



JOINING WITH GOD TO DISRUPT INJUSTICE

MODULE FIVE

SESSION 1

In this session we will learn how God worked to disrupt injustice through the prophets. God appointed men and women to use their voices to remind people of God's goodness when they forgot or got distracted by other things. Prophets also spoke up for people who were poor, overlooked, mistreated, and oppressed.

KEY POINT: God selects prophets to help us see and respond to injustice.

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

Session #

God's Plan to Disrupt Injustice Through the Prophets

KEY WORDS

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

OPPRESSION: When people are harmed by injustice and hurt by unfair systems and laws.

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

REPENTANCE: Turn away from life focused on self to a life focused on loving God and others.

SIN: Anything that is against God's will.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Small paper cups
- Pitcher of water
- Paper plates
- Paper
- Computer, tablet, or smart TV with internet access
- Playdough
- Markers, coloring supplies
- *Prophets 1* video: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-prophets/>
- *Prophets 2* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sumaxbjp2kg>
- *God's Story: Deborah* video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GakKDNn2_UE

- Justice video:
<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/justice/>
- A Picture Book of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggekysuigwdy>

PREPARATION

Read through the Bible passages for this session. Watch the videos and prepare to share them with students.

FOR LEADERS

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

In the Old Testament, a prophet's main purpose was to serve as God's representative by communicating God's word to people. The prophets did not share their personal opinions or speak on their own authority, they were inspired by God. They delivered the message God gave them. Second Peter 1:20-21 says it this way: "No prophecy in Scripture ever came from a prophet's own understanding of things. Prophecy never came simply because a prophet wanted it to. Instead, the Holy Spirit guided the prophets as they spoke. So, although prophets are human, prophecy comes from God" (NIRV).

Several other passages also illustrate this point:

- **Moses is instructed by God**, "Now go. I will help you speak. I will teach you what to say" (Exodus 4:12).
- **God promised Moses**, "I will raise up for [my people] a prophet like you....I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him to say" (Deuteronomy 18:18).
- **God declared to Jeremiah**, "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9).
- **Ezekiel is sent by God**, who tells him, "You must give them my message" (Ezekiel 2:7).

It is important to note that prophetic ministry was not restricted to men in the Old Testament. Scripture calls Moses's sister Miriam a "prophet" (Exodus 15:20), as well as Deborah (Judges 4:4) and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20). Scripture also refers to a group of prophets ministering in Israel (1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Kings 18:4) who were "the company of the prophets" (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7; 4:38).

In the eighth century B.C., the focus of the prophets' message turned more to the people at large. It would be a mistake to think of prophets in the Old Testament

as only predicting the future. Their primary role was to show the people the holiness of God and the covenant obligations—they denounced injustice, systemic sin, idolatry, and empty ritualism, and they called Israel to repentance, faithfulness, and right(eous) relationships with God, neighbor, and creation.

In the period leading up to Israel's exile in the sixth century B.C., the prophets often delivered messages denouncing widespread institutional injustice, systemic sin, and the oppression of the least of these. After the exile, the prophets expanded their attention to more specifically include the covenantal promises of God and the spiritual blessings that come with trusting and obeying God's will.

WATCH this introductory video on the prophets.

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-prophets/>

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing or craft materials (optional)

Creating a welcoming space is critical for children to know they are valued.

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

For some children, it may be helpful to use drawing or craft materials 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.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper plates, markers

Hand each child two paper plates. Ask them to write the word "just" on one plate and "unjust" on the other.

EXPLAIN: We will name several kinds of behavior and identify whether each one is just, meaning right, or unjust, meaning wrong.

Read each behavior, and after each one, ask students to hold up either the "just" or "unjust" plate. Then invite them to explain why they answered that way.

BEHAVIORS

- Making fun of someone because of how they look
- Laughing at someone because they are struggling with their schoolwork
- Inviting someone who has been left out of a game to join you
- Saying mean things to make someone else feel bad
- Boys making fun of girls
- Girls making fun of boys
- Sitting with someone in the lunchroom who is all alone
- Inviting someone into a game so they can play, even if it means the teams will be uneven
- Sharing when you have more than enough with someone who has little

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Dixie cups, pitcher of water

EXPLAIN: Today we will learn how God worked through prophets in Scripture to interrupt injustice, sin, and evil; bringing healing, repentance, and restoring kindness and love among people.

Repentance means: Turning away from life focused on self to a life focused on loving God and others.

And Injustice is when something isn't fair, resulting from privilege or the sin of selfishness.

Let's begin by reading 2 Kings 4:1-7. This is a story of the prophet Elisha.

READ 2 KINGS 4:1-7.

Pause after reading verse 5 and fill several Dixie cups with water from a container until all the water is gone. Then finish the story.

DISCUSS

- What was the widow worried about? Not being able to pay her bills and having her sons taken as slaves.
- Who helped her? Elisha.
- How did Elisha show love and kindness?
- What would have happened if Elisha had done nothing?

EXPLAIN: Our purpose as the Church—the hands and feet of Jesus—is to show the world God’s love, and to invite people into the family of God. When we forget our purpose, we forget who we are and whose we are. Then we might mistreat our neighbors and fall into sin. That sin leads to selfishness and creates privilege. The result is that some people have more than they need and others do not have enough.

Prophets were sent to deliver God’s messages and to remind us to love others. The Bible tells us that our “love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35, NLT). As we love people, we are also called to invite them into the family of God. God calls prophets to lead people in repenting of their sin and turning back to God. Prophets remind us that when injustice happens, sometimes only a few people are guilty of actually hurting others, but as God’s children, we are all responsible for noticing it, doing something about it, and working to end it.

WATCH this video on the Old Testament prophets: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sumaXbjP2Kg>

God’s Story: Deborah video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GakKDNn2_YE

DISCUSS

ASK:

- What did you learn about the prophets?
- What did you learn about God?
- Why do you think that people chose not to listen to the prophets? Why do we not listen and do what God tells us sometimes?

EXPLAIN: Even though God sent the prophets to remind us how selfish and uncaring we can be, we still sin. We sin whenever we don’t pay attention to sharing our money, clothes, toys, and food and when we don’t speak up when the people who make these things for us are treated unfairly.

God calls us to love our neighbors, which we do by using our voices and influence to make sure that they are treated fairly and speaking out when we see that they are being

mistreated.

The prophets show us how to do this well.

WATCH this justice video: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/justice/>

WATCH *A Picture Book of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGKYSUigWDY>

ASK:

- After learning about the prophets in the Bible, why do you think people call Dr. King a great prophet of our time?
- What injustice or oppression did you see in this video?
- How do you think Jesus feels about these things?
- What was Dr. King’s message to God’s people?
- What might Dr. King’s message have been to the church today?

Application Activity

Supplies: Coloring supplies, playdough

DISCUSS

ASK: What are some things that are not fair today?

OPTION 1: Draw a picture or mold something out of playdough to show ways God wants us to love others to eliminate unfairness.

Invite children to share their creations with the group.

OPTION 2: Encourage children to act out ways we can love others and eliminate injustice (lack of fairness resulting from the sin of selfishness and oppression or privilege) and oppression (when people are harmed by injustice and hurt by unfair systems and laws).

Closing Activity

ASK:

- How do we know that God wants people to be treated fairly, or justly?
- Why do you think stopping injustice is important to God?
- How can we keep our eyes open to see injustice this week?
- What might we look for?
- How will we find the courage to speak-up and reach out with God’s love?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, we are grateful you are a just God who wants the best for all people. Help us to see injustice around us this week, and give us the courage to respond. And help us to see the just things around us and give encouragement and praise. Amen.

A set of 40 horizontal blue lines, organized into two columns of 20 lines each, for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across most of the page width, leaving small margins on either side.



Session #

God's Plan to Disrupt Injustice Through Jesus

JOINING WITH GOD TO DISRUPT INJUSTICE

MODULE FIVE

SESSION 2

In this session, we will explore how God works through Jesus to interrupt injustice, sin, and, evil, bringing healing, repentance, and reconciliation through Christ to us and our world.

KEY POINT: Jesus invites us to receive God's loving gift of forgiveness and to join with God to share God's love with others.

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

KEY WORDS

COVENANT: Special promise from God.

DISRUPT: Stop, interrupt, or change something.

EXPLOITATION: The action of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work. Such as working long hours for little or no pay.

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 of laws.

RECONCILE: Working to bring back or restore relationships that are broken.

SACRIFICE: Giving up something for someone else.

SYSTEMIC SIN: When systems work against God's will because of the sinfulness of those in charge of the systems.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Paper plates
- Paper
- Markers, pens
- Playdough
- Post-it notes
- Bibles
- Son of Man video: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/son-of-man/>

- Kids talking to a survivor of Japanese-American internment video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e1s2kwSPwU
- *How God Works to Interrupt Injustice* video: <https://vimeo.com/382628714>

PREPARATION

Read through this week's Bible passages. View the videos and prepare to share them with students.

FOR LEADERS

One of the most important things the prophets do is remind us of God's covenant love. A covenant is a special promise from God. In Scripture, one of the most important things the prophets do is remind us of God's covenant love. A covenant is a special promise. In Scripture, five great covenants are made between God and the people of God. The prophets remind God's people of those covenants.

1. **God makes a covenant with Noah** (Genesis 6:18; 8:20–9:17; Isaiah 54:9). God promises never to flood the earth again.
2. **God makes a covenant with Abraham** (Genesis 12:1–3). God promises Abraham that his family will grow into a great nation and that his name will be celebrated. God also promises that his family will be used to bless people throughout the world.
3. **God makes a covenant with Israel through Moses** (Exodus 19:3–6, 10–12; cf. Deuteronomy 4:6–8). God promises to free Israel from slavery, and Israel promises not to enslave or mistreat other people. By treating others right(eous)ly, Israel represents God's love in the world. Sometimes they accurately reflect God's love, and other times they do not. When they fail to live into their created purpose, they become self-centered, sinful, and mistreat their neighbors, particularly the poor. Consequently, God sends Israel into exile, because they have forgotten who they are—a set apart people with a mission to reflect God's love throughout the world—and whose they are as God's chosen people.
4. **God makes a covenant with David** (2 Samuel 23:5; 1 Chronicles 17; 2 Chronicles 7:18; 13:5; Psalm 89:3; Jeremiah 33:21). David intends to build a house of

worship, a temple for God, and God promises to build a "house," or a dynasty, for David (2 Samuel 7:1–11). In this covenant we see a shift occur from Israel as the chief representative of God's restorative plan, to the promise of Jesus. In this new covenant with David, we learn that David's family line will produce the chief prophet, but that prophet will not be David (2 Samuel 7:12–17; cf. Genesis 17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:10; see also Genesis 38; Ruth 4:18–22). The chief prophet is Jesus, who will come out of David's family tree, and he will live and fulfill all of God's promises. God's plans for David and Israel are interconnected (2 Samuel 7:8–11, 23–26).

5. **God sends his son Jesus in human form as the new and final covenant** (Jeremiah 31:31). In Isaiah we learn that this everlasting covenant of peace is linked to Jesus's mission to liberate the oppressed, expand God's kingdom to include the Gentiles, and reconcile the world to God's self—back to its original intent, before sin distorted everything (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 61:8). Jesus's love, justice, and righteousness will be for all people, with a particular emphasis on those who suffer most because of the oppression, exploitation, and injustice that sin systemically breeds (Isaiah 56:3; Luke 4:18–19).

In order to faithfully fulfill this redemptive covenant where we are restored to right relationship with God, through Jesus's love, sacrifice, resurrection, and model for us regarding living out the will of God, we are called to "hold fast to" the covenant and follow the sacrificial example of love Jesus set for us (Isaiah 56:5–6; cf. 56:1–2). While each covenant is important because they build on one another, this final covenant is the most important because the New Testament declares that all God's covenant promises are realized in and through the covenant of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:54–55, 69–75; 2 Corinthians 1:20).

WATCH *Son of Man* video:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/son-of-man/>

This video can be scary for children, especially for those who are younger. An alternative video is *The Messiah Jesus* at <https://bibleproject.com/>.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing or craft materials (optional)

Creating a welcoming space is critical for children to know they are valued.

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

For some children, it may be helpful to use drawing or craft materials 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.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Post-it notes, pens, and a space for posting the Post-it notes

EXPLAIN: Last time we saw how God sent prophets to help overcome or disrupt injustice. We talked about how some actions are just and other are unjust. We also considered some ways we could fulfill God's hope and God's plan for a more just world.

This week we will start by making a "Naughty and Nice" list.

On the naughty list will be unkind things people do that hurt others. On the nice list will be kind things we do that help others.

Divide the children into pairs or groups. Ask each group to think of every kind thing they can do to help others. Next ask each group to think of unkind things we do that hurt others.

Each person in each group will take turns running and posting each idea on the wall. The notes do not have to be in order or separated by groups. The object is to get as many ideas on the board as you can. For smaller groups consider writing all the ideas on a whiteboard or poster instead of using Post-it notes.

Tell the groups they have four minutes to complete this exercise. (The time can be adjusted down or up as needed depending on the size of your group.)

DEBRIEF: Read through each idea and provide space for any comments.

EXPLAIN: The world in which we live is not perfect. None of us is perfect. Hopefully we all do things that help others, but all of us also mess up.

After the prophets, God sent Jesus just as God promised. And like the prophets before him, Jesus came to show us how to love people and disrupt injustice.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bibles

READ JOHN 3:16 AND LUKE 4:16-21.

ASK: Why did Jesus come?

Jesus died to reconcile us with God and to defeat the powers and authorities that create systems of sin and injustice in the world.

Jesus shows us how to truly love one another, and how we become good neighbors to the poor and mistreated, to people who are oppressed. Jesus also gives us the gift of his Spirit, so we can continue to love as he did and be used by God to continue what he started.

Let's take a moment to think about this. God who created us, loves us so much that God breathes his very Spirit into anyone who accepts Jesus as their Savior. God is always with us and God's Spirit will guide us if we listen and allow

God to guide us. How awesome is God’s love for us! What does this tell us about God?

When Jesus says he came to “proclaim good news to the poor” (John 4:18), he is referring to people who are poor in spirit and people who are physically poor and suffer because of the sin of others.

When Jesus says God sent him to “proclaim freedom for the prisoners” (v. 18), he is talking about all who sin and need to be freed from sin through Jesus. God is also talking about those who are unjustly imprisoned (i.e., through kidnapping, or those who have been put into prison for something they did not do, or for an extra long time for a crime that didn’t hurt anyone else).

Jesus also restores our sight. Sin keeps us from seeing all people as our neighbors. We can get so caught up in what we want that it blinds us to injustice around us. Jesus teaches us how to truly see again, revealing to us that everyone is equally made in the image of God and showing us that we all belong to each other. We are a part of one big kingdom family.

ASK: How did Jesus live? Who did he focus on?

READ John 13:34-35.

ASK: What does Jesus call us to do?

READ John 14:16-17.

ASK: Who has Jesus given us to help us notice injustice and act upon it?

READ 1 John 3:16-18.

ASK: How do we know what love is and how do we show our love?

Jesus calls us to something new. He calls us to live with God and for God, by sharing the good news that God loves everyone, forgives our sin, and invites us to follow Jesus by sacrificially loving others as he did. One key way to do this is by noticing injustice, praying about how to respond, and working to end it.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Video of kids talking to a survivor of Japanese-American internment.

THE OVERCOMING INJUSTICE GAME

Take the Post-it notes with the unkind ideas and divide them up among small groups.

Ask the groups to determine how to turn something mean or unjust into something just through kind, Christlike actions.

Ask the groups to silently act out those kind actions (charades) and then debrief.

Either ask each group to explain their charade or ask other groups to share what they saw.

Give everyone a few minutes to practice and then play the game.

DISCUSS

ASK: How does it feel to mess up? How hard was it to find a solution? Why do you think we sometimes choose to mess up and do the mean thing instead of the loving thing?

Everyone messes up. None of us is perfect. God knows we can’t be perfect.

EXPLAIN: As we learned in Module 2, session 3, from the story of Moses, when a leader messes up and fails to confess, repent, and turn back to God, their sin can affect many people. We can mess up as individuals, but we also mess up as a country when we allow sin to keep us from seeing everyone as our neighbors and all people as created equally in the image of God.

In the U.S. we have messed up like this many times:

oppressing Native Americans, enslaving black people, the Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese internment camps, and separating Latino families at the border, many of whom are coming here for safety.

WATCH this video of kids talking to a survivor of Japanese-American internment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e1s2kwSPwU

When we make mistakes, God calls us to repent and to do everything that we can to fix our error. We are also called to learn from our errors so we don’t repeat them. When our family, church, or country makes mistakes, Scripture invites us to pray about how we can partner with Jesus to pursue justice. As we listen for God’s response, we respond to injustice with love, making sure that all our neighbors are being treated fairly.

God’s grace is a gift we receive, even when we do not deserve it. Because of sin, we (individually and as a nation)

do not always do what we should. But because of grace, God commits to keep God's promises, even though we break our promise/our part of the covenant agreement to love others. God does not ask us to be perfect but to be obedient, faithful (open to be led by the Holy Spirit), and willing to be used by God. When we are obedient, we speak out when we see injustice happening, we stand up for our sisters and brothers who are being hurt by systemic sin and oppression by sacrificially loving our neighbors.

That's why God sent his Son Jesus—to show us how to love one another and to forgive us for all the times we mess up. Jesus knows what is in our hearts, and we bring him joy when we try our best to help others, love the overlooked, and pursue justice. We will not always get it right, but when our hearts are in the right place, God is pleased! And, as we grow in our relationship with God, we spend more time with God, and we will learn how to love our neighbors the way Jesus first loved us.

Jesus showed us how to follow the will of God and to love one another (1 John 3:16).

Activity

EXPLAIN: When Jesus came, he performed miracles, but he also experienced all the things we experience, including the injustices people experience today.

Today we are going to remember what Jesus experienced.

OPTION 1: Act out each of the bullet points below.

OPTION 2: Have children select one or two examples to draw or use playdough to illustrate and share.

- Jesus raised a girl from the dead.
 - Jesus healed a blind man.
 - Jesus saved a woman from being stoned.
 - Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish.
 - Jesus raised a young man from the dead.
 - Jesus calmed the wind and the waves that could have injured the people out at sea.
 - Jesus healed ten people with leprosy.
 - Jesus healed a slave.
 - Jesus healed a paralyzed man.
 - Jesus talked with a woman no one else would talk to.
 - Jesus was upset when his disciples tried to keep children away from him.
 - Jesus rose from the dead.
- ASK:** What do all these things tell you about Jesus?
- Jesus chose not to show his power all the time because he did not want people to believe in him only because of the miracles he performed. He wanted them to see his love for them, and he stood up for those who were suffering and acknowledged they were as loved and gifted as people in power.
- DISCUSS**
- ASK:** Have you ever thought of Jesus like this?
- NOTE:** Take time to process this with children. What questions do they have? How does this make them feel? What does it say about Jesus?
- Jesus knows what it's like to be a child.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be homeless.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be born to poor parents.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be an immigrant and a refugee. His family was forced to leave Israel because Jesus would have been killed by a king who didn't love God or use his power for good.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be from a town that other people criticized.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be laughed at.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be spit on.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be made fun of.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be hit in the face.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be beaten up.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to lose a friend, and he cried like you and I do.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to have people lie about and falsely accuse him.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be unjustly punished for something that you didn't do.
 - Jesus knows what it's like to be constantly challenged by people in authority.
- Jesus wants us to remember these things as much as we remember his miracles, because they remind us that Jesus also calls us to disrupt injustice. Jesus loves all his children and does not want them to suffer. He invites us to join with him to end that suffering whenever we encounter it.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Pen and paper

EXPLAIN: Jesus's love, justice, and righteousness are for all people, yet Jesus shows special care for those who are hurting because of systems that create sin and injustice. The Bible highlights people who are poor, sick, homeless, and don't have families or food to eat (Isaiah 56:3; Luke 4:18-19).

As we give God thanks for the love we are shown and the gift of Jesus, we seek to follow Jesus's example. We don't have to be perfect, but we ask God to help us be like Jesus and to love others the way Jesus did.

Here is a video of how one girl in a Covenant church joined God to disrupt injustice. <https://vimeo.com/382628714>

ASK: What might we do this week to live the way Jesus did and to follow his example to disrupt injustice?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for coming to earth to show us how to faithfully reveal God to the world. Thank you for loving us when we mess up and for forgiving our sin. Help us to live like you. Help us to love not just with words or speech but with actions and in truth. Amen.



Session #

God's Plan to Disrupt Injustice through the Holy Spirit

JOINING WITH GOD TO DISRUPT INJUSTICE

MODULE FIVE

SESSION 3

In this session, we see how God gives us the gift of his Spirit, who empowers us to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world today. The Bible calls us "co-laborers with Christ," which means we are people who join Jesus in making broken things right in our world and calling people to do justice by living in right relationship with God, our neighbor, and creation.

KEY POINT: The Spirit invites us to disrupt injustice through the ministry of reconciliation. In so doing, we follow Jesus's command to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35, NIV).

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

KEY WORDS

AMBASSADOR: A representative. As Christians, we represent God in the world.

DISRUPT: Interrupt, change.

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

RECONCILIATION: Working to bring back or restore relationships that are broken.

SOLIDARITY: Supporting one another. Standing up and speaking up for those facing injustice.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Markers/coloring materials/pencils
- Drawing paper
- Playdough
- Bibles
- Computer, tablet, or smart TV with internet connection
- 4 note cards
- Paper hearts
- Holy Spirit video: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/holy-spirit/>
- Agape Love video: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/agape-love/>

PREPARATION

Read through the Bible passages for this session. View videos and prepare the technology needed to share them with students. Cut out heart shapes from drawing paper large enough to write one sentence on them. Write the following phrases on the four note cards: “near or far,” “same or different races or ethnicity,” “from the same or different countries and continents, as immigrants and refugees,” and “know or didn’t know.”

NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

While the voice of the Lord was rarely heard during what we call the “intertestamental” period, the time between the events of the Old and New Testaments, prophetic tradition in Scripture cannot be reduced to the Old Testament. The two most prominent prophetic voices in the New Testament are John the Baptist (Matthew 11:9; Luke 1:76) and Jesus. John was called to pave the way for Jesus. He called people to repent of their sins and to return to God (Matthew 3:1-12).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that God would pour out his Spirit “on all people” (Acts 2:17). Quoting the prophet Joel, Peter explained that as a result, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18).

Prophetic ministry in the early church grew as a result of this. A band of prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. Prophets were active in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), Tyre (Acts 21:4), Caesarea, in the churches at Rome (Romans 12:6), Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 14:1-40), Ephesus (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11; Acts 19:1-7; 1 Timothy 1:18), and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

The Spirit of God is alive and at work through the Church. Jesus gave the gift of his Spirit to empower the Church to serve as his hands and feet in the world after he returned to the right hand of the father. The Holy Spirit directs and catalyzes us as co-laborers with Jesus in the work of reconciling all things—which includes people, systems, and structures that are broken and distorted by sin—back to God. The Spirit draws us into solidarity with our neighbors—particularly the least of these who suffer the most because of sin—and helps us to discern how we faithfully serve as ambassadors of reconciliation in our divided world.

WATCH this video on the Holy Spirit:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/holy-spirit/>

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing or craft materials (optional)

Creating a welcoming space is critical for children to know they are valued.

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

For some children, it may be helpful to use drawing or craft materials 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.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper and pencils

Write down or draw something unkind that someone did or said to you; something that hurt your feelings, made you feel unloved, or all alone. Don't include the name(s) of the persons, just write or draw what happened.

(If a story involves abuse, check in with that child apart from the other children. In this case you do want names. Then take appropriate action in accordance with your church's safety plan.)

If you don't have a safety plan you can find one here: <https://covchurch.org/resources/making-churches-safer/>

ASK:

- How did you feel?
- What do you wish a friend would have done for you, when you were feeling like this?

EXPLAIN: Today we're going to discover a gift Jesus gives us. A gift that assures us God is always present, even when bad things happen, and a gift that can move us and others to reach out and help someone in need. Let's explore our Bibles to see what that gift is.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bibles, paper, markers, or playdough

READ JOHN 14:15-21.

EXPLAIN: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God present with us.

ASK:

- Do you have questions about the Holy Spirit?
- Why do you think Jesus asks God the Father to send us the Holy Spirit?

EXPLAIN:

- The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us so that we never have to be alone, or without God's loving presence (John 14:16-17, 26).
- The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God (Acts 5:32).
- God also gives the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks (Luke 11:13).
- The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and a deeper understanding of who God is (Ephesians 1:17).
- The Holy Spirit connects us to God and to each other as sisters and brothers in Christ (1 John 4:13).

ASK:

- Do you ever feel the Holy Spirit in you?
- What does it feel like?

EXPLAIN:

- The Holy Spirit helps us to love others.
- In the Bible it says the Holy Spirit comes on us like a "dove" or like "fire" or like "wind." Let's draw these things. Why do you think the Holy Spirit is described like this?
- What does this have to say about how much God loves us?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper and markers, Agape video

We talked earlier about a time we were hurt by someone else. Now think about a time you hurt someone else. Share what happened.

We all hurt people at some point. God knows we are not perfect. When we know we have hurt someone, we need to apologize to them, and pray to God, asking for forgiveness. Sometimes we even hurt people without knowing it. But when we learn we have hurt someone, apologizing is ALWAYS the first step. Then we need to ask that person how we can make things better, listen to their response, and do what we can to make things right again (reconciliation).

Now when you think about what happened, write down or draw one thing you could have done differently in that situation. What did you learn?

Let's pray silently and ask God for forgiveness. Assure the children that God has forgiven them and will help us try and do the right thing in the future.

READ ACTS 2:42-47.

ASK:

- What happened within the community where the people received the Holy Spirit?
- They ate, prayed, and fellowshiped together.
- They sold their excess, so that no one went without what they needed; no need was unmet.
- They gathered together every day to learn more about God, to praise God, and deepen their friendships with one another.
- The love they had for one another made other people want to know more about God, and become part of this special community (the Church). So, these believers invited them in, told them about God, and invited them to join the family of God.
- What family of God do you belong to? What is it like?
- We also belong to the the whole body of Christ, every church. How does that make you feel?
- Do you think God would like everyone to be a part of the church? Why?

DISCUSS

In this story, we heard about followers of Jesus selling their possessions so that they could "give to anyone who had need." What needs do people have today, that we (the Church) could sell things to help meet?

Make a list of the things students say. Then ask if they would consider selling, or forgo buying something, to help meet some of the listed needs their neighbors have.

Take the list they create and make a plan to do a churchwide fundraiser to help the needs of neighbors: Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, or Lent may all be good opportunities to bless neighbors.

Some fundraising examples:

- Raise funds that will help students in the Stateville Restorative Arts program at North Park Theological Seminary be able to stay in contact with their family and support systems as they seek to transform their lives.
- Raise money to aid families separated at the border.
- Raise money to support families impacted by the water crisis in Flint, Michigan.
- Raise funds for a particular need in your community.

WATCH AND DISCUSS

Jesus gave us the gift of his Spirit to help us be his hands and feet in the world after he returned to heaven. We can continue the work that Jesus started.

WATCH THIS VIDEO:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/holy-spirit/>

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to be partners, or co-laborers, with Jesus in the work of making broken things right. The Bible says that we partner with Jesus to fix brokenness caused by sin and to reconcile all things—which includes people, systems, and structures that are messed up by sin—back to God. The Spirit also brings us into a diverse (race, gender, class, ethnicity, abled/disabled) community of loving sisters and brothers who stand up for one another and protect each other (practicing solidarity) as neighbors—particularly the least of these who suffer the most because of sin.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Pre-cut hearts, markers, notecards with four statements

ASK: Is love something we feel or something we do?

Assure children that both answers are true. Love is something we feel and something we do.

EXPLAIN: Jesus tells us to love God and love our neighbor.

Name some of your neighbors and where they live.

- How do they show loving kindness to you?
(Write the answers on the hearts.)
- How do you show loving kindness to them?
(Write the answers on the hearts.)

EXPLAIN: Usually we think of a neighbor as someone close to us. But when Jesus talks about a neighbor, Jesus means "everyone." Jesus loves everyone and wants us to extend loving kindness to everyone.

- Hold up the notecards one at a time and ask:
(Both answers are always correct)
- Is a neighbor "Near or Far?"
- Is a neighbor "Someone with the same race or ethnicity or with a different race or ethnicity?"
- Is a neighbor "From the same country or another country?"
- Is a neighbor "Someone you know or don't know?"
Someone who is a good friend or not a good friend?

ASK: How can we be a neighbor to someone who is:

- Being made fun of?
- Someone who is far away?
- Someone who needs food?
- Someone who needs a friend?

EXPLAIN: When the Bible speaks of our neighbors, it doesn't just mean the people who live next door to us or on the same street as we do.

We may hear some people call neighbors our enemies, but Jesus teaches us to "love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44, NIV). Regardless

of where they live, or how they look, we are supposed to love everyone equally; just like we want other people to love us (Matthew 7:12). The Holy Spirit helps us to understand (discern) how we love people like Jesus loves us, in a divided world that needs a lot more love (ambassadors of reconciliation).

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Pen and paper

Ask students to make a list of people who we sometimes forget are our neighbors.

Ask them to identify people who are not treated and loved well.

Have students write a prayer to God, where they ask the Holy Spirit to show them how they, and their church family, can begin disrupting the injustices that harm the neighbors they identified as being overlooked, mistreated, and unloved.

Students could also write a letter of encouragement to one of the individuals who is a part of the group that they are going to raise funds to support. The letter could contain:

- The student's favorite Bible verse
- A reminder that God loves them and has a plan for their lives
- A reminder that God is present with them, even during this hard time
- A reminder that believers are praying for them, their family, and for their situation to change for the better
- A reminder that they have a story to share and you are ready to listen to it

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you God for creating a diverse world. We are thankful that each of us is both unique and equal, but sad that everyone is not treated equally. We ask you to help us live into what we have learned today and to notice brokenness in our world. Please help us to live in right relationship with you and our neighbors. Amen.

Lined writing area consisting of two columns of horizontal lines for notes or answers.

JUSTICE JOURNEY

for kids

covchurch.org/JusticeJourney



The Evangelical Covenant Church

LOVE MERCY DO JUSTICE
MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES