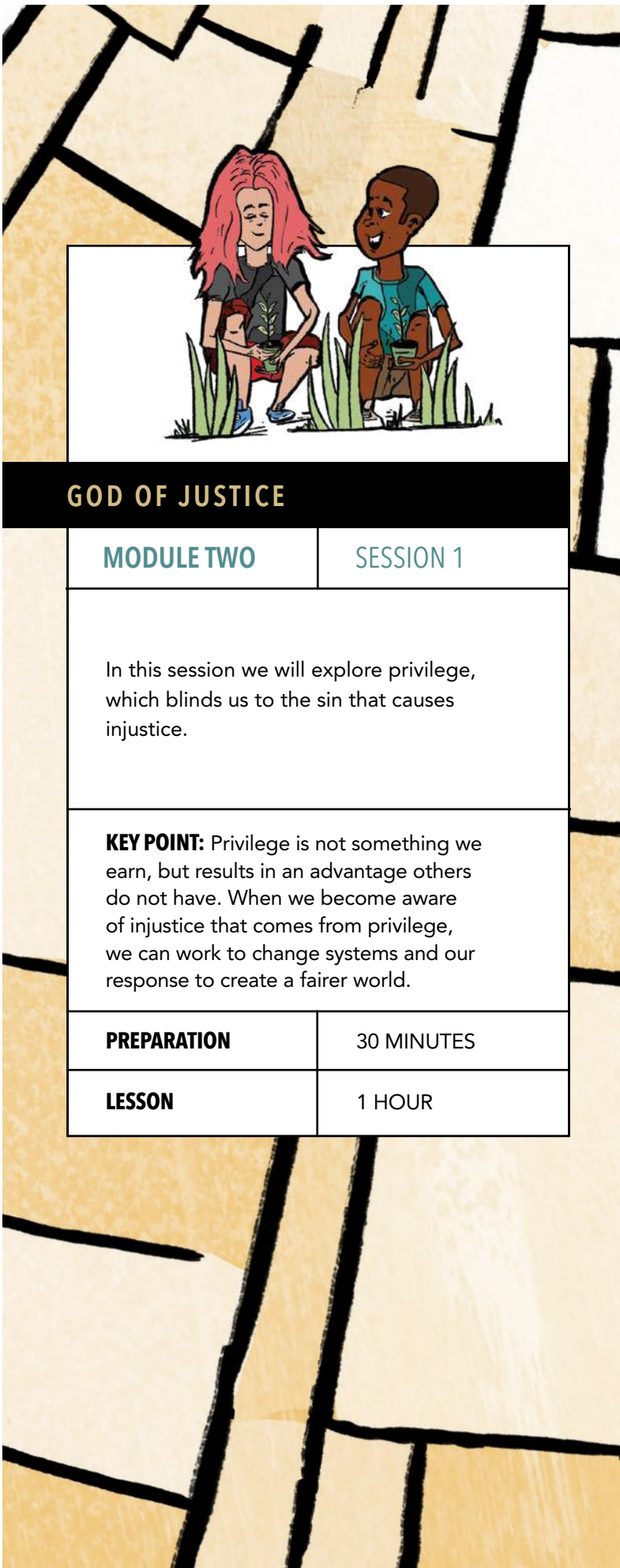
DISCUSS: What was most noticeable about the feast? Who was there? What were they saying? Was any one missing? Would you like to go to that kind of a feast?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: blank cards, coloring materials, stickers

Invite kids to use these supplies to make invitations to whatever local gathering you’ve decided on. As they decorate, ask them for ideas of who your church could invite to this feast—such as people they don’t normally see at church. Collect these cards and distribute them as you can.

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **Ask God to help us respond in a loving way to others rather than mean ways because someone is different from us. Give thanks to God for making us different and helping us to celebrate our differences.**



GOD OF JUSTICE

MODULE TWO

SESSION 1

In this session we will explore privilege, which blinds us to the sin that causes injustice.

KEY POINT: Privilege is not something we earn, but results in an advantage others do not have. When we become aware of injustice that comes from privilege, we can work to change systems and our response to create a fairer world.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

Injustice

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Drawing tools or craft items
- Butcher paper or white board
- Waste basket
- Building blocks
- Toothpicks, playdough
- Video:
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: M\$JEw3yfVgw
[youtube.com/watch?v=QmnJJGQ_gDw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmnJJGQ_gDw)
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at:
covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

Write the following words on a board or large pieces of paper and post in the room: Privilege and Injustice.

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, what they are looking forward to.

It may be helpful for some children to have drawing or craft items available to help them process their thoughts.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Building blocks, blindfolds

OBJECTIVE: Build a bridge.

You can do this in pairs or threes. Give some groups building blocks and other groups toothpicks and playdough. Tell the groups they have five minutes to build as strong a bridge as possible. After the groups are finished, test the strength of each bridge, using a heavy rock to test the toothpick bridges and a smaller rock to test the block bridges.

DISCUSS

- How did you feel about this challenge?
- What wasn't fair about it?
- How could it have been more fair?

EXPLAIN: What you just experienced is injustice.

ASK: What advantage did some groups have over other groups? Could everyone have built a strong bridge?

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to talk about fairness. In the Bible, this idea is called justice. When things are not fair, it's called injustice.

Injustice is a lack of fairness, mistreating others, taking what does not belong to us, or making rules and laws that exclude and hurt people. Injustice is the result of sin, and it can create unfair privileges in our world. Injustice involves taking something from

someone—something they deserve or that God desires for them. Injustice includes stealing, such as taking something you did not earn, or creating laws or rules that hurt some people and help others. The root cause of injustice is sin.

The rules that give some people an advantage over others is what you experienced today.

ROUND 2

This time each group will use the blocks to build a tower. If anyone in your group has blue eyes or blond hair, they will not participate. They will just watch the others. The rest of the group will work to build a tower as tall as they can with the blocks.

If anyone asks why some members of the group can't participate, tell them it is because of their physical traits.

If they invite their left-out friends to help, that is okay.

DISCUSS

- How did it feel to be left out because of the way you looked?
- Was this fair?
- How does this happen today? Is that fair?

Bible Time

READ

"The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him" (**PROVERBS 11:1**).

"You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (**AMOS 5:11-12**).

“Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless” (**EXODUS 22:21-22**).

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?” (**ISAIAH 10:1-3**).

DISCUSS

ASK: Have you ever seen someone left out because of how they look? What happened?

EXPLAIN: Even though Jesus forgives our sin, we still mess up. Sometimes we choose selfishness, and we forget about sharing. Sometimes we use what we have just for ourselves. Sometimes we even hurt or bully other people so we can have an advantage over them.

EXPLAIN: Jesus invites us to love others like he does. We look out for other people, especially those who are left out or overlooked. Even though we do not always act like it, we are a family, people created by God in God’s image. We belong to each other, and Jesus tells us, “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you” (**MATTHEW 7:12**).

We are all connected people. As followers of Jesus, we are called to make sure no one is left out or mistreated. We cannot just be concerned about ourselves or our friends and family. God calls us to care about all people—especially those who are left out.

ASK: Can you think of a time when you may have overlooked or excluded someone else? How do you think this person felt? What could you have done differently?

Video Activity

Watch the video:

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: QmnJJGQ_gDw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmnJJGQ_gDw

ASK: How did the boys in this video put someone else’s interest ahead of their own? How could you practice that kind of generosity in your own lives?

Application Activity

Put a wastebasket in front of the room. Seat children in rows of chairs (a front row, second row, third row, fourth row, etc.) with space behind each row. If you have just a few children, seat them in chairs in a line, one behind the other. Give each child a crumpled up piece of paper.

The object of the game is to see which row can get the most wads of paper in the basket. If you have a smaller group of children lined up behind each other, give each child three pieces of crumpled up paper.

EXPLAIN: The purpose of this exercise is to toss your piece of paper into the wastebasket. Everyone must stay seated in their chair, and you must throw your own wad of paper. When I count to three, everyone will try to throw their paper into the basket.

You can see a video of this here:

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: 2KlvmuxzYE&t=28s

[youtube.com/watch?v=2KlvmuxzYE&t=28s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KlvmuxzYE&t=28s)

DISCUSS

Once the game concludes, ask the students:

- In the back row(s): how do you feel about this game?
- In the middle rows: was playing a game where everyone didn’t have equal access make it less enjoyable?
- In the front row: Does it feel as good to win the game once you realize how unfair it was?

EXPLAIN: "Privilege" is an advantage that is available only to a particular person or group of people, usually because of injustice.

ASK:

- Was this game fair?
- Did the people in the front row do anything to earn the advantage they had in the game?
- Was it wrong for them to sit in the front row?
- What should we do if we notice we have an unfair advantage in a situation?

Closing Activity

ASK: How could this game have been more just/fair for everyone? (For example, put the chairs in a circle with basket in the middle.)

EXPLAIN: It's important for us to be aware when we have privilege over others and to work to make sure life is fair for everyone.

Jesus instructs us to love one another.

Sin makes us self-centered. It makes us want to focus our efforts on getting rather than on giving. Sometimes we can be so caught up in getting what we want that we forget about our neighbors and those who are poor and in need around us. The Bible instructs us to care for the poor and needy, but sin can blind us to their needs and the ways injustice has given us certain privileges.

Living like Jesus with a focus on giving makes us aware of the privileges we have and the need to make sure life is fair for others and to give to others an equal opportunity.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4.

ASK: How does this passage show Jesus putting our needs before his own?

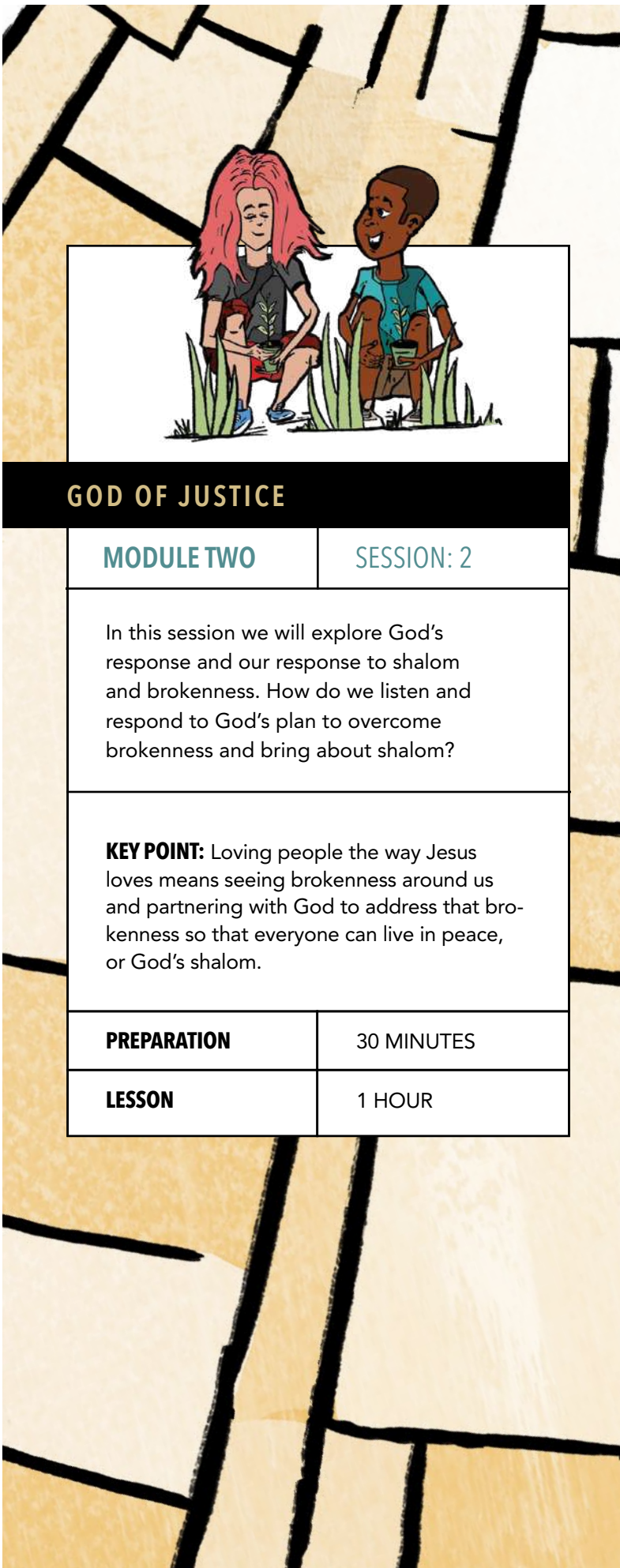
Ask students to make a plan to put someone else's needs before their own interests this week.

Share vulnerably to explore and make a plan.

ASK:

- What does it feel like to belong to a family, a group of friends, or a team?
- Who do you belong to?
- What does it feel like to be left out or overlooked?
- How can we make sure we don't make other people feel like this?
- How can we respond with love when we see other people who are left out or overlooked?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **Ask God for forgiveness. Thank God that we are forgiven. Ask for help in focusing on giving and treating others with respect and love.**



GOD OF JUSTICE

MODULE TWO

SESSION: 2

In this session we will explore God’s response and our response to shalom and brokenness. How do we listen and respond to God’s plan to overcome brokenness and bring about shalom?

KEY POINT: Loving people the way Jesus loves means seeing brokenness around us and partnering with God to address that brokenness so that everyone can live in peace, or God’s shalom.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #



God's Shalom

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Butcher paper or a white board
- Charade cards with words on them (see below)
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

Write the following words on a board or large pieces of paper and post around the room: Injustice, Privilege, Sin, Shalom, Brokenness.

Make charade cards with these words on them: Homelessness, Hunger, Someone getting into trouble at school for something they didn’t do, Sickness, Someone who doesn’t have a lunch, Someone being made fun of because of how they look, Someone being bullied

There are also several “explain” portions in this session. Children could volunteer to read those sections.

FOR LEADERS

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”
MATTHEW 25:35-40)

God identifies with the poor. In fact, God says that when we neglect, disrespect, or forsake the least of these, we are doing the same to God. Referencing passages like Proverbs 14:31 and Proverbs 17:5, biblical scholar Elsa Tamez says, “God identifies himself with the poor to such an extent that their rights become the rights of God himself.” God makes no such proclamations about any other group. God’s intimate identification with the oppressed is an irrevocable sign of his particular union with “the least of these.”

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, what they are looking forward to.

It may be helpful for some children to have drawing or craft items available for them to process their thoughts.

Review

Remind children of the key concepts from last week:

- **INJUSTICE:** When something isn’t fair, resulting from privilege or the sin of selfishness and oppression
- **SIN:** Anything that is against God’s will
- **PRIVILEGE:** An advantage that is gained because of injustice, or the exclusion of others. This advantage is only available to a particular person or group of people.

ASK: How did you put someone else’s needs before your own this past week? How did you feel when you did that? Remind them that this is what the gospel calls us to do, and that God was pleased with them.

EXPLAIN: Last week we learned that sin causes us to think more about ourselves than others. God created enough good things to meet everyone’s needs, but not enough for everyone’s greed. Injustice, which is the result of sin, keeps people from experiencing what God desires for them. It also causes division. God is grieved by injustice and cares about how we respond to it when we see it. Seeking justice is biblical—it is how Christians join Jesus in repairing what is broken. Today we will talk what it means to share what we have. This is not just something we do to be kind—we share because we are followers of Jesus.

Bible Time

READ ACTS 2:42-47.

EXPLAIN: **God wants every person to have what they need.** That was always God’s plan from the beginning. But sometimes we become selfish, and we don’t share with others. When we have more than we need but do not share, some people have to go without. That is not God’s plan for his creation.

ASK: What is the difference between a want and a need? What wants can you name? What needs do you have? Can you think of a time you had to go without something you really needed? How did that feel?

EXPLAIN: In Acts we see the believers gathering together and sharing everything they had. As we grow closer to God, we become more willing to share what God has given us. When we refuse to share God's blessings with others, we disobey God and Scripture.

ASK: What is brokenness? (Separation, something that is no longer whole or complete, something divided and different from what God wants.) What causes brokenness? Sin that results in injustice and greed. God provides enough for everyone's needs, but our greed prevents us from meeting the needs of others.

Application Activity

- Think about a place where you see people in need—perhaps they are hungry or don't have a place to live. Do you know anyone in your church, school, or neighborhood who does not have enough (warm clothing for the winter, food to eat, or a place to live)? Make a list of the places that you see people who are in need, and if you happen to know their name, write that down too.
- Ask God how you, your family, and your church might be able to help people who are in need. Write down a prayer for them.
- Did you know one of the ways that God speaks to us is by giving us ideas and visions as we pray? Make a list of the ideas that came into your mind as you prayed.
- Draw a picture of you and your community helping someone in need, doing one of the things you heard from God.

Bible Time

READ 1 JOHN 3:16-18.

ASK:

- How do you know when someone is in need? When you see someone in need how do you feel? How do you think God feels?
- In the previous activity, what did you draw? Why?
- How is your picture connected to the Scripture passage we read?

Application Activity

Using the charade cards you prepared before class, give one card to each child who is willing to act out the concepts. When the group guesses the word on the card, ask, "What would Jesus do for that person? What could we do?"

DISCUSS: Sometimes we see people who are hurt or in need and we don't respond. What could we do to become more aware of the things that are happening around us? How could we respond?

EXPLAIN: God sees the pain and heartache of those who are in need and God expects us to see this pain too. God suffers alongside of those in need and calls us to do the same—to stand in solidarity with or stand up for someone who is suffering. God also calls us to defend their rights, dignity, and humanity.

God's shalom means peace, harmony, prosperity, and wholeness that encourages us to give back—to generously repay something in some way. God acts in Jesus Christ to bring shalom in every part of creation. Jesus wants the best for everyone.

READ JOHN 10:10; 14:27.

Application Activity

PARTNERING WITH GOD: It takes courage to give back and share Jesus's love with others.

Ask students to pair up and act out these scenarios.

Or read each illustration out loud and ask students how they would respond.

- Your friend tells you they have a secret. They tell you their family does not have enough food to eat at home. You notice that every day when your friend comes to school, they seem sad and unable to focus on their work. What can you do?
- Some kids at the lunch table were making fun of your friend's clothes because they wear the same clothes several times a week and their clothes are dirty. What can you do?
- Your friend tells you that he and his family got kicked out of their house because his mom lost her job. They are now staying in a shelter some nights and sleeping in their car other nights. What can you do?
- For Christmas you got a brand-new winter coat. You love your new coat and wear it all the time. You have an old coat that still fits, but you don't wear it anymore. On New Year's Day, you are in the car with your parents and you see people out on the street asking for food and money. You see two kids around your age who look very cold. What can you do?
- Your friend tells you that their parents are getting deported for an immigration violation. Your friend was born in the U.S. and has never been to Honduras before. They only speak English, and they are afraid. Their family doesn't have much money, and they don't know what to do. What can you do?

DISCUSS

We love others because Christ first loved us. When we see people in need God calls us to respond:

- We are called to express our faith in love.
- We do not turn a blind eye to injustice, suffering, or the needs of the least of these (those in need, the poor, those without parents, or those who feel unloved and overlooked).

- We name injustice and the wrongs that we see in the world.

- We pray to God about what is happening. We tell God how the situation makes us feel, and we ask God how we should respond.

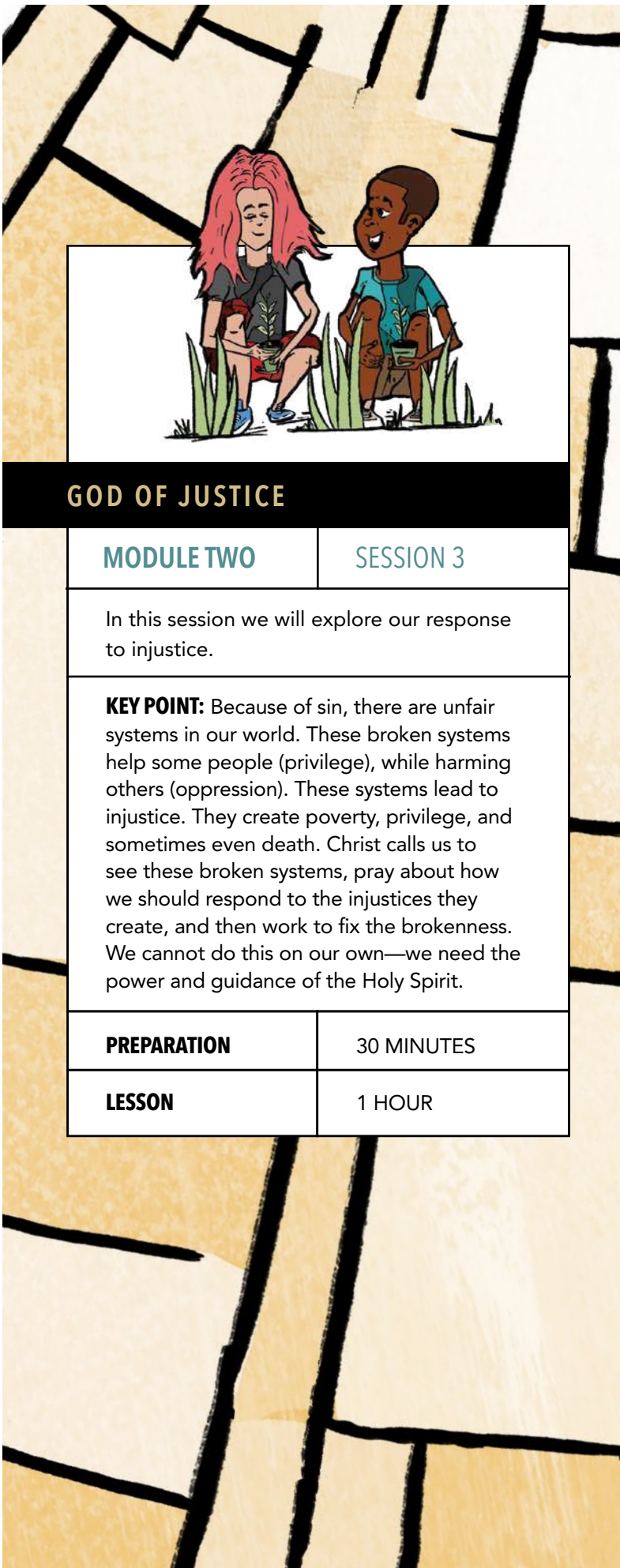
The Bible calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves, so our response should look like something we would want others to do for us if we were in their situation.

Closing Activities

- We can learn more about the problem, and figure out how why it is happening.
- Pray a prayer of lament. Lament means recognizing that things are not as they should be and crying out to God, asking him to come and fix the brokenness of our world.
- Pray a prayer of intercession on behalf of those who are suffering. In this kind of prayer we remember those who suffer and we advocate for them through our prayers.
- Keep our eyes and ears open to see those who are in need and those who are not treated fairly.
- Recognize that everyone is made in God's image.
- Celebrate that God made a diverse world of people.
- Respond when we see a need.

Which of these activities will you partner with God in doing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: God, help us to love people the way Jesus loves. Help us to see the brokenness around us and partner with you to address that brokenness so that everyone can live in peace. For this we give you thanks. Amen.



GOD OF JUSTICE

MODULE TWO

SESSION 3

In this session we will explore our response to injustice.

KEY POINT: Because of sin, there are unfair systems in our world. These broken systems help some people (privilege), while harming others (oppression). These systems lead to injustice. They create poverty, privilege, and sometimes even death. Christ calls us to see these broken systems, pray about how we should respond to the injustices they create, and then work to fix the brokenness. We cannot do this on our own—we need the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

3

How Sin Keeps Us from Loving Our Neighbor and Hurts Our World

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Butcher paper or white board
- Books: *Henry's Freedom Box* and *The Story of Ruby Bridges*
- Video: Ruby Bridges
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: Y4F3sr5f-EQ
[youtube.com/watch?v=Y4F3sr5f-EQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4F3sr5f-EQ)
- Materials for the celebration ideas at the end of the session
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

Write the following words on a board or large pieces of paper and post in the room: Injustice, Privilege, Sin, Shalom, Brokenness, System, and Oppression. Prepare for the celebration at the end of the session.

FOR LEADERS

The Bible links justice to taking care of and taking up the cause of “the least of these” (people who are vulnerable, including widows, orphans, immigrants, and those who are poor). Israel’s inability to care for these people led them into exile. Biblical scholar Donald Gowan writes that as Zechariah identifies the reason for the exile of the Israelites, he offers a single thought: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow and fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other” (ZECHARIAH 7:9-10). This is an acknowledgment that not just individuals but the systems of society unjustly help some while oppressing others.

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, what they are looking forward to.

It may be helpful for some children to have drawing or craft items available for them to process their thoughts.

REVIEW

Remind children of the key concepts from the last two sessions and introduce the idea of “systems.”

- **INJUSTICE:** Lack of fairness resulting from the sin of selfishness and oppression or privilege.
- **SIN:** Anything that is against God’s will.
- **PRIVILEGE:** An advantage available only to a particular person or group of people.
- **SHALOM:** The world as God intends it to be. Shalom is the peace, harmony, prosperity, and wholeness that encourages us to love our neighbors, see ourselves as a big connected family, and understand that everything we have is a gift from God—and that gift is not just for us, but it is meant to make the world a better place. Shalom inspires us to give back or to generously repay something in some way.
- **BROKENNESS:** Something that does not reflect God’s original intent—separation, division, or something that is no longer whole or complete. God provides enough for everyone’s needs, but our greed separates us from meeting the needs of others.
- **SYSTEM:** Places that create rules and laws regarding the way things are done.
- **OPPRESSION:** When people are harmed by injustice and hurt by unfair systems and laws.

EXPLAIN: In the past two sessions we have talked about how we can respond to individual injustices that we see around us. But brokenness can also affect our laws, government, and even the church. Today we will explore what unfair systems look like and who they hurt.

Bible Time

READ EXODUS 1:6–2:10.

We often say that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. But some systems are in place in our society that do not allow for equal access, which leads to some people being oppressed.

- What sinful laws or systems does Pharaoh put into place because he is afraid of losing his power?
- How are the Hebrews oppressed by Pharaoh's laws and systems?
- How is sin connected to the Hebrew's oppression?
- How does Pharaoh's sin grow and become law? When someone's sin becomes a law—that an entire society must obey—that sin becomes "systemic," which means it becomes part of the system. When sin becomes part of the system, the system becomes broken. It becomes an unsafe place that harms certain people, gives unfair advantages to other people, and goes against God's will.
- What privileges do the Egyptians get from the oppression of the Hebrews?
- How hard is it to do what's right when a law or system is unjust and everyone else around you ignores the unfairness?
- Who responded to the unjust laws of Pharaoh? What did they do?
- Can you think of ways people have been oppressed in our country?

Read *Henry's Freedom Box*. Talk about the unjust system in this story and how people responded.

CHALLENGE: To respond to injustice, we must first learn to identify it. We pray for God's guidance and ask God to shine a light on the wrong that is occurring. And then we ask God how we should respond. The Holy Spirit leads us to speak up for justice—even when it feels uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or unpopular.

READ ACTS 6:1

ASK:

- What was the problem in this story? (The widows didn't have access to food.)
- Did you know the same thing happens for some children here in the US and Canada?

Thirteen million children in the United States live in homes that do not have enough money for food without federal food assistance and community food pantries. Five million of those children live in households that have very low food security. That means they do not have enough to eat at times because they have insufficient money or no access to other food sources such as a food pantry. In Canada 1.3 million children live in conditions of poverty and more than one third of food bank users are children. (*Statistics from the USDA and Canada Without Poverty*).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest program in the US to help the hungry, offering nutrition assistance to millions of individuals and families. But for up to 5 million children this is not enough. They must rely on local food pantries as well. Unfortunately for those children who live in poorer areas, there is not always enough food available. They don't have the same access to food because of where they live.

In the same way, children in poorer neighborhoods don't have the same opportunities at school that other children have. Their textbooks may be outdated, and often they have no access to computers, gym, art, or music classes. If we don't respond to this lack of access, injustice and oppression occur.

READ ACTS 6:2-3

ASK:

- Did the apostles ignore the needs of those without food?
- What was their solution?

EXPLAIN: In the New Testament one out of every sixteen verses is about the poor. In the Gospels, the number is one out of every ten; in Luke's Gospel it is one out of every seven, and in James, one out of every five. God cares for those who are poor and for those who do not have equal access or who are oppressed because of unfair systems.

REFLECTION AND RESPONSE

Read *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, by Robert Coles and George Ford.

Or watch this video:

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: Y4F3sr5f-EQ
[youtube.com/watch?v=Y4F3sr5f-EQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4F3sr5f-EQ)

ASK:

- What is the injustice in this story?
- How could the injustice be fixed?
- How did the church help Ruby and her family?
- How could Christians in this story have followed Jesus in the ways we have learned about today?
- How was God with Ruby in the midst of her oppression?
- How is Ruby an example of how we should follow Jesus?

ASK:

- If you were Ruby, how would you have responded to the crowd?
- If you were one of the students at the school, what do you think you would have done? Do you think

you would have been brave enough to stand up for Ruby?

- If all the other children were being mean to Ruby just because of the color of her skin, would I have the courage to be different, to stand up for justice—even if it meant I might lose some friends?

Application Activity

In this activity we will name ways the church can stand up for justice and partner with God to help end oppression and injustice.

Write the following list of needs on the board: Homelessness, Neighborhood violence, Lack of school supplies, Hunger, Lack of winter clothing.

Brainstorm ways we could respond as a church to each need. Some examples might be: Give food to food pantry, organize a coat drive.

At the end of the game ask children to consider how they might partner with God to live into one of their responses.

DISCUSS

Following Jesus means confronting injustice and responding in nonviolent ways that reflect the love, grace, and justice of God.

When injustice and oppression occur—and when other people go along with it or turn a blind eye to it—Christians cannot just do what's popular or follow what everyone else is doing. As God's children, we are called to do what's right and to stand up for justice, even when it's lonely, unpopular, or costly. When we partner with God to work for justice, people around us might not understand why we are

doing what we are doing, but the Bible assures us that this is what God wants us to do.

ASK: **As Christ's hands and feet in the world, what are we supposed to do now?** As we follow Jesus together, we also follow what Jesus did.

- Jesus loved people in sacrificial ways.
- Jesus used what he had to help others, instead of using it for his own advantage.
- Jesus went out of his way to love people who felt overlooked, unloved, and left out. He helps all of us realize that we belong to each other and that we are all a part of one family, the household of God.

Closing Activities

- Show-and-tell portion in service for kids—give each student 5-10 minutes to present what they've learned to the congregation. They could set up reflection stations in the church, give a live presentation, or prerecord a video.
- Share ideas and partner with church leadership to reach out to those who are experiencing injustice.
- Share testimonies of their favorite lessons and things you have learned over the past few weeks.
- Highlight stories from kids/leaders/families through video interviews.
- Create a collaborative art piece to help class participants remember what you have learned.
- Show and tell: take a journey through books, projects, art, games you played, discussed, learned.
- Create a slide show with images of the kids participating in the Justice Journey.
- Pray a closing prayer for the community,

written by the kids.

- Ask the kids to write a liturgy for justice for the congregation to read during the service.
- Plan a closing worship service and special commission of students who participated, including a commitment to keep learning, listening, and growing together.

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **God, help us to not forget who we are, whose we are, and who you have called us to be. Every person in the world is made in your image, and we are one family. When our family is mistreated, overlooked, or hurt, help us to go out of our way to show them your love. Amen.**



IDENTITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER

MODULE THREE

SESSION 1

In this session we will explore what it means to be made in God's image, and to understand and celebrate that idea. We will examine Genesis 1:27, 29-31, and Psalm 139:13-16.

KEY POINT: God has made us unique and distinct from one another for his good and perfect purposes.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #



Made in God's Image

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A handout that depicts a range of different flowers/plants
- A handout that depicts a range of different animals
- A handout of children's faces from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. To download visit: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links
- If possible, a small mirror for each child
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

Create a handout with a word cloud on it that spans a range of academic subjects, hobbies, and interests. Potential entries include:

Math	Softball
Language Arts	Soccer
Science	Tennis
Technology	Bowling
Physical Education	Sports
Music	Ballet/Dance
Musical Instrument	Church/Youth Group
Art	Service
Theatre	Instagram
Singing	Snapchat
Baseball	YouTube
Football	Fortnite
Running	Video Games
Basketball	

(Or feel free to add whatever seems relevant for your group—think about the children in your ministry and contextualize for them.)

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, what they are looking forward to.

It may be helpful for some children to have drawing or craft items available to help them process their thoughts.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Handouts with word cloud, animals, flowers, and children for each child

SAY: Let's start today by taking a few minutes to look at this handout, and circle which items or activities you enjoy the most on this list. Which of these things do you enjoy? Give children a few minutes to respond.

SAY: Now before we go around and share, let me ask you a question. Do you think your handout will look the same as another person's? Why or why not?

INVITE ANSWERS

ASK: Have you ever looked around and noticed how many different kinds of flowers there are in the world? Or animals? Did you know that there are more than 45,000 kinds of spiders in the world?

Show handouts of flowers and animals. Feel free to fill in with your preferred specific example.

ASK: Can anyone give me an example of a flower you know?

When you receive answers, say, That's a beautiful flower! Can you imagine if it were the only kind of flower that existed in the whole world? What would that be like? A little boring, right? God's way is different—he loves to create things that are different yet all equally beautiful and valued. You can see this in all of creation, such as in the flowers and animals we were just talking about. But it also applies to us as people.

EXPLAIN: We use a word to describe the wide variety of things in the world that God has created: diversity.

WRITE ON THE BOARD IF YOU HAVE ONE

EXPLAIN: Diversity means that God loves creating different kinds of the same thing. God creates a diversity of flowers. God creates a diversity of animals. God loves creating so many versions of the same thing, because he is a God of creativity and beauty.

SAY: Let's go around and share what we each marked on our handouts.

Spend time letting the children share and affirming each child's particular interests and talents.

ASK: Who has given each of you those talents and interests? Where do they come from?

INVITE RESPONSES

SAY: I'd like each of you to pick one thing you circled and thank God for creating you with that specific talent or interest.

Go around the room and let each child fill in the following sentence: "Thank you, God, for my _____." Feel free to model this for the children.

Let's see what the Bible says about how each one of us was created.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, drawing paper, crayons handouts of children

READ Genesis 1:27, 29-31, and Psalm 139:13-16.

DISCUSS

SAY: These verses provide some important teachings about who created us and how. Let's first talk about the verses in Genesis. What do they say about God? (God created us, God provides for us, God loves us.)

ASK: Who is made in God's image? (Women, men, kids, everyone)

SAY: Each of us was made in God's image. That is pretty amazing. This is an important way that we are different from flowers and animals. Human beings are made in God's image, both boys and girls. You are made in God's image. And you are, and you are, and you are (point to each child). Each and every one of us is made in God's image. We are all so different, so unique, and yet we are each made in God's image. Every single human being on earth—that is nearly seven and a half billion people—is made in the image of God. This is a mystery, but somehow part of what it means to be a human being is that all of us together reflect who God is.

SELF PORTRAITS

Encourage children to draw a picture of themselves. Assure them that they are made by God and God loves them.

Show the handout with the children of different ethnic backgrounds, and ask the children to share their pictures of themselves.

EXPLAIN: It does not matter where you are from, what you like or don't like, whether you have a home or not, whether your skin is dark or light, whether you have lots of money or none at all—each of you is made in the image of God. In God's eyes, we are each loved and valued equally.

SAY: Let's look at the passage from Psalm 139. Can someone read this for us?

EXPLAIN: I love this phrase, "wonderfully made." Who has made you so wonderfully? God has! Nothing about you is a mistake. Not your hair color, your eye color, your skin color, your talents, or your interests. God has designed you exactly as he has intended for his purposes.

What would you like to say to God? Write it on the paper with your picture.

Application Activity

Let's see if we understand this idea of what it means to be made in God's image.

- 1. People have a special spiritual relationship with God.** What are some ways you can think of that we can relate or communicate with God? What are some ways God communicates and relates with us? (Prayer, God's word, Jesus, the Holy Spirit)
- 2. God creates and we can create.** What are some things God has created? What can we create?
- 3. God's creation is diverse.** That means that God made us all different on purpose and called it good. And just as God loves each of us who are different, we are supposed to love those who are different from us. How can we love those who are different from us?
- 4. We receive love from God and can give love to God and others.** What are some ways we know God loves us? What are some ways we love God and others?
- 5. We have free choice.** Because God loves us, we can choose to do what God would want us to do, or we can choose to disobey God.

What does it look like when we choose God's way?
What does it look like when we choose not to follow God?

EXPLAIN: We are still made in God's image even when we choose not to follow God. But when we do this, we focus more on ourselves than on God or others. We separate ourselves from God. Because God loves us, God sent Jesus so we can be forgiven of our sin and learn how to love God and others.

Today we have learned that we are made in God's image and that God made each of us different. We also learned we are to love those who are different from us just as God loves all of us.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Mirror for each child (options)

Hand out mirrors to each child if you have them.

SAY: Notice the things that you can see, like your reflection, what you look like. Remember that God loves you, made you special and unique, wants to communicate with you, wants you to create, and wants you to love others just as God loves you!

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **Thank you, God, for making each one of us different. Thank you for loving us and choosing to make us and all people throughout the world. Help us to love those who are different from us and to celebrate and rejoice that we are all different because this is the way you made us.**



IDENTITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER

MODULE THREE

SESSION: 2

In this session we will explore Acts 2:1-12. We will acknowledge the diversity of language, culture, and peoples that Jesus calls to himself.

KEY POINT: Appreciating the diversity of God's people.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #



Appreciating the Diversity of God's People

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- The book *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox
- Cutouts of the outline of the letters "ECC," one letter per poster-board size paper, posted up on the wall.
- Scissors and glue sticks
- A handout of children's faces from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. To download visit: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, what they are looking forward to.

It may be helpful for some children to have drawing or craft items available for them to process their thoughts.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Crayons or markers, drawing paper, book *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to read a book about children from around the world. As we read notice how these children are similar to or different from you.

READ: *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox

DISCUSS

What are some things you notice about the children in this book?

Give children blank sheets of paper for drawing or construction paper for creating.

ASK: Who do you belong to? What is your background? What are your favorite things to do? How are you the same or different from your friends?

Allow a few minutes for children to draw or create a story about themselves. Then take some time to share their drawings with the group.

EXPLAIN: Notice that each of us is different, but we also enjoy some things that are the same. One thing we share is the love of Jesus and Jesus's love for us.

We all need each other, and Jesus wants us all to love each other just as Jesus loves us. The same holds true for those outside the church. Jesus wants us to reach out and love those who are not yet a part of the church.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Crayons or markers, drawing paper, or play dough

ASK: What countries are there in the world? Ask children to name all the countries they can think of.

SAY: Does everyone look the same in each country? Does everyone speak the same language? Is everyone made in God's image?

Today we are going to read a passage of Scripture in which the disciples were trying to tell people from many countries about Jesus. Not all the people looked the same and not all spoke the same language. But God made them all and loved them all and wanted them to know Jesus.

READ ACTS 2:1-12

The children will need help with the pronunciations of people groups. After reading the Scripture together, hand out paper or play dough, and ask children to draw or mold something that stands out to them in the story. Read it twice more while they work. Invite the children to share what they created.

DISCUSS

- Why do you think God made it possible for the disciples to speak in languages that everyone could understand?
- Do you think everyone is special to Jesus no matter what they look like or where they come from?
- Do you think God likes only one kind of music? Clothing? Food? Dance? How can differences be a celebration of God's creation?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Large cutouts of the letters "ECC," images of children from around the world

Today we are going to work together and showcase our God-given diversity in the Evangelical Covenant Church. You see these big letters, ECC, here on the board? Look how empty and boring these letters look. Let's help create some diversity!

FIRST LETS DRAW A PICTURE OF OURSELVES

EXPLAIN: On the table are copies of photographs of children from all over the world. Let's cut out pictures of these children and glue them on to the big letters so we can fill up the "ECC" with faces of children from every background and create a beautiful mosaic together. Let's see if we can fill up the whole space
OPTIONAL: Include the drawing of the children.

Help children as needed to complete this collage together. Once the letters are done, affix them to a larger piece of paper/butcher paper with a phrase such as "Made in God's Image, We Are One in the Body of Christ" below the big letters. Take a photo of the final product, and print copies to give to all the children the following session. Display in the church and encourage adult leaders to call attention to the children's work in a future service.

NOTE: You could take a picture of the children next to the collage rather than attach their drawings.

Closing Activity

SAY: I love the unity that we have created in this collage together. It's a wonderful picture of the diversity God has created in the church/world. We look like one unified, loving body of Christ!

Sometimes as we move through life we may encounter friction between different groups in the body. (Gently move one of the big letters away from the others.) Maybe the hand doesn't like what the foot is doing or the other way around. Let us remember this picture we created as being one that celebrates all the uniquenesses of who God has created us to be while still being a united body. Even when challenging times come, even when you are in busy times with others in the body of Christ, remember that beauty comes from the diversity that God has created, and unity comes as we love one another across differences. The love of Christ is stronger than any other force that might seek to divide us and destroy our unity. (Bring the big letters back together in unity.)

Interactive Encounter (OPTIONAL)

Contact another local Covenant congregation in your area or the same time zone that will be having a church service and children's program at the same time as your own church. If possible, find another church with demographics that are different from your own. Use a laptop to set up a video conferencing call via Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, or similar technology. Plan for each group to teach a worship song to the other group. If you can do this in different languages, all the better!

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **(SAY THIS IN UNISON):**

Jesus, help us to remember the beauty that comes from our differences and the unity that comes as we love one another because your love is stronger than any force that might seek to divide us and destroy our unity.



IDENTITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER

MODULE THREE

SESSION: 3

In this session we will explore how some people are treated as less valuable and are persecuted, which is contrary to the will of God.

KEY POINT: God made, loves, and values everyone equally, and God calls us to love each other.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Session #

3

Treating and Valuing Everyone Equally

PREPARATION

- You will need a laptop or computer with Internet access for this session, or download the following movie trailer onto the computer before the session, and make sure it is able to play as well as be heard in the room you are using.
Wonder Movie Trailer:
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: YRXmuv7JP-A
youtube.com/watch?v=YRXmuv7JP-A
- Blank index cards and markers
- “All Around the World” song video link:
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: ew9GjmGXD_I
youtube.com/watch?v=ew9GjmGXD_I
(Lyrics on last page of this session)
- Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at:
covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

Opening Activity

EXPLAIN: Have any of you seen the movie *Wonder* or read the book? Ask for a show of hands, and invite a summary of the story if anyone would like to offer one. Then show the trailer.

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: YRXmuv7JP-A
youtube.com/watch?v=YRXmuv7JP-A

In this story, the main character, Auggie Pullman, has a rare medical condition that affects the development of the bones and tissues in his face. His parents have chosen to homeschool him through fourth grade, and he is very smart. But now his mom is unable to keep up with his learning, so Auggie is headed to school for the first time. What were some of the initial responses the kids had to Auggie when they first saw him?

INVITE RESPONSES

SAY: Many of the kids stared at him, or whispered to one another, right? Some even stepped away from him and put distance between themselves and him. How do you think that made him feel?

INVITE RESPONSES

SAY: Although all humans were created in God's image as we discussed in Session 1, sometimes we do not treat each other with kindness and justice. In fact, people can cause harm to others who are different from them for all kinds of reasons. It could be because their bodies look different—like Auggie's did. It could be because of where you live, or what color your hair or eyes or skin are, or what kind of things you like to eat, or where your parents grew up. There are all kinds of ways that people consider other people in the world as being less valuable. This makes God very sad, because he has made each one of us in his image and values all of us.

Bible Time

Let's see how Jesus tells us to treat people who are different from us.

During the time of Jesus, Jewish people thought Samaritans were inferior, or not equal, to them. They didn't talk to or even get close to a Samaritan.

But Jesus says we should love each other and see each other as neighbors, even when we are different. Let's see who does this in the story today.

READ LUKE 10:25-29

EXPLAIN: Let's look for the two key things God wants us to do. (Love God with our whole heart, and love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.)

EXPLAIN: Let's look at the rest of the story to see who our neighbor is.

READ AND ACT OUT: LUKE 10:30-37

(THE GOOD SAMARITAN)

Assign the following roles:

- Traveler
- Robbers
- Priest (pastor)
- Levite (religious leader)
- Samaritan
- Innkeeper

(As an alternative, you could ask children to draw each character, tape them to a craft stick and perform this as a stick puppet show.)

ASK: Who was not a neighbor? Why?

ASK: Who was a neighbor? Why?

ASK: Are there times when we leave someone out when we are playing at school? Why?

Do you think Jesus loves all of us, no matter what we look like or where we are from?

WHO WAS THE NEIGHBOR IN THIS STORY?

What does it mean to be a neighbor according to Jesus?

Activity

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to read two true accounts of people who were treated contrary to the will of God. They were people with many gifts and dreams just like you, but they were treated unjustly.

Read through each story, and ask the children to respond to the questions below after each one.

FIRST NATION PEOPLE

In 1838, President Martin Van Buren sent General Winfield Scott and 7,000 soldiers to remove Cherokee people from their native land so white settlers could live there instead. Scott and his troops used bayonets to force the Cherokee people into stockades while white people went into their homes and stole their belongings. Then the soldiers marched the Indians more than 1,200 miles to what was called "Indian territory." More than 5,000 of the Cherokee people died on the trip because of illness and lack of food.

The federal government promised that their new land would remain theirs forever, but soon U.S. armies and white settlers pushed westward, and the Cherokee people were forced out of their homes again. The land they were allocated was reduced again and again. In 1907, Oklahoma became a state and Indian territory was gone for good.

- What was the situation?
- Who was treated poorly?
- How were they treated poorly?
- Do you think the Cherokee people were able to fully use their creativity and gifts?

- Who misses out when a person is not able to develop and share their giftedness?
- How do you think God feels when we treat his children this way?
- What do you think God would want us to do?
- What are your thoughts or questions if you have first nation ancestors?
- What are your thoughts or questions if you have first nation ancestors?

SLAVERY IN THE U.S.

Slavery in America started in 1619, when a Dutch ship brought 20 African slaves to the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. By 1850 more than 3 million black slaves were in the U.S. Many died on the ships as they sailed from Africa to America. Those who survived were sold. Families were split up. A wife would be sold to one buyer, a husband to another, and their children to yet another. They would never see each other again but would be forced to work their whole lives as slaves until they died. When black children were born, they could be taken from their families and sold to someone else. This went on for hundreds of years, even though 5,000 black soldiers helped the colonies to gain independence from the British during the Revolutionary War and 179,000 served in the Union army during the Civil War.

When slavery was officially abolished in 1865, black people were still treated unfairly in this country. They were not allowed to vote, sit in white restaurants, drink from white drinking fountains, or live in white neighborhoods.

- What was the situation?
- Who was treated poorly?
- How were they treated poorly?
- Do you think they were able to fully use their creativity and gifts?
- Who misses out when a person is not able to develop and share their giftedness?

- How do you think God feels when we treat his children this way?
- What are your thoughts or questions if you had ancestors who were slaves?
- What do you think God would want us to do?

It is important that we learn from past wrongs we have committed as human beings towards one another. This is how we will become sensitive toward those who have faced past and present persecution and work together to correct the wrongs for a better future.

Application

WHO IS YOUR "AUGGIE"?

Show the trailer for Wonder again.
ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: YRXmuv7JP-A
[youtube.com/watch?v=YRXmuv7JP-A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRXmuv7JP-A)

SAY: Imagine you were at the school that day, and you are seeing Auggie for the first time. How could you have acted differently from the kids at Auggie's school? How could you have shown that you know Auggie is made in God's image, just like you?

INVITE RESPONSES

SAY: Let's think about our own context. Think about your school, your activities, your neighborhood, your family. Is there anyone you can think of who might be treated differently by other people than they should be? Maybe, like Auggie, they are being ignored or teased, or people keep their distance for some reason. Take a moment to think about that person.

Give kids time to think about their selected person.

SAY: Take an index card and using the markers on the table, draw something to remind you of this person.

You may choose to draw him or her, or maybe you will draw something that helps remind you of him or her. On the back of the card, write down one thing you can do to treat that person as God might want you to.

Give kids time to complete the activity. Invite them to share about who they chose and what they said they would do.

SAY: It is wonderful to hear the ways in which you are thinking about how you can treat one person in your life with respect and kindness. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus!

Bible Note

THE GOLDEN RULE

Write Luke 6:31 on the board: "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

EXPLAIN: As we seek to be like Jesus in all we think, do, and say, this instruction from him that appears in the Gospel of Luke can be a lifelong guide to how we are to treat people. Let's read it together. (Recite verse).

ASK: What does this verse mean?
(Invite responses, or explain if it's unclear.)

EXPLAIN: Some people call this "the Golden Rule." But it's actually God's rule for how we are to treat other people who are all made in his image.

ASK: What are some ways you would like people to treat you? When someone hurts you does it help when they apologize? How might we apologize if our ancestors enslaved people or took away their land? Solicit and affirm responses. If time permits, have children write the verse on a piece of paper and decorate or draw a picture of a way we can be kind to other.

Closing Celebration Song:

"ALL AROUND THE WORLD"

Lyrics provided to print out beforehand:

To close out the session, summarize the key teaching points from Sessions 1 and 2, and remind the children of what they have experienced and learned:

1. We are each wonderfully made in God's image.
2. God loves diversity and has created a beautifully diverse world full of unique people who all have equal value in God's eyes.
3. Therefore, we are to treat one another equally and value every person the same.

Then, teach and sing the following song together, taken from the Weird Animals VBS. You can show the video first, then teach the lyrics, then end with the hand motions.

ENTER IN YOUTUBE SEARCH: ew9GjmGXD_I
[youtube.com/watch?v=ew9GjmGXD_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ew9GjmGXD_I)

The video also features an array of diverse animals, so it provides another opportunity to emphasize that our God is creative and values diversity, both in animals and in people!

CLOSE IN PRAYER: **God, help us to learn and appreciate the diversity of those around us. Help us to always value people as made in your image and to remember the ways people who are different can be treated poorly, even though they have wonderful gifts to share. Help us, Lord, to be a neighbor like the good Samaritan. Amen.**

All Around the World GROUP PUBLISHING

All around the world something's going on
about Jesus' love, it's amazing.
He loves us so so much
with a love so strong
no one else could love us more.
It's amazing.

We're all a little different, in many different ways,
no matter where we come from, God loves us the same.
None of us are perfect, so he forgives our sin,
Jesus is our Savior, his love will never end.

All around the world something's going on
about Jesus' love, it's amazing.
He loves us so so much
with a love so strong
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We're all a little different, in many different ways,
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Jesus' love is one of a kind, he loves us so much
we're always on his mind.
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No one else could love us more, it's amazing
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JUSTICE JOURNEY

for kids

covchurch.org/JusticeJourney



The Evangelical Covenant Church

LOVE MERCY DO JUSTICE
MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES