

Session #

1

# Injustice

## 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

Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: [covchurch.org/justicejourney/links](http://covchurch.org/justicejourney/links)

### KEY WORDS

**INJUSTICE:** When something is unfair, resulting from privilege, or the sin of selfishness and oppression.

**OPPRESSION:** Unjust treatment or control of others through unfair systems or laws.

**PREJUDICE:** Not knowing a person but mistreating them and believing things about them because of the color of their skin, gender, ethnicity, or where they are from.

**SELFISHNESS:** Being concerned for one's self or one's own advantage.

### SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Drawing tools or craft items
- Butcher paper or white board
- Wastebasket
- Building blocks
- Toothpicks, playdough
- Kids playing soccer video: [youtube.com/watch?v=QmnJJGQ\\_gDw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmnJJGQ_gDw)

### 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.

### PRAYER

Gather children in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

**PRAY:** God you love each of us and you purposely made all of us different. Because of your love for us, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus and fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love others in the same way you love us.

## 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.

**EXPLAIN:** 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 or book, to test the toothpick bridges and a smaller rock or book, 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 advantages (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, not properly paying someone for their work, 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 the rules. This could result in a discussion about power and rules that are fair and unfair.

If the children decide in the midst of this discussion to 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?
- Who had the power to decide who was in and who was out? Was it fair to use power in this way?

## 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

**SUPPLIES:** A media player

**WATCH:** Kids playing soccer video:

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

**SUPPLIES:** Wastebasket, paper

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 the children in the first row six sheets of paper and all other children three sheets of paper. Do this discreetly so that the children do not know that some have more sheets of paper than others.

The object of the game is to see which row can get the most wads of paper in the basket.

**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.

## 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? Once those of you in the front row learned from others that you had more paper than they did, how did it make you feel?

**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?

Help children to see the importance of listening, discussing, and responding like Jesus.

## 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.

Jesus asks more of us than just to give. Jesus's example is

to ask for the thoughts and ideas of those in need so we will know how to give.

Living like Jesus with a focus on giving makes us aware of the privileges we have and helps us learn from those that have less than us by listening and valuing their thoughts and ideas to help insure life is fair for everyone.

## 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.

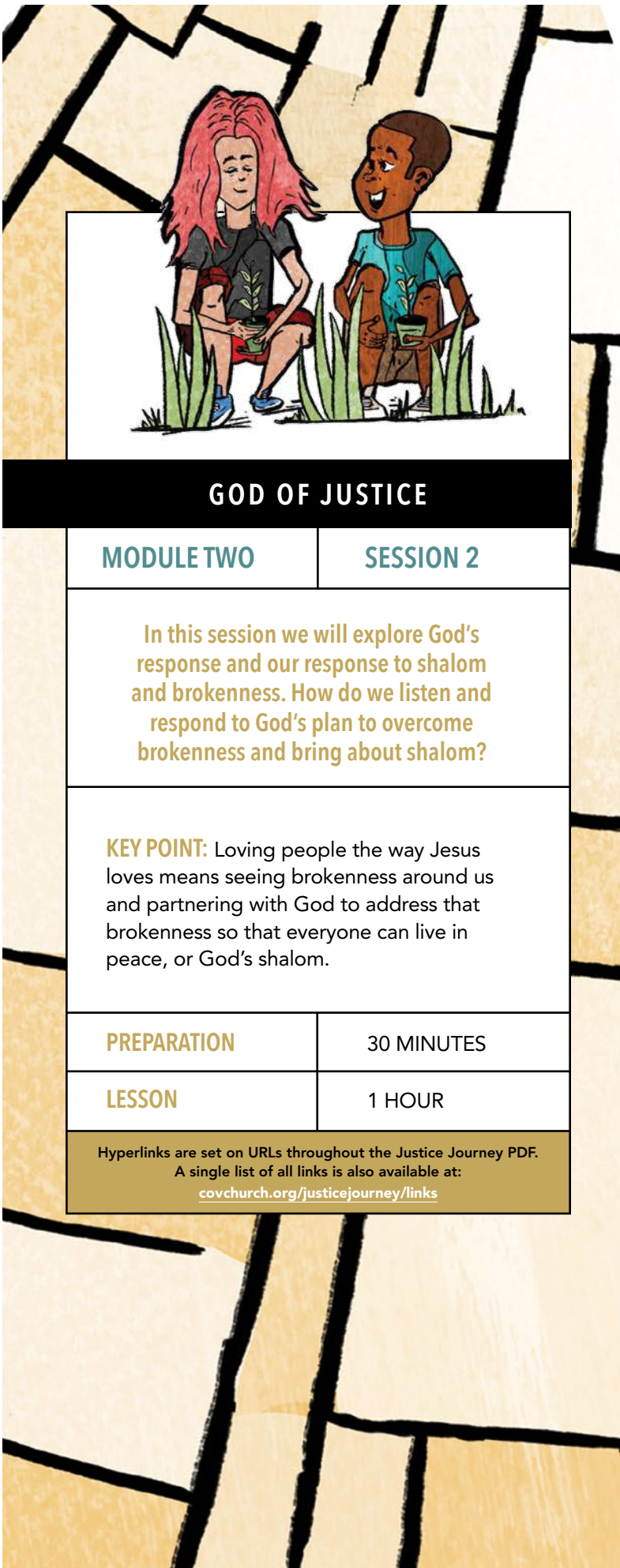
Share vulnerably to explore and make a plan.

### 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 give others a chance to share their thoughts and ideas?
- How can we respond with love when we see other people who are left out or overlooked?

## CLOSE IN PRAYER

**Lord, all of us are your children and you love each of us. Help us to notice when we have an unfair advantage over someone else. Help us to be aware of our own privilege and to respond like you Jesus, to ask, listen, and learn from others and respond in love.**



Session #

2

# God's Shalom

## 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

Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: [covchurch.org/justicejourney/links](http://covchurch.org/justicejourney/links)

### KEY WORDS

**BROKENNESS:** Separation, something that is no longer whole or complete, something divided and different from what God wants.

**INJUSTICE:** When things are not the way God intends. When something is unfair and people are mistreated because of sin, which causes selfishness, privilege or oppression.

**PRIVILEGE:** An unfair advantage available so some people, but not to other people.

**SHALOM:** When everything works how God created things to be. Shalom happens when we love each other well by restoring what is broken, creating justice and peace. It is a space where everyone can be who God created them to be, there is no need that goes unmet, and we praise God because everyone has what they need.

**SIN:** anything that is against God's will.

**SOLDARITY:** Standing together with someone or a group that is being mistreated to say that there is a better way, and that God is not pleased with what is happening. It is supporting our neighbors by standing up, speaking up, and showing up for those who are mistreated and hurt by injustice and oppression.

## SUPPLIES

### For this lesson you will need

- Butcher paper or a white board
- Charade cards with words on them (see below)

## 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 a very important sign of God's 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.

## PRAYER

Gather children in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

**PRAY:** God you love each of us and you purposely made all of us different. Because of your love for us, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus and fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love others in the same way you love us.

## Review

### Remind children of the key concepts from last week:

- Injustice: When something is unfair, 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 about 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 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 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?
- When we talk to someone in need, remember they may be able to help us with something we are struggling with as well. Being in need doesn't mean a person is any less knowledgeable, any less gifted, or any less loved by God.
- 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 and to listen and learn and work together to bring about change.

God's shalom encourages us to notice injustice, when people are hurting, and 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. What does this look like?
- How can we keep from ignoring 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. What would we say to God about how the situation makes us feel? How might God ask us to 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.

### Who is our neighbor?

## Closing Activities

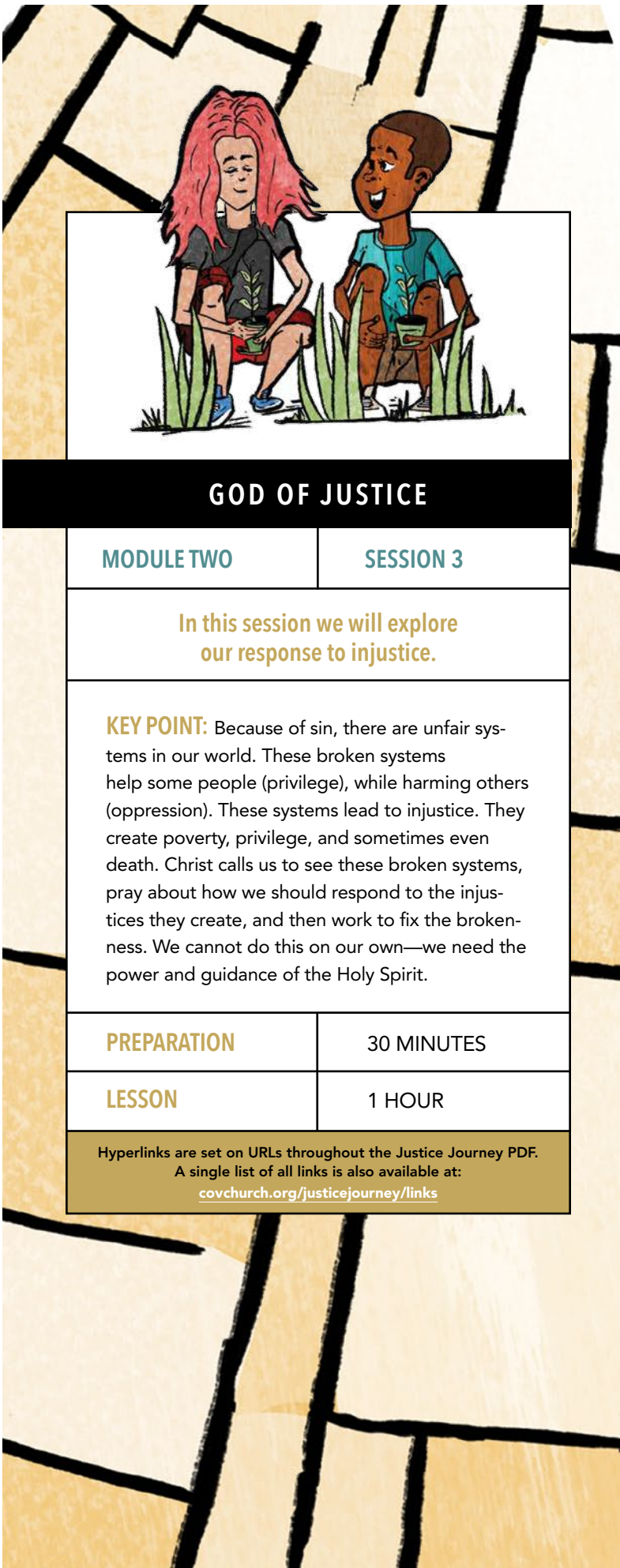
- We can learn more about the problem, and figure out why it is happening.
- Pray a prayer of lament. Lament means recognizing that things are not as God desires and crying out to the Lord, asking God to come and fix the brokenness of our world.
- Pray a prayer of intercession for those who are suffering. In this kind of prayer we remember those who suffer and we advocate for them through our prayers and using our voice to help others understand their needs and why they are suffering.
- Keep our eyes and ears open to see those who are in need and those who are not treated fairly.
- Recognize that everyone is equally made in God's image.
- Celebrate that God made a diverse world of people.
- Respond when we see a need.
- Listen to those in need to learn and understand the need and find a solution.

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.**





Session #



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

## 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

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### KEY WORDS

**BROKENNESS:** Separation, something that is no longer whole or complete, something divided and different from what God wants.

**INJUSTICE:** When something is unfair, resulting from privilege or the sin of selfishness or oppression.

**OPPRESSION:** Unjust treatment or control of others through unfair systems of laws.

**PRIVILEGE:** An unfair advantage available to some people, but not to other people.

**SHALOM:** When everything works how God created things to be. Shalom happens when we love each other well by resorting what is broken, creating justice and peace. It is a space where're everyone can be who God created them to be, there is not need that goes unmet, and we praise God because everyone has what they need.

**SIN:** Anything that is against God's will.

**SYSTEM:** A group of related parts that are designed to work in a specific way. Rules or laws for the way things are done.

### SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Butcher paper or white board
- Books: *Henry's Freedom Box* and *The Story of Ruby Bridges*
- *Ruby Bridges* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4F3sr5f-EQ>

- Materials for the celebration ideas at the end of the session

## 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.

## PRAYER

Gather children in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

**PRAY:** God you love each of us and you purposely made all of us different. Because of your love for us, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus and fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love others in the same way you love us.

## 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:** Rules or laws for 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 unjustly advantaged (privileged) and others 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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:

<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 you have the courage to be different, to stand up for justice—even if it meant you might lose some friends?

What would Jesus do? What could happen if we don’t respond? What could happen if we do?

**NOTE:** Sometimes doing the right thing may cost us something, but it will cost someone else if we fail to do the right thing.

## Application Activity

In this activity we will consider ways the church can 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, Children who experience hunger, Lack of winter clothing.

Brainstorm ways we could respond as a church to each

need. Some examples might be: Give food to a food pantry, organize a coat drive.

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

- What will they do?
- How will they do it?
- How will they tell the church about their idea? (*This could be during worship in person or through a video.*)
- In what ways will they invite the church to participate?
- What will they be asking the congregation to do?
- When will it happen?

### 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. What does this look like?
- Jesus listened. How might we listen to both the dreams and the needs of someone else?
- Jesus used what he had to help others, instead of using it for his own advantage. What could this look like for us?
- 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.







# JUSTICE JOURNEY

*for kids*

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The Evangelical Covenant Church

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