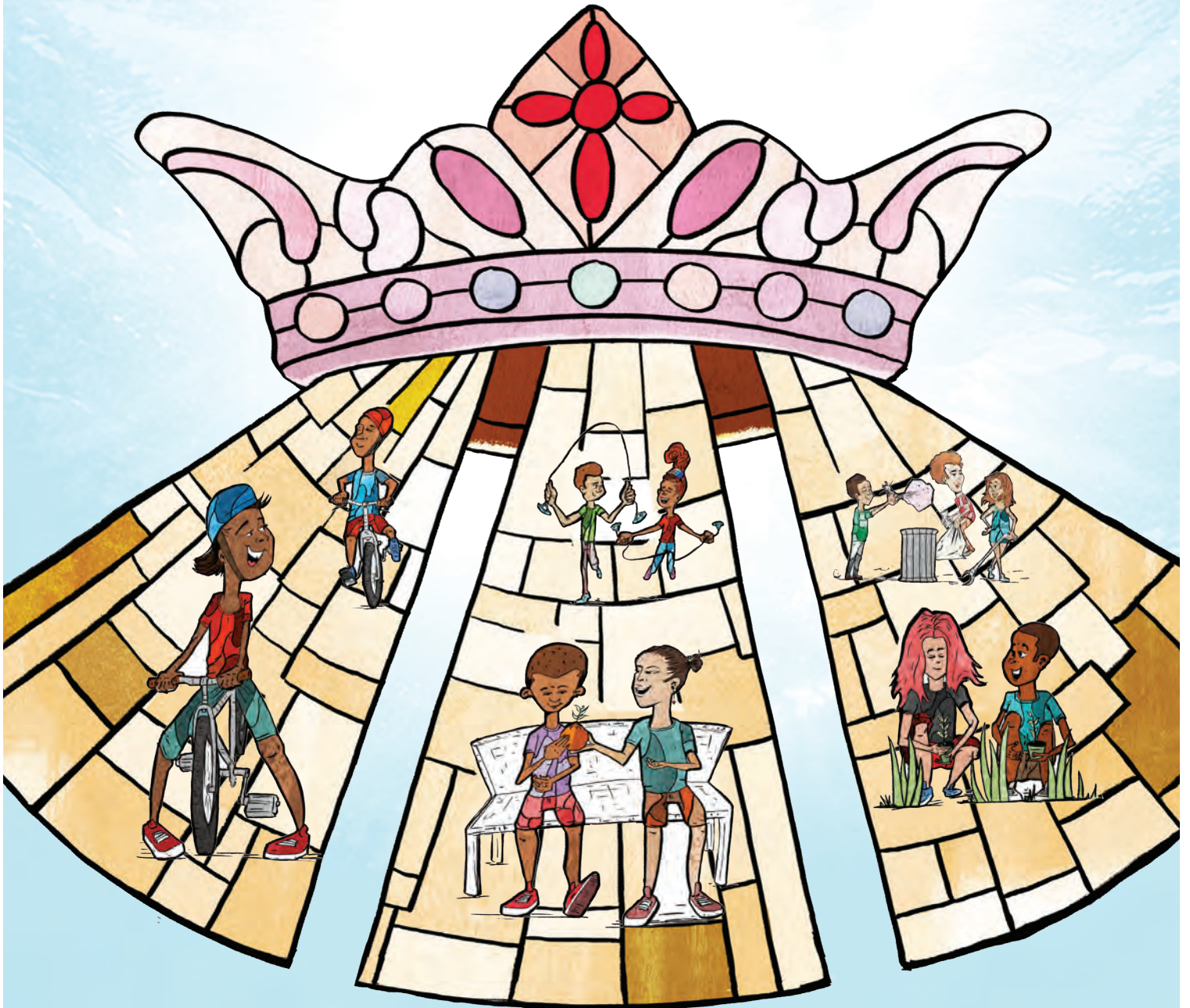




The Evangelical Covenant Church

JUSTICE JOURNEY *for kids*



LIVING INTO LIFE-GIVING PATTERNS OF DIVERSITY, COMMUNITY, AND LOVE

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.

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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.

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

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KEY WORDS GLOSSARY

AMBASSADOR: A person who represents something. As Christians, we represent God in the world, and show God's love to everyone, both people who are a part of God's family (the Church), and people we pray will become part of God's/our family.

BROKENNESS: When something does not work how God created it to. Brokenness happens when something is no longer whole or complete, when it is divided, separated, and not what God wants.

COVENANT: A special promise that God makes with God's people. These promises include instructions that remind us of how we are supposed to live and love as God's children.

CULTURE: The food, language, arts, games, traditions, and practices of people groups all around the world. There are many different, exciting, and beautiful, cultures all around the world.

DISCRIMINATION: Unfair treatment of others because they are different. The difference could be gender, religion, race, or language.

DISRUPT: To stop, interrupt, or change something.

DIVERSITY: God made a variety of different people, plants, and animals and called them good. God made everything different on purpose, diversity is a gift from God.

EQUALITY: We are all made in the image of God. Which means that while we are all different (we each have different faces, hair, skin color, height, and weight) we all do the same thing, reflect parts of who God is. No person or group reflects more of who God is than another group, men do not reflect more of who God is than women. We all share the same amount of God's image, though we reflect different parts of God.

Equality also means that no person has more or better opportunities than their neighbors do. Everyone has the same chance to be everything God created them to be.

EQUITY: Fairness. When everyone has the same number of chances, opportunities, and support. When everyone is free to be what God created them to be. When all people are treated fairly, and no longer mistreated because of where they were born, what language they speak, the color of their skin, their gender, how much money they have, or a disability.

ETERNAL LIFE: A timeless, infinite life together with God, free from the sin of injustice, brokenness, and pain of this world.

ETHNICITY: A group of people who come from a certain part of the world, who share culture, traditions, and usually language.

EXPLOITATION: Mistreating someone to take something from them that you want. Sometimes sin leads to unjust laws that make exploitation happen and at other times sin causes people to take advantage of their neighbors in unhealthy relationships, where people take something that does not belong to them (stealing and bullying).

FAITH: Believing in God even though we cannot see God. Faith helps us live like Jesus. Faith helps us as children of God, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to even love those who have not always treated us the way that they would want to be treated.

IMMIGRANT: A person who leaves the country they were born in and goes to live in another country.

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.

JUSTICE: Making things right, back to the way God created them to be. This includes fixing broken relationships, laws, and systems that sin has damaged. It means repairing things so that all people have an equal opportunity to be everything God created them to be.

LORD: A Lord is someone who we follow and try to be like. Jesus, unlike other lords, is loving, caring, and just. Jesus is our model for loving God and neighbor well. Jesus is our guide for living a good life that pleases God and makes the world a better place.

PARABLE: A story told by Jesus, to explain something in a way that people can understand.

PREJUDICE: Believing things about a person without knowing them and mistreating them because of what you think about the color of their skin, gender, ethnicity, or where they are from.

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

OPPRESSION: When people are hurt by sinful laws and unfair systems. When people are mistreated and do not have enough power to speak up and change what is wrong.

RACE: Groups of people who have skin that is close to the same color and body features (noses, eyes, ears, mouths, and hair) that are similar. These groups usually have a common experience and usually come together because of this.

RACISM: When one group of people believes they are better (superior) than others and uses their privilege to create laws and systems which work better for their racial group than for other racial groups. Racism can happen intentionally or unintentionally.

RECONCILIATION: Partnering with God to fix what sin has broken. Sin damages our relationships, the law, and systems. We pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us and give us the power needed to fix the brokenness we see in the world.

REPENTANCE: When we see sin in our own lives, we pray, ask God for forgiveness (which God gives us when we ask), and stop living in a way that just thinks about ourselves. When we repent, we turn away from selfishness and turn back to God. Then we spend time with God, building a strong relationship, and go out and show the world God's love by serving and supporting our neighbors—treating them how we want to be treated.

RESTORATION: Returning things to the way God created them to be. Sin breaks things and damages what God created. The good news though is that God is in the process of fixing everything that sin has damaged, and God invites us, as the Church, to help with fixing what is broken.

SACRIFICE: Sharing with others and using what we have to show God's love to our neighbors. When we have the choice to get something for ourselves, but we choose to instead get something for someone in need, or to do something to show our appreciation for someone we love.

SAMARITAN: An ethnicity from north of Jerusalem that Jews thought they were superior to. Jews thought Samaritans were unclean and not as good as them. God uses the story of the Good Samaritan to show how

God's love gives us the power to love people even when they do not treat us the way that they would want to be treated. This story also shows that God's love comes from unexpected places and people.

SAVIOR: Jesus offers to forgive and save us from a life of self-focused sin, and fill us with his love and Spirit to help us live a life loving others.

SELFISHNESS: When we only think about ourselves, and do not see, or do not care about the hurt and pain of our neighbors. We can think so much about ourselves, and what we want, that we miss opportunities to show God's love and tell others about Jesus.

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. Sin damages the things that God created to bring love, joy, happiness, and health into our world and relationships.

SOLIDARITY: 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.

SYSTEMS: Places (like the government, schools, or churches) that create laws and rules for how things will be done.



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

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covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

Session #

1

Creation and Diversity

KEY WORD

DIVERSITY: Variety, difference. God made a variety of people, plants, animals, and planets and called them good.

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
- Playdough or clay, enough for each child to have a fist-sized lump
- Sticky notes
- Poster board
- Families of the world video playlist:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8HqCrX4JFq28TVVxrVwZu0lz2GpOa79p>
- Children & families around the world video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2r2C26RCYs>

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, need love, need respect. 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.

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: 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. Why 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. It may be helpful to read through the text more than once so the children can reflect further as they draw.

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! God 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 create 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 equally made to do these things together, not just by ourselves. That's what it means to be made in the image of God. This is God's gift to us, that together 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 the variety of people in the world clearly shows 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 intentionally created diverse by God. 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. None of us looks the same or acts the same. This means we can learn from each other. Diversity of people makes our lives and our relationship with God better too. We're going to learn more about that today. Diversity is a gift from God.

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. Give each team, or the group, 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. Play until all sticky notes

are gone.

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, and unique. God loves diversity, and God wants us to appreciate diversity and love each other just as God loves us.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Prepared index cards, playdough

Give each child some playdough and an index card.

Invite them to use the playdough 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 your 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 you God for the way you made diversity in creation and among humans. Help us to speak up and be a friend to everyone, not just those who look and act like us. Help us to be kind to one another and learn from each other. Amen



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

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Session #

The Church and Diversity

KEY WORD

DIVERSITY: Variety, difference. God made a variety of people, plants, animals, and planets and called them good.

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 the locations of 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
- *Praises Heard Around the World* video: [youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8)

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 that 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 of your church and other worship gatherings they may have attended.

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: 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. For smaller classes or groups you could sit and work through the whole bingo card and see how many match and how many are unique to each child.

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 purposely made each of us different and loves each of us but sometimes one group of people think they are better than another group of people and work to keep them separate. What might it look like if only one kind of person—who liked the color red, or ate pancakes every day for breakfasts—was allowed in the church? Take a minute and talk with your neighbor about how our church would be different if that was so.

Now lets share our thoughts together.

ASK: Who do you think God wants you to invite to the church? Why do you think this is important to God?

SAY: Now let's look at what God has to say about this in the Bible.

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 2:1-4.

Read a few times and encourage the children to draw what they imagine the coming of the Spirit looked like.

EXPLAIN: Pentecost was a Jewish spring harvest festival, but now we use the word Pentecost to remember when Jesus's disciples received the Holy Spirit.

EXPLAIN: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God which Jesus promised he would give to every one who received him as Lord and Savior. God loves us so much that just as God breathed the breath of life into us, God now also breathes his Spirit into us. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Bible and directs us to love others and live for God.

ASK: What did the Holy Spirit give the disciples to help

them share Jesus's love with others?

EXPLAIN: Now lets look and listen to Acts 2:5-12 to see how this gift from God was used to love others.

READ ACTS 2:5-12.

Read 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 Pentecost, the big spring harvest festival. 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 the good news of Jesus is? (Because of God’s love for us, God sent us a Savior, Jesus. Jesus’s life shows us what it means to love one another. Jesus loved us so much that he died on the cross for us so our sins are forgiven. Then Jesus filled us with the Spirit of God to guide us, so we could fulfill God’s plan to share God’s love with everyone.)
- What kinds of people do you think God wanted to be part of these new churches?
- Do you have a story with Jesus? (Let children know that each story is different, because we are all different.)
- Who does God welcome into the church?

EXPLAIN: Everyone is welcome to become a part of the church community. You don’t have to acknowledge Jesus as your Lord and Savior first. The church is the place where we learn about Jesus, experience Jesus’s love, become Jesus’s disciple and share Jesus’s love with others. If you’re not sure you are a disciple of Jesus but want to be Jesus’s disciples, we can talk it over and pray with your parents after class.

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 in the church, but we all have this in common Jesus loves us, we love Jesus, and Jesus commands us to love one another. 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? Remember: God made everything different on purpose. Diversity is a gift from God.

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? Or ask: Why is it good we are not all the same? Why do you think God made it like this?

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 are they 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.”

Praises Heard Around the World video:

[youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8)

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you God for the diversity in churches and the way you planned for the good news to spread to all people. Help us to share the love of Jesus, by loving those who are different from us and sharing the good news of Jesus with everyone.



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

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 #

The Kingdom of Heaven and Diversity

KEY WORD

DIVERSITY: Variety, difference. God made a variety of people, plants, animals, and planets and called them good.

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

RACISM: When one group of people believes they are better (superior) than others and uses their privilege to create laws and systems which work better for their racial groups than for other racial groups. Racism can happen intentionally or unintentionally.

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
- *There's a Space for You* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow>
- Blank cards
- Stickers

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 quinceañera 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?

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 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. Start with new bowls and reverse positions.

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, killed, and enslaved other humans because they thought that the color of their skin made them better than others. 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. Two ways this commonly happens is racism and prejudice. Many people are sad and hurting, or angry and hateful, because of these sins. 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 intentionally 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 7:9-10.

EXPLAIN: So in heaven people of all countries and tribes and languages were all worshiping 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, in Revelation 19:9, it 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.

God says this is what it will be like at the end of time. But God also wants us to live this way today.

- How might we do something like this? Who could we invite to a feast that doesn't look like us and whose traditions are different from us?
- How could we show God's love to those who are different from us?

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.

Racism is when one group of people believes they are better (superior) than others and uses their privilege to create laws and systems which work better for their racial groups than for other racial groups. Racism can happen intentionally or unintentionally.

Prejudice is believing things about a person without knowing them, and mistreating them because of what you think about the color of their skin, gender, ethnicity, or where they are from.

Let's take a few minutes to draw and share what you think this feast will look like. 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! And, in verse 2, we read that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, which also means ethnicities. God will use us, our love, and the Gospel to heal the wounds racism and prejudice cause. We will all be one people—God's people. Just as God made us all different in the beginning at creation, God will love and 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 worshiping 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? How might we celebrate together? What might we learn from each other?

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

Gather the kids around the video player and play the video: *There's a Space for You*

<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

God help us respond in a loving way to others rather than mean ways because someone is different from us. Thank you 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

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 #

Injustice

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

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.

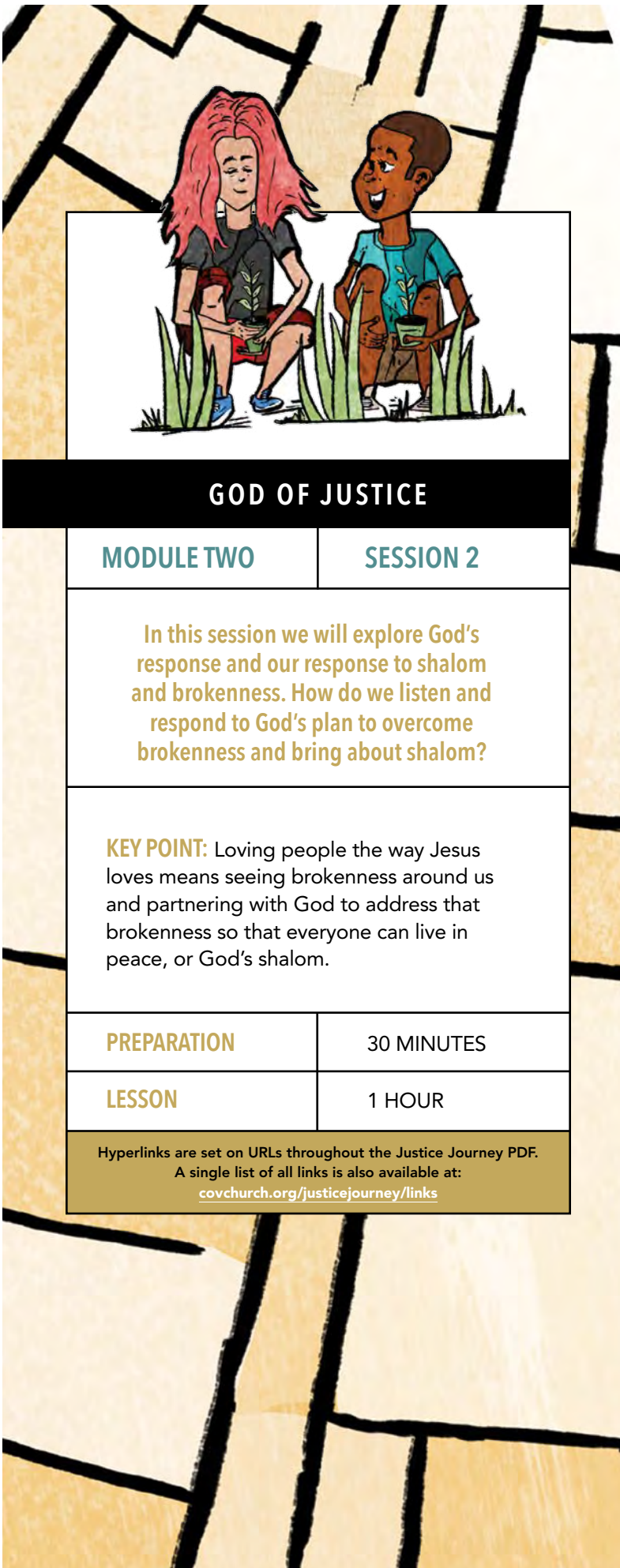
Share vulnerably to explore and make a plan.

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

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?

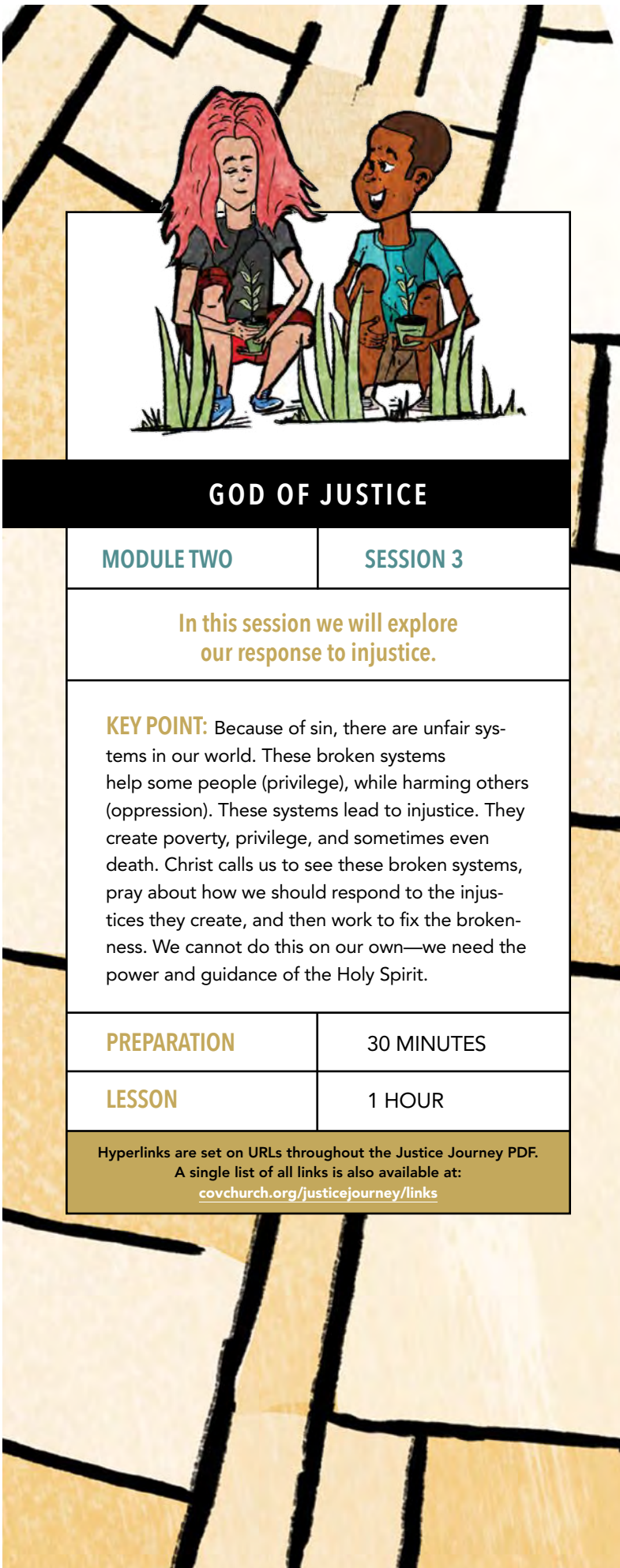
Closing Activities

- 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

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

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.

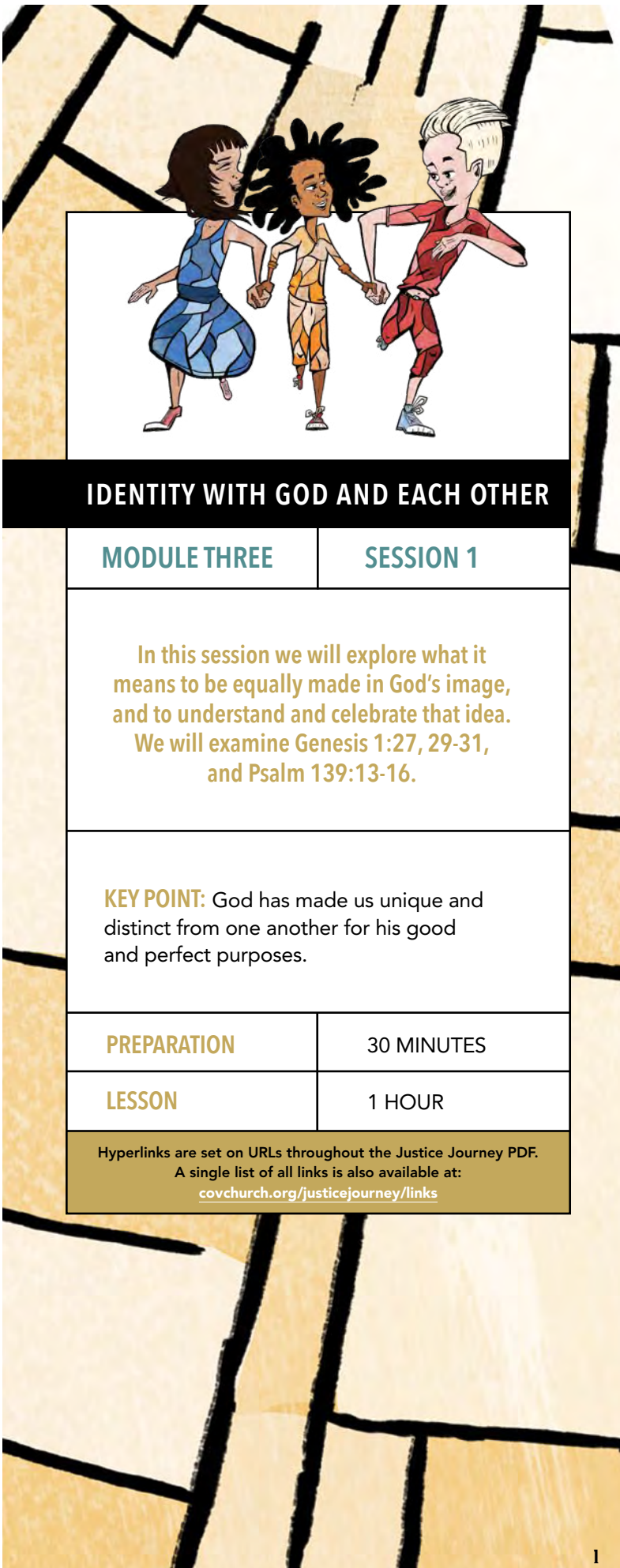
Closing Activities

- **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.
- **Write the following list of needs on the board:** Racism, Unfair Laws and Systems, Hunger, Homelessness, Neighborhood violence, a Lack of school supplies, winter clothing, and Clean drinking water *(While we usually think this is just an international issue. More than 30 million Americans lived in areas where water systems violated safety rules at the beginning of 2019 according to the EPA.)*

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, raise funds to donate clean water, host a prayer vigil, do a letter-writing campaign, or help with mail content for a neighborhood nonprofit addressing these issues.

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 equally 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 equally 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

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 #

Made in God's Image

KEY WORDS

DIVERSITY: Variety, difference. God made a variety of people, plants, animals, and planets and called them good.

INJUSTICE: WHEN THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY GOD INTENDS. 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.

RACE: Shared common physical characteristics.

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

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	

(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.

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: 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. Encourage children to also add things they do if they're not on the 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 exactly 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 variety or difference. 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 God is the greatest artist! God's artistry brought the world into being and inspires beauty all around us. Diversity is one of the most magnificent elements of God's artistry!

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, every race, ethnicity, immigrants, refugees, and people with disabilities are all equally made in God's image.)

SAY: Each of us are equally made in God's image. That means boys and girls, men and woman, and all the diverse people from all around the world. 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 equally made in God's image. Every single human being on earth—that is nearly seven and a half billion people—is equally 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 in a special and unique way.

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. We are different individually and as races. 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.
- 6. God gives us the responsibility of helping to make things right.** We won't always make the right choice, but God wants us to notice injustice and help to make it right. If we discover we have an advantage over someone else, God wants us to notice and do something about it because all of us are God's children.

What do you think God would want us to do in these situations?

- I have plenty of food but there are others who don't have enough?
- I'm never made fun of for my skin color, features, or culture but how should I respond when I hear or see someone else being made fun of for these things?
- In John 15:12 Jesus says we should love one another, who do you think the one another is? And how should we show them they are loved by God?

ASK: 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 (optional)

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
<p>In this session we will explore John 4:3-26. We will acknowledge the diversity of language, culture, and peoples that Jesus calls to himself.</p>	
<p>KEY POINT: Appreciating the diversity of God's people</p>	
PREPARATION	30 MINUTES
LESSON	1 HOUR
<p>Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF. A single list of all links is also available at: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links</p>	

Session #



Appreciating the Diversity of God's People

KEY WORDS

CULTURE: The food language, arts, games, traditions and practices of people groups all around the world.

DIVERSITY: Variety, difference. God made a variety of people, plants, animals, and planets and called them good.

ETHNICITY: Belonging to a group with a common cultural tradition.

RACE: Shared common physical characteristics.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- The book *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox
- The book *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh
- Magazines
- Three poster boards
- Scissors and glue sticks
- A handout of children's faces from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. To download visit: covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

PREPARATION

- Cut out the letters "ECC," one letter per poster board size paper, posted up on the wall.
- Cut out pictures of children of different ethnicities.

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.

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 loving Jesus and knowing that Jesus loves 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 playdough

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 equally made in God's image?

Today we are going to read a passage of Scripture in which two people groups lived near each other (Samaritans and Jews) but were not equally cared for.

READ JOHN 4:3-26.

As you read through the Scripture make note of these things:

1. Jesus was tired and thirsty.
2. Jesus converses with a Samaritan woman. This would never take place among Jewish religious leaders as Samaritans were disliked by the Jews.
3. Living water refers to Christ's loving presence in our lives.
4. We can be thirsty for water and also thirsty for God, for God's loving presence.
5. Jesus tells the woman that she won't have to thirst for God any longer because if she accepts Jesus as her Messiah, God's Son, and her Savior, God's spiritual presence will always be with her. She will have eternal life and she will be able to worship God anywhere.
6. Jesus is showing us he loves everyone and that everyone may receive God's eternal love and life.

After reading the Scripture together, hand out paper or playdough, 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 different races and people groups?
- 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? Culture?
- How can we celebrate diversity as a gift from God, as a beautiful part of God's intentionality in 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 "*Equally made in God's Image: We Are Diverse, and Unified as One, as 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.) 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.

READ: *Separate is Never Equal.*

- What is this story about?
- How do you think Jesus was feeling when Sylvia was not allowed in the school?
- How was Sylvia brave?
- If we see an injustice like this how should we respond?

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 and take action to being about justice and fairness for all God's people. Because 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.*)

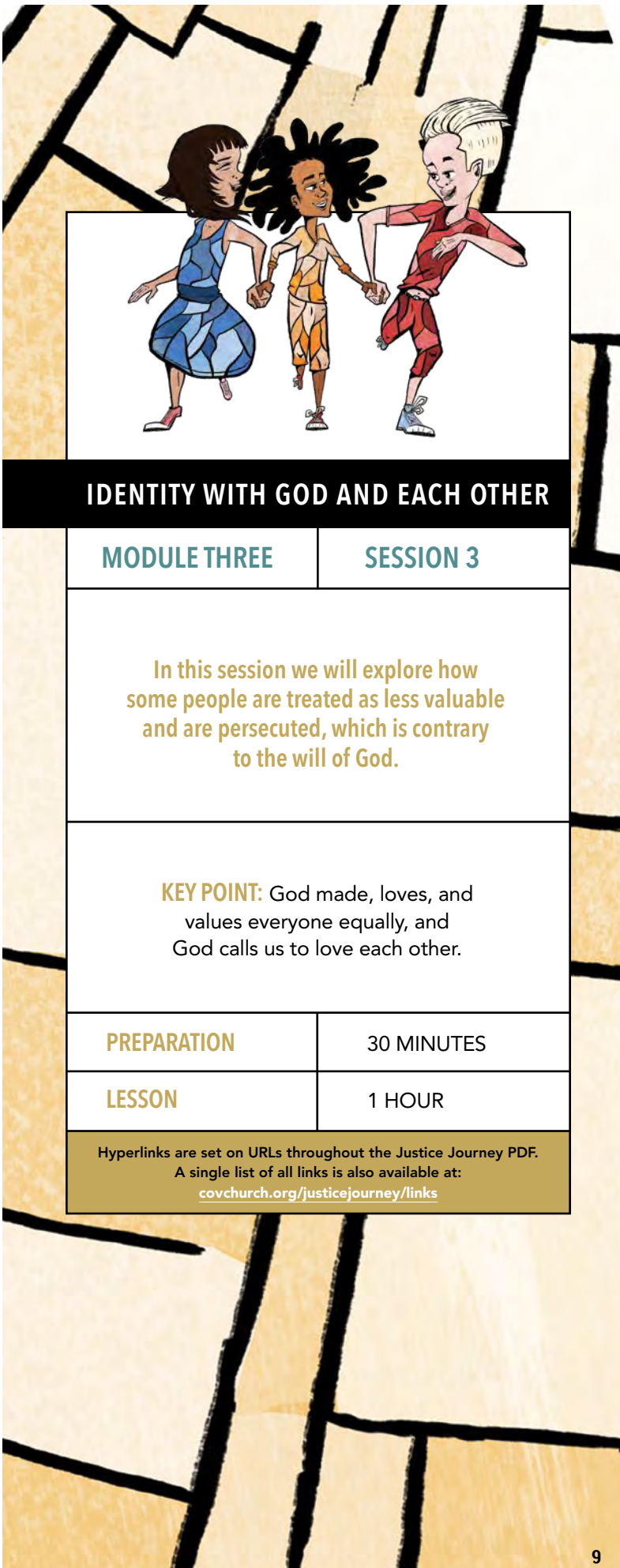
Interactive Encounter

1. 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!
2. Invite someone in from another race, culture, or country to share their faith walk, cultural traditions, and challenges. Provide space for children to ask questions and consider a plan of action for any challenges that could be addressed by the children.

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.

Lined area for writing, consisting of horizontal lines.



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

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 #

Treating and Valuing Everyone Equally

KEY WORDS

ETHNICITY: Belonging to a group with a common cultural tradition.

INJUSTICE: When things are not the way God intends. 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.

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.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A laptop or computer with internet access, or download the following movie trailer 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: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRXmuv7JP-A>
- Blank index cards and markers
- Craft sticks
- *All Around the World* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SNg7Q52vDs> (Lyrics on last page of this session)

Welcome

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child about what they enjoy, what has been difficult about their week or day, 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. Or you could draw a line on the board with a happy face on one end and a sad face at the other and ask them to put an x on the line that shows how they are feeling and then discuss.

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: A media player

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.

WATCH: *Wonder* video trailer

<https://www.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?

Allow time for children to answer.

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 where your parents grew up, or the shape of your eyes, or the color of your skin, or hair, or what kind of things you like to eat or do. There are all kinds of ways that people consider other people in the world as being less valuable. This makes God very sad, because each one of us is equally made in God's image and we are all equally loved and valued by our creator.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Index cards, markers, craft sticks (optional)

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 (less important or not equally made in the image of God), 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. What does it look like to love God with our whole heart, and love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves?

This is a three part question on what it means to love God, love our neighbor, and 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?
- Who was a neighbor? Why?
- 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 unjustly, in ways that went against the will of God. They were people with many gifts and dreams just like you, but they were oppressed.

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

NATIVE AMERICANS

In 1838, President Martin Van Buren sent General Winfield Scott and 7,000 soldiers to remove Cherokee Indian people from their native land so white settlers could live there instead. Scott and his troops used bayonets (long guns with knives) to force the Cherokee people out of their homes while white people went into their homes and stole their belongings. Then the soldiers marched the Cherokee people 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. Today, some

people call this terrible journey, and others like this one, the Trail of Tears.

The federal government promised that their new land would remain theirs forever, but soon U.S. armies and white settlers pushed westward, and the government broke its promise as 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.

ASK:

- 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 are your thoughts or questions if you have first nation ancestors?
- What do you think God would want us to do?

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 as slaves. Slaves had to do hard work for their masters, but they did not earn any money at all. As you can imagine, this made masters very rich while slaves stayed very poor. 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, live in white neighborhoods, or go to the nicest schools that were only for white kids.

ASK:

- 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 Activity

WHO IS YOUR "AUGGIE"?

Show the trailer for *Wonder* again.

<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 equally 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 others.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player, song sheets

"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.

WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SNg7Q52vDs>

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 when we see someone who is being treated unjustly because of their race, remind us to speak up and take action as an act of love. 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.
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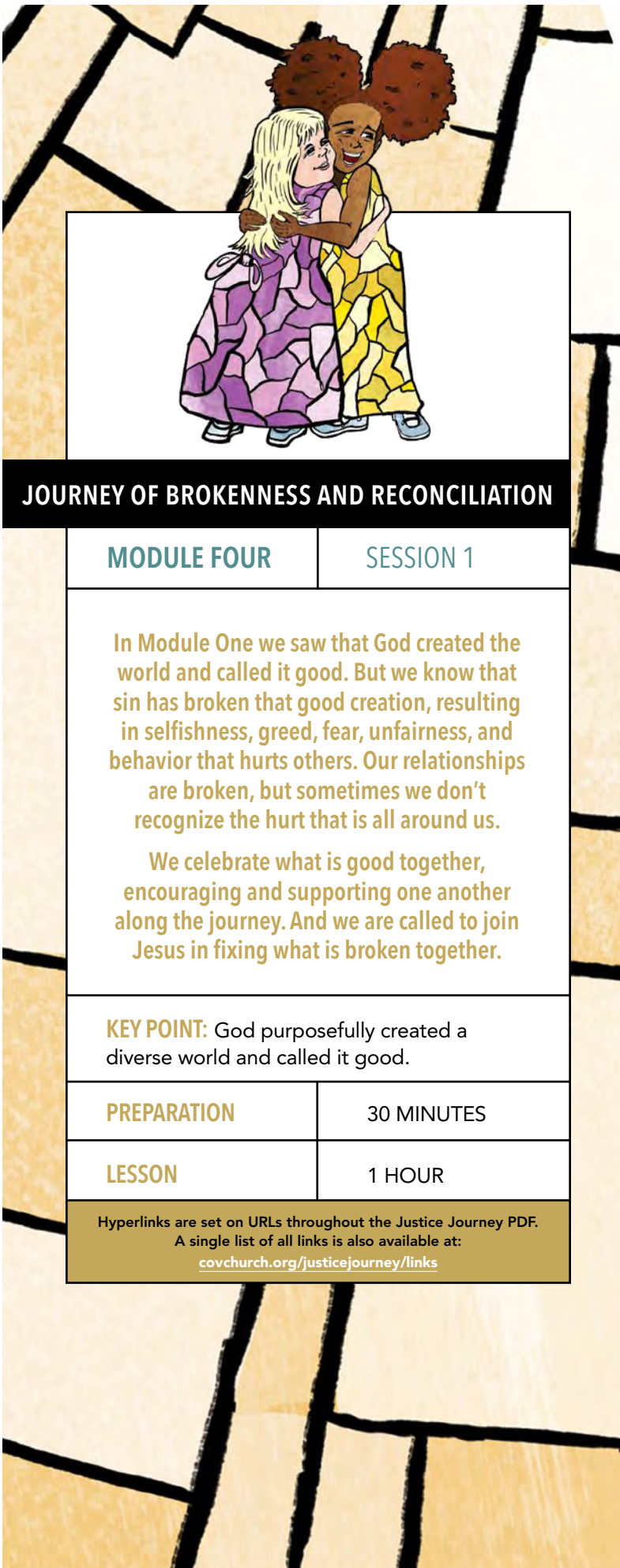
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Jesus' love is one of a kind, he loves us so much
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No one else could love us more, it's amazing
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JOURNEY OF BROKENNESS AND RECONCILIATION

MODULE FOUR SESSION 1

In Module One we saw that God created the world and called it good. But we know that sin has broken that good creation, resulting in selfishness, greed, fear, unfairness, and behavior that hurts others. Our relationships are broken, but sometimes we don't recognize the hurt that is all around us.

We celebrate what is good together, encouraging and supporting one another along the journey. And we are called to join Jesus in fixing what is broken together.

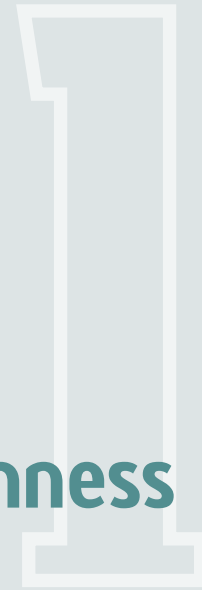
KEY POINT: God purposefully created a diverse world and called it good.

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 #



Brokenness

KEY WORDS

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

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

RESTORATION: Making something right. Returning something to the way God intends it to be.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Ball(s) of yarn
- Inflated balloon, Nerf ball, or beach ball
- Drawing or craft materials (optional)
- The book *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales

PREPARATION

Research and arrange optional joint learning experience or testimony for review activity.

Together we will explore:

- What is broken?
- Why is it broken?
- What am I in this brokenness?
- How can we be a part of fixing brokenness together?
- What does reconciliation and restoration mean?

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 difficult this week, 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: A ball(s) of yarn and an inflated balloon, Nerf ball, or beach ball

Appreciation Circle—Invite children to sit in a circle. (You may need more than one circle if you have a large group.)

Join them in the circle, holding a ball of yarn.

EXPLAIN: Each of us will have a chance to pass this ball of yarn to another person in the circle. But first, we will say something we appreciate about the person we are giving the yarn to. For example, “a good friend,” “kind,” “helper,” etc.

DIRECTIONS

1. Make a loop with the end of the yarn and hold the loop.
2. Give a compliment to a student across the circle and toss the ball of yarn to them, letting it unwind as it goes. Don't worry if it drops on the floor—just pick it up and continue.
3. Ask that student to loop the yarn around a finger, then pay a compliment to someone else in the circle and toss the ball to them.
4. Each person in turn should say something they appreciate about another person in the circle, loop the yarn around a finger, and then toss it to that person. As the ball unwinds, it creates a web of interconnection.
5. Continue until everyone has gotten the ball of yarn.
6. Now play with the web a bit. Have people move it up and down. You could even drop an inflated balloon, Nerf ball, or beach ball onto the web and bounce it around. Experiment with what happens if one person pulls strongly on their loop of yarn.
7. Next invite someone to let go of the yarn. Watch what happens to the web.
8. Then ask another student across the circle to let go of the yarn.
9. One by one, invite students to let go of their yarn.

The web will gradually lose its shape. When the web is lying on the floor, ask everyone to sit down and discuss, using the questions below.

EXPLAIN: Notice how we were all interconnected by the yarn. We couldn't have made this pattern alone. If someone had been left out, the pattern would not have been complete. We need each other. We also need to care for one another.

DISCUSS

- What were we able to do together?
- What's hard about being connected as one group?
- What is good about all being a part of the group?
- How would you have felt being left out?
- What happened to the web when the first person let go of the yarn? How does that illustrate what happens when people are excluded from a community?

- As more people dropped the yarn, what happened to the web? How did this affect its usefulness (or playfulness)?

EXPLAIN: When we were no longer connected, the pattern was broken. If someone is left out of a group, that part is hurting and other parts will hurt with it, because we are no longer a complete group.

Bible Time

READ MARK 10:13-16, NIRV.

Read the passage through one time out loud.

Now invite four children to each read one verse. As they read, ask the rest of the group to act out this scene. You may choose to assign roles: the disciples, people bringing children to Jesus, the little children, and Jesus.

Invite the children to make the following expressions on their faces:

- The expressions of the parents when they first brought their children to Jesus.
- The expression of Jesus when he saw the children.
- The expression of the children when Jesus placed his hands on them.
- The expression of the disciples when they saw the parents bringing their children to Jesus.
- The expression of Jesus when the disciples told the parents and children to stay away.
- The expression of the parents and the children when the disciples told them to stay away.
- The expression of the parents and children when Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."

ASK:

- Who was trying to break the relationship between the children and Jesus?
- Was that what Jesus wanted?
- Do you think Jesus wants us to keep others out of our group, or invite them in? Why?

Application Activity

Present the following scenarios to the group. Ask students to identify the brokenness and act out a solution. Remind students that brokenness means

separation, something that is no longer whole or complete, something divided and different from what God wants.

(Small classes can do this all together as one group. Larger classes may break into smaller groups.)

RESPONDING AND RESTORING BROKENNESS

How can we restore broken relationships?

- You have picked teams for soccer, but some kids on the team never get the ball.
- At recess some of your friends are calling other kids stupid and telling them they can't play on the equipment.
- Some girls want to play football at recess, but the boys say they can't play.
- You see someone who is sad because of something that happened at home.
- Some kids in your class have just moved here from another country, and you want to invite them to play but your friends don't want to play with them.
- Some of your friends are making fun of kids who are a different ethnicity than they are.

ASK:

- How are we the same?
- How are we different?
- What is broken and needs restoring in these situations?
- Is it hard to include everyone? Why? (Acknowledge that it takes time to understand our differences.)
- What could it cost us?
- Why do you think Jesus wants us to do this hard work?

Closing Activity

OPTION 1:

Read the book *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales.

ASK:

- What are your thoughts about this story?
- What would it be like to learn a new language?
- Can everyone have dreams?
- What can we learn from each other?
- What could we lose if we choose to keep people out instead of inviting them in?

- Do you think God wants us all separated or do you think God want’s us to be together? Why?

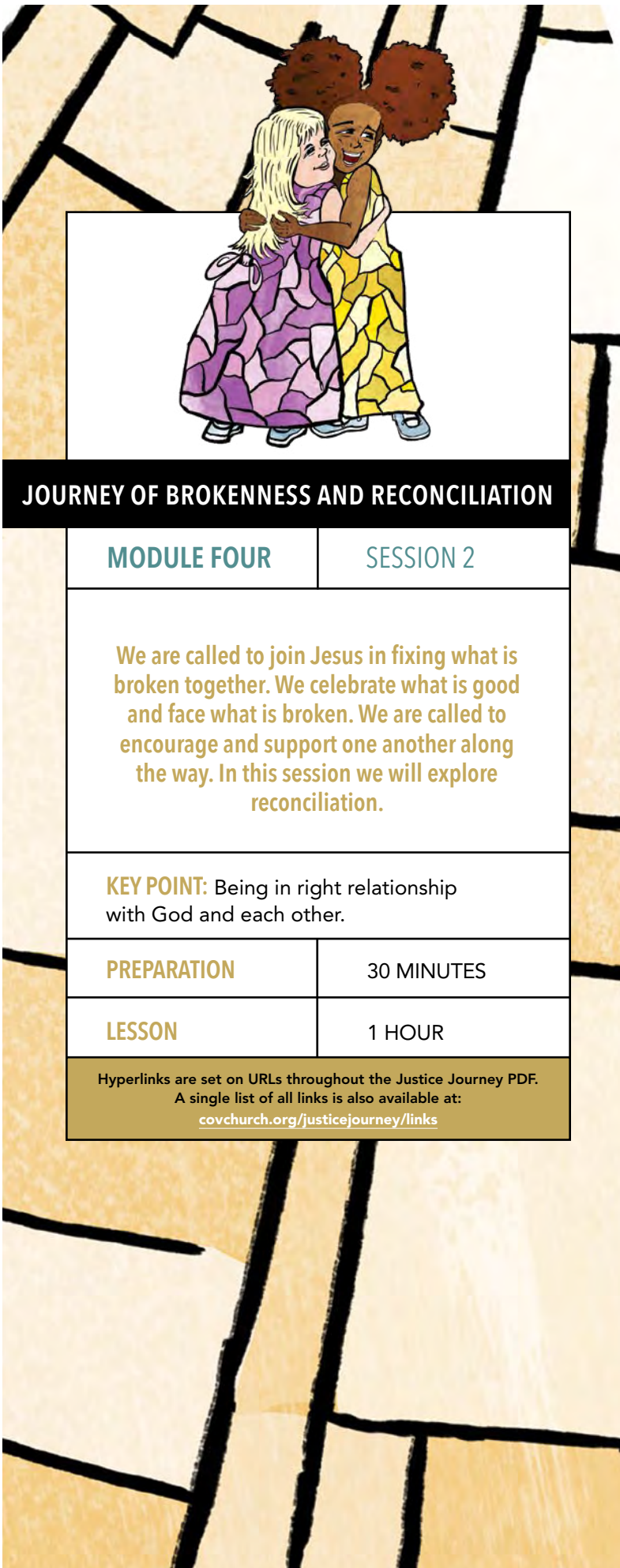
OPTION 2:

Depending on the relationships that have formed throughout previous modules, your church may choose to engage your community in one of these ways:

- Participate in a joint learning experience in your community (i.e., find a way to engage with marginalized people in your neighborhood).
- Listen to a testimony from a community member about their experience with/as a refugee, Japanese internment, immigration, undocumented immigrant, or adult person with disabilities and how they were able to create change, empower others, or experience support.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for coming to heal our broken relationships with you and with each other. We confess that we don’t always notice what is broken or that we are the cause of the damage. Help us to notice. Help us to be strong enough to speak up and include people who are left out. Help us to be strong enough to reach out even when we are the ones being left out. Thank you, Jesus, that we can count on you loving us and being with us in the midst of brokenness. Amen.



JOURNEY OF BROKENNESS AND RECONCILIATION

MODULE FOUR **SESSION 2**

We are called to join Jesus in fixing what is broken together. We celebrate what is good and face what is broken. We are called to encourage and support one another along the way. In this session we will explore reconciliation.

KEY POINT: Being in right relationship with God and each other.

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 #

2

Right Relationships

KEY WORDS

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

JUSTICE: Restoring things back to the way God wants them. This includes fixing broken relationships, laws, and systems that come from sin and that keep all people from enjoying the peace God created for all to enjoy.

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.

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

SIN: Anything that is against God's will.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Paper, markers, pencils or pens, and paper plates (three for each child)
- Enough blocks for each child to build a tower
- White board, cardstock, or large piece of paper

PREPARATION

Write the words “Brokenness” and “Reconcile” on the board or on card stock or large paper.

Read through the Bible passages.

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 difficult, 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: Blocks

Depending on the size of your group, pass out blocks to each child or to small groups of children and ask them to build a tower.

After the towers are built, invite the children step away from their towers. Next tell the children to slowly knock down someone else’s tower.

ASK: How did it feel when your creation was destroyed?

Next ask the children to work together to rebuild the tower(s).

DISCUSS

- How did you work together to build the tower?
- Do you think God wants us to build together or destroy? Why?

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to talk about two important ideas: brokenness and reconciliation. What broke today while we were building?

Sometimes when that happens it can also make us mad and our friendship with others becomes broken. When we worked together to rebuild the towers, that is what reconciliation looks like.

Reconciliation is about making relationships right. It is about being made right with God and being in right relationship with the people around us. Reconciliation is also about working to fix or rebuild good things that are broken. It involves how we feel, think, and act toward others and what kind of relationships we have.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Three paper plates for each child

Today we will think about how our faith is a journey with Jesus that includes brokenness and reconciliation. We are not alone. We are on a journey with God, and with each other.

READ JONAH 3:2-5, 10; 4:1-4, NIV.

EXPLAIN: This is a story about the Ninevites, who did not follow God, and Jonah, who thought he was better than the Ninevites. Today we will explore how God worked to reconcile them, or make their relationships right again.

Give each child three paper plates.

Read the story two more times, and encourage students to draw facial expressions of how the Ninevites might have felt, how Jonah felt, and how God might have felt on the paper plates.

Our relationships should reflect God’s love and justice.

Remember justice is restoring things back to God's original intent. It involves fixing broken relationships, systems, structures, and laws that emerge from sin and keep people from enjoying the shalom God created all to enjoy. Justice is ministry we do in Jesus's name to end oppression and to change the thinking and behavior which creates sinful thoughts of superiority, systemic sin, and privilege.

DISCUSS

Invite the children to share the expressions they drew and explain their drawing. There are no right or wrong answers. Below are some possible reasons for each expression. Be sure to offer positive reinforcement to each child for sharing.

NINEVITES: The expressions could be sad or afraid because they were worried their city would be destroyed. Maybe they were happy because God spared the city.

JONAH: Perhaps he was angry or afraid because he didn't want God to love the Ninevites.

GOD: Some children might draw an angry expression because the Ninevites and Jonah were not following God and loving God as God loved them. Some children may draw a smiling God because God loves all people and seeks to help them to turn from evil to good and to experience God's love even as they love each other.

ASK: Did Jonah like the Ninevites? (*No, his relationship with them was broken.*)

How did Jonah respond when God asked Jonah to help make the relationship right? (*He got angry and ran away. Jonah didn't want to be God's messenger, and then he became angry that the Ninevites responded to God's love.*)

Jonah was an angry messenger who didn't want to make the relationship right with the Ninevites. Let's look deeper into God's word to discover what kind of messengers God wants us to be.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20, NIRV.

Invite a child to read this passage.

DISCUSS

ASK: What does it mean to be a "new creation"? (*The old creation was living life for myself, only caring about what benefited me.*)

Invite students to act out some ways we are selfish.

EXPLAIN: That is our broken self. In verse 18, Paul says that God "brought us back to himself through Christ's death on

the cross." What do you think that means? God offers us forgiveness and hope. God says, "I love you. I forgive you when you make mistakes." God also says, "Jesus brought people back to me, so you can go do the same."

If you have not yet asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior but would like to do so, you can pray to Jesus and Jesus will hear you. You can thank Jesus for forgiving your sin and ask Jesus to be your guide, showing you the truth of God's love, and helping you to share the good news of Jesus's love with others. Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior you will journey with Jesus every day. Jesus will never leave you. Jesus's love is with you always.

(Consider engaging children in this prayer with their parents, so they can also experience this sacred moment with their child.)

EXPLAIN: Once we have prayed and asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, we can share Jesus's love with others. We will be a new creation, living our lives for and with Jesus. Jesus lived for others, cared for others, helped and healed others. Jesus worshiped God in the temple, out in nature, and with his family and friends. Jesus fed people and prayed for them. Jesus cared about people's bodies and relationships, and healed people and helped them think about generosity, kindness, and hospitality.

Review Activity

Invite children to act out some ways we can live like Jesus, such as caring, forgiving, and righting a wrong.

Application Activity

Our world experiences much brokenness. Some things are not right about how we live. Invite students to share some of the ways they see brokenness in their communities (homelessness, hard things at schools, bullying, people are mistreated because of their gender and race, people are mistreated because they are immigrants or refugees, kids are mistreated because they have a disability, people not getting jobs, jail/detention center/mass incarceration, unfair laws, hunger/lack of access to good food, not everyone gets the medicine and medical help they need, kids can't live with their parents or are in foster care, sickness, etc.).

We know that God is at work fixing what is broken, and God uses the Church to help bring love and healing to the

world. This is God’s work of reconciliation. God is making all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17), and God invites us to be partners in fixing what is broken.

In the midst of the world’s brokenness, we are called children of God (1 John 3:16). Jesus invites us to walk in faith and live out our faith by loving others. Let us consider some ways we can partner with God to restore what is broken.

Invite children to share a Christ-centered response to the scenarios below:

- You got into a fight with your friend because you hurt each other’s feelings yesterday about your art projects. What can you do?
- A classmate’s parent has to work and there is no one else home. What can you do?
- You heard some kids at the lunch table making fun of the lunch your friend brought to school. What can you do?
- Your neighborhood has a mini-mart on the corner and fast-food restaurants, but the nearest grocery store with fresh fruits and veggies is several miles away. Some neighbors want to plant a vegetable garden, but some other neighbors don’t like the idea. What can you do?
- The weather is getting colder, and you get out your winter clothing. You notice that some people who are homeless in your neighborhood are wet and cold. What can you do?
- Your parents tell you that your church is hosting a refugee family. What can you do?

Closing Activity

DISCUSS

ASK:

- What are some examples of when our relationship with God or someone else is broken?
- Hold up one of the plates to show how you feel when this happens.
- What could you do this week to reconcile or make things right with God and others?
- Hold up one of the plates to show how you feel when this happens.

EXPLAIN: We are ambassadors who represent Christ. When we see brokenness, or things that are not right in the world, we can name it. But what do we do next?

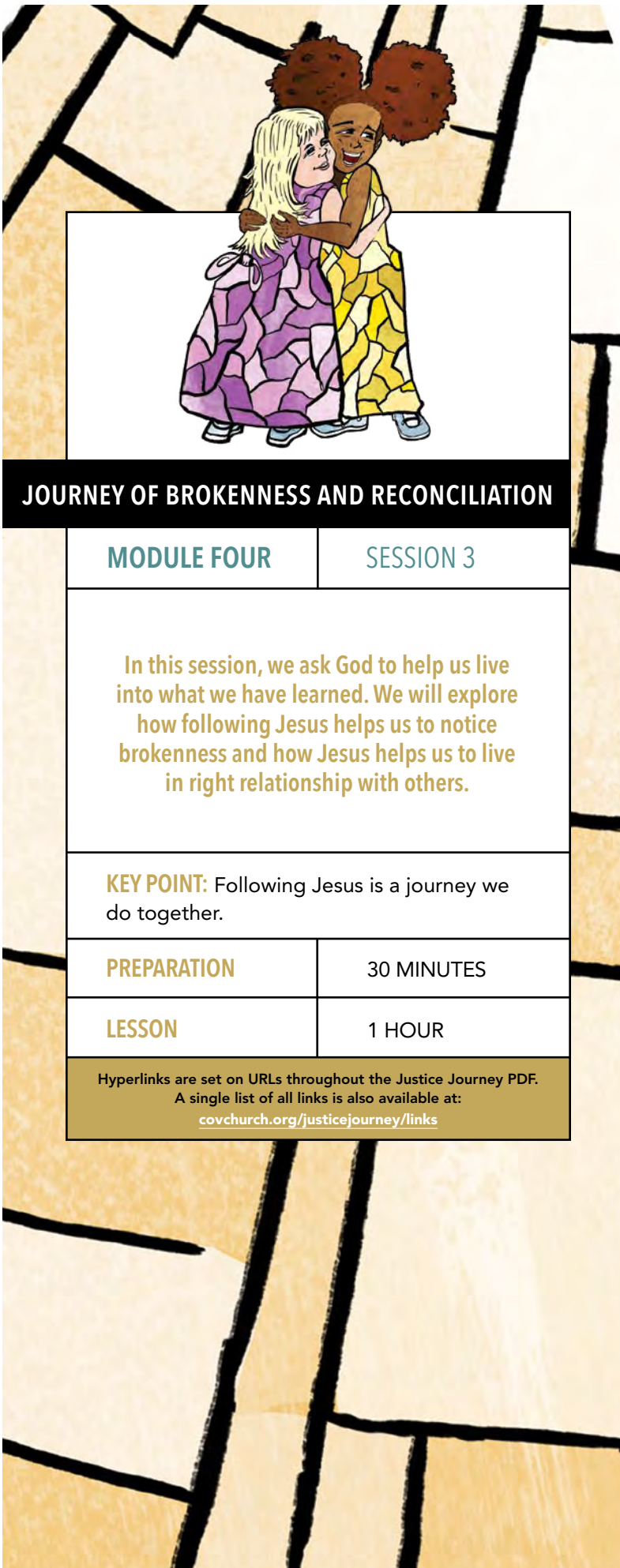
Sometimes it is right to lament, or pray and talk to God about the thing that makes us sad and hurt our neighbors. King David did that in the psalms a lot. Lament psalms were written to cry out to God about oppression, injustice, and things that are not right, but they always ended with a praise for who God is. Psalms and songs of lament help us move from hopelessness to hope or from sadness to joy.

For more on lament psalms, see the Christian Resource Institute at crivoice.org/psalmgenre.html#Lament

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you, God, for creating a diverse world.
We are thankful that each of us is unique.
When we see one group of people hurt others,
we feel sad and angry. Forgive us, God,
when we do the same thing. Help us to mend
the brokenness among people. When see
something that is broken and unfair, give us the
strength to speak up and take action to help
restore the world as you made it to be. Amen.

Gather the children who want to pray and ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. Let them know we are waiting for their parents before they pray. Help to prepare them by asking what they would like to say to Jesus and what they think Jesus would like to say to them.



JOURNEY OF BROKENNESS AND RECONCILIATION

MODULE FOUR	SESSION 3
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In this session, we ask God to help us live into what we have learned. We will explore how following Jesus helps us to notice brokenness and how Jesus helps us to live in right relationship with others.

KEY POINT: Following Jesus is a journey we do together.

PREPARATION	30 MINUTES
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LESSON	1 HOUR
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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 #

3

Judging Others

KEY WORDS

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

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

RESTORATION: Making something right. Returning something to the way it is supposed to be.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- The book *The Harmony Tree* by Randy Woodley
- Drawing materials (optional)
- Craft materials (optional)

PREPARATION

Read *The Harmony Tree* by Randy Woodley.

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: Drawing materials

Invite students to draw a picture following these instructions:

- Think about a place to draw—your school, neighborhood, or some place in your community.
- Draw a picture of yourself doing something for others in that place.
- Add some friends or family to the drawing.

ASK:

- What did you draw? Why did you draw that?
- How is Jesus present with you in this picture? What do you think Jesus would want you to do in this place?

Bible Time

READ LUKE 6:37.

EXPLAIN: Jesus says we should first think about and change our own faults and then lovingly reach out to others.

DISCUSS

ASK:

- What are some ways we “judge” others?
- Why is it not okay to judge others who don’t look like us or act like us?
- Have you been judged by others?
- What does it mean to forgive?
- Have you forgiven or been forgiven?
- What are some faults we have that could hurt others?
- Does Jesus forgive us for our faults?
- Does Jesus want us to keep doing the same things or does Jesus want us to care for others?

ACT OUT: Ways we judge and ways we forgive.

READ LUKE 6:38a.

DISCUSS

- What do you think God wants us to give to others?
- Even though we may not always get back exactly what we give, should we still give? Why?

EXPLAIN: After fielding some thoughts, explain that we may want to make things equal, but we can’t do this without something called equity. Equity is the quality of being fair and just. This is what Jesus calls us to be as disciples, to be fair and just. So we may not get back exactly what we give, but we give because loving others like Jesus is to also be fair and just.

ACT OUT OR DRAW: Ways we give and can be friends with others who are different from us.

READ LUKE 6:41-42.

- **ASK:** Have you ever gotten something in your eye? What does it feel like? Does it hurt?
- **EXPLAIN:** This seems to be a story about things that get stuck in our eyes but it's actually a story about judging others.

None of us is perfect. Jesus is telling a story about how we often focus, and judge others for their faults without noticing the faults in our own lives. Sometimes the faults we see in others are not faults at all. The person is just different from us.

If someone looks different from us, dresses differently, acts differently, or even worships God differently than we do—singing different songs, speaking in a different language, playing different instruments, praying in different ways, using different communion elements, and dancing in ways that we do not, as part of their worship to God—does that make it wrong?

- **REMIND:** We are all made in the image of God and we are all uniquely made, we don't all think the same or act the same, but we are all a part of God's one family.

Prayer Practice

EXPLAIN: We are going to take two minutes to silently pray. This will be special time with you and God. God is here and God loves you. When we get quiet, it can be easier for us to focus on God and feel God's love.

Two minutes may seem like a long time. So first you will need to find a place to get comfortable. It may be at the table or it may be on the floor, or near the wall.

ONCE CHILDREN ARE IN PLACE EXPLAIN:

- Ask God to be with you.
- Quietly share with God, whatever is on your mind.
- Ask God to help keep from you from judging others who are different from you.
- Ask God to help you think of some ways you can lovingly share Jesus's love with everyone.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: *The Harmony Tree* by Randy Woodley

READ: *The Harmony Tree*

In this Native American tale, we see that as Grandmother Oak shares her stories and how she came to have such deep roots, she finds hope and healing. The other trees, seeing the value of Grandmother Oak's history with the land, begin to find strength too.

Encourage children to imagine themselves in this story.

- Who am I in this story?
- Am I Grandmother Oak?
- Am I one of the new trees or houses?
- What can I learn from the place I find myself in the story?
- Who is it that gives us hope and healing?

Review Activity

ASK: Are Christians always perfect? What are some things we do that hurt others?

SOME IDEAS: We have harmful ideas/thoughts about others, don't treat people fairly, choose not to respond kindly to some people or people groups, don't forgive others, leave people out, listen to some people's ideas but not everyone's.

ASK: What are some things Jesus wants us to do?

SOME IDEAS: Worship God, sacrificially love our neighbors, welcome our homeless neighbors, different ethnic groups, immigrants, refugees, and people with different abilities. We can also show God's love when we tithe, support kids in schools or families who are struggling, invite those who are left out, listen to what those who are suffering have to say, don't assume to have all the answers, fight injustice in our city, fight against inequity for our kids/families.

Make a list of ways you and your church community can practice reconciliation. Plan to share with your church leadership.

Select an area of ministry that your group will continue to engage.

SOME IDEAS:

- Build relationships with a refugee community. Listen, learn, and care
- Team up with an organization who has a close relationship with those who are homeless and build a community
- Participate in justice marches or demonstrations
- Make a commitment to regular conversations around faith and race
- Learn about ways to support and build relationships among children and families in local foster/adoptive communities
- Start a library of diverse books and resources that you can share with your community
- Consider how well your church welcomes kids with disabilities and what you can do to care well and establish relationships

Closing Activity

Give children an opportunity to share their prayers with God as you complete this module. It could be prayers of thanks, asking God for help, prayers for others, prayers for the church. You may want to give them a few minutes to reflect and write some prayers before you begin.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you God for sending your son Jesus to earth to teach us how to live. Jesus, thank you for both modeling and telling stories that teach us how to help others in need and how to live in ways that show love and justice for others. Please help us find ways to serve others who are in need and to teach and show our church, family, and friends how to live a better life together.



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=gqkysuigwdy>

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.



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

Session #

God's Plan to Disrupt Injustice Through Jesus

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.



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.



**ONE INTERCONNECTED BODY,
MANY INVALUABLE PARTS**

MODULE SIX

SESSION 1

In this session we will discuss how God has given everyone unique gifts, no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they come from, in order to fulfill God’s mission.

KEY POINT: Though some gifts may be more noticeable, that does not make any particular gift better than another. God created each person equally, and we all receive gifts from God.

PREPARATION

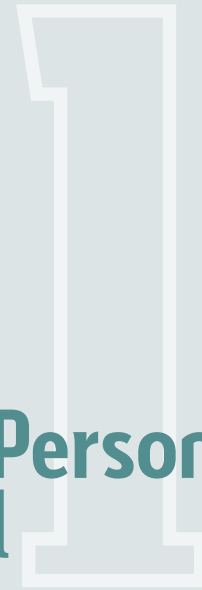
30 MINUTES

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 #



**Every Person
Is Vital**

KEY WORDS

VITAL: Absolutely necessary or important; essential.

SOLIDARITY: Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- White board
- Dry erase markers
- Drawing paper
- Crayons/markers
- Two small buckets or large bowls for each team of five or more children
- Five tennis balls (or similar item) for each team
- One paper plate for each team

PREPARATION

Write prompting question on the board: “What is your favorite team sport or activity?” Mark Bible passages.

Welcome

As students come into the classroom, allow them to get settled. Ask about their week. What was great? What was hard? When did they feel closest to God or furthest away from God?

Give students time to answer the prompting question, "What is your favorite team sport or activity?" Ask them to explain their answers.

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: Two small buckets or large bowls for each team of five or more children, five tennis balls (or similar item) for each team, one paper plate for each team

NO "I" IN TEAM

EXPLAIN: We are going to play a game called Bucketball Relay. This is not a competition. It's a game to see how well you can work together.

Create teams of five people each. Assign a role to each player: retriever, handler, over-the-head, bouncer, spinner. (Some positions can be duplicated if you have a large group. For example, you may choose to add extra overhead or bouncer positions, or if you have fewer than five children they can double up positions.)

Ask the students to line up. Place a bucket or bowl at the end of each line. Space out the bouncers and spinners approximately six feet apart from the players on either side of them. Place a paper plate between the retriever and the handler.

PLAYING THE GAME

1. Place all the balls in the bucket at the front of the line.
2. The retriever removes one ball at a time from the bucket (or bowl) and places it on the paper plate held by the handler.
3. The handler passes the plate to the over-the-head player, who picks up the ball from the plate. If the ball rolls off before the over-the-head player removes it, the retriever must take it back to the bucket, then remove it, and place it on the plate again.
4. The over-the-head player tosses the ball backward over their head to the next person in line, who is positioned approximately six feet away. If the ball is dropped, it must be returned to the retriever who puts it in the bucket and starts over.
5. The bouncer receives the toss from the over-the-head player and bounces it to the spinner, who is approximately six feet away.
6. The spinner receives the bounced ball and spins around three times before putting the ball in the bucket at the end of the line. If the ball is dropped either from the bounce or fails to get into the bucket, the ball must be sent back to the retriever to start over.

ASK:

- What was the importance or function of each player's role on the team?
- What was hard? What was easy?
- How were teammates encouraged/discouraged?
- What would happen if any of the positions were missing from the team? How would it affect the ability of the team to complete the relay?

EXPLAIN: Sometimes when we play a game, the person who scores gets the most attention. But a person can't score by themselves. There is no "I" in team, because you need everybody to win.

Today we are going to read about a church that needed a reminder about what it means to work together. In this

passage, the apostle Paul reminds them that everybody in the church has different gifts, and each person is needed to accomplish the mission.

Bible Time

The city of Corinth was a major trade hub during the time of this letter. The population was made up of freed slaves, retired military, and people who would have been considered among the elite upper-class at the time. The people who made up the church in Corinth were not necessarily used to power, authority, or some of the responsibilities that came along with leadership in the early church.

The result was that people began to assign levels of importance to spiritual gifts, even though that was not God's intention. God gave gifts to all people to help spread the gospel, and every gift and every person is equally important in God's eyes. So it did not please God that people who were preachers and teachers began to act as if they were better than people who had different gifts. Paul, an apostle who had helped start the church, heard about what was happening. He wrote the letter we call 1 Corinthians in response to what was happening. Paul was an important person to the church in Corinth. So, if they would listen to anybody, it would be him. It was very important for Paul to correct this behavior early. The mission of God in the world was too vital for it to be stopped by people being unfair.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-26.

ASK: What are some gifts the Holy Spirit gives, and what do you think they are used for? What are some gifts God has blessed you with? (Or, what skills do you have that could be used to help others experience the love of Jesus?)

EXPLAIN: None of us is exactly the same. God has given every person gifts and talents, and every person is equally important to God. But sometimes we are tempted to seek a place of superiority over others, believing we are better.

As followers of Christ, we seek to become examples of Jesus in the world around us. That means not acting as though we are better than others and speaking up when we see people being put down or treated unfairly. As this passage says, we cannot say "we have no need of you."

Every person is equally needed no matter what their gifts or abilities are or what they look like.

ASK:

- Have you ever experienced being treated unfairly?
- Do you think God likes it when we act like we are better than others? Why not?
- What do you think Jesus would want us to do when someone makes fun of another race?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Drawing paper, crayons or markers

Draw or act out some ways we can help when we see someone be treating unfairly.

ASK:

- Why might it be hard to speak up or befriend someone who is being treated unjustly?
- How can we gain the strength to speak up and to act?
- How can we live into our commitment to treat others equally?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Buckets/bowls, balls, paper plates

Bucketball Relay Revisited

EXPLAIN: Now we are going to play the game two more times.

The first time we will play in silence.

Now play it one last time and tell the children they can speak, encourage and help one another.

Closing Activity

DISCUSS

- What did you experience by playing the game these two different ways?
- Where you able to encourage each other even in the silence? How?
- How did you feel when you could speak up and encourage one another?
- When we see others who are left out or treated



**ONE INTERCONNECTED BODY,
MANY INVALUABLE PARTS**

MODULE SIX

SESSION 2

In this session we will discuss how important each person is to the mission of Jesus in the world.

KEY POINT: Sometimes we may feel unimportant because we aren't the biggest, best, fastest, or most visible. However, just as with our physical bodies, if one part of the body of Christ is harmed or doesn't function, the entire body suffers.

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 #

2

Every Part Is Vital

KEY WORDS

VITAL: Absolutely necessary or important; essential.

SOLIDARITY: Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

SUPPLIES

- White board
- Playdough
- Plastic cups
- Paper towels
- Paper
- The book *When God Made You* by Matthew Paul Turner
- Puzzle (Don't choose a puzzle with too many pieces. You'll want students to finish within 10 minutes.)
- Dry erase marker
- Open floor space
- Water
- Blue painter's tape
- Marbles

PREPARATION

- Write the key words for the lesson on the board or somewhere visible that can be seen easily by the students.
- Read through this week's Bible passages.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Puzzle

Greet the students and encourage them to build a puzzle(s) together. (Be sure to remove a few pieces so the puzzle(s) cannot be completed.)

DISCUSS

ASK:

- What did you enjoy about building the puzzle?
- How did you feel about doing this as a group?
- Were you satisfied with the finished product? Why or why not?

EXPLAIN: Today we are going to explore the different members of the church body. Just as with the puzzles we built, we will discover how vital each part of the body is and how disappointing it can be when some pieces are missing.

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.

Application Activity

NO OPPOSABLE THUMB

SUPPLIES: Plastic cups, blue painter's tape, water

1. Pair up the students, and ask one person in each pair to wrap tape around their partner's hand so the thumb is taped to the hand and can't be used. Now ask the student whose thumb is taped to try to pick up a plastic cup and drink from it. (Make sure to have paper towels available.)
2. Now switch places, so the other student's thumb is taped down. Ask them to try to drink from the plastic cup.

DISCUSS

Why was it difficult to accomplish this task? Talk about how important the thumb is to the function of a hand, even though it is the smallest part.

EXPLAIN: Just as every body part is important, so every person is equally important to the body of Christ and to God. Even though some parts are smaller or unnoticed, if one piece is missing, the body cannot function the way it was meant to.

Bible Time

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13 AND 20-21.

EXPLAIN: The body is the church together. We are one family.

DISCUSS

- Each one of us is invited to be a part of the body, (the church). Do you think each part is equally important to the mission of Jesus Christ in the world?
- Is it okay to say to someone "I have no need of you" because they are different from you? Why?

READ MATTHEW 28:19 AND JOHN 13:34-35.

ASK: What does this passage say we are to do as the family or body of Christ?

EXPLAIN: This is our mission.

ASK:

- Have you ever been treated differently because you look or act unlike the people around you?
- Have you ever seen someone else being treated unfairly? How did that make you feel? How did you respond?
- How do you think it makes other people feel to be treated differently or unfairly?
- What ways can you stand together with people who are experiencing unfair treatment or injustice?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: *When God Made You* by Matthew Paul Turner

Read *When God Made You* by Matthew Paul Turner.

ASK:

- What is your favorite part of this book?
- Would you like to be friends with this girl?
- How does God feel about the girl in this story?
- What does this say about God?
- How do you think God wants us to see each other?
- How important is each person to God?
- How can we extend God's love to those who are different from us?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper, marbles, playdough

EXPLAIN: Use the playdough to show ways we live our mission to love others and share Jesus's love and story with others.

SETUP: Fold a piece of paper lengthwise two times to make a trough for each person in your group.

This is not a race or a competition, even though large groups may need to be broken down into smaller groups.

HOW TO PLAY: Ask students to line up holding their paper troughs in front of them. Drop a marble into the first trough. The first student tips their trough to roll the marble into the next student's trough and so on. The object is to move the marble through the troughs to get it to the other side of the room. Once a student has passed the marble off, they move to the end of the line to catch the marble again. So the team keeps moving while passing the marble from trough to trough until the marble crosses the finish line.

DISCUSS

ASK: What was hard about this game? What was easy? How did you encourage one another? Why couldn't you do this by yourself? How does this game illustrate the importance of each person?

EXPLAIN: In this activity we see how important every part of the body is. We all bring different gifts to the body, and if any part is broken or missing.

Jesus's plan is that all people should equally be a part of the body/church. This is not just true of individuals but among people groups as well. We are all equally loved by God no matter our race, our culture, our gender, our ability, the language we speak, or the country we are from.

God loves us all and wants us to love each other as well.

ASK: What are some things Jesus is asking us to do? What are some things we might say or do when we see someone put down, left out, or treated unfairly? (*You can do this in pairs or small groups and then share.*)

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for making us a part of your body. We are so grateful that each one of us is important to you. Help us to be aware when other parts of the body are hurting, and give us the courage to help. Help us become like you, Jesus, and speak up for others who are treated differently. Help us to stand up to those who treat people unfairly. And help us to invite, encourage, and support each other so we can work together to share your love. Amen



**ONE INTERCONNECTED BODY,
MANY INVALUABLE PARTS**

MODULE SIX

SESSION 3

In this session we will discuss how important it is to see every human being as a brother and sister in Christ and for that understanding to shape how we care for people, especially people who are different from us.

KEY POINT: In sessions 1 and 2, we explored how we are one body, each created differently but each equally important. In this session we will encourage students to take an active part in caring for people who are different.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

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Session #

3

The Loving Neighbor

KEY WORDS

SAMARITAN: ⁽¹⁾The Samaritans were a group of people who lived in Samaria, an area north of Jerusalem. When Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C., some Israelites were taken in captivity while others were left behind. The Samaritans had their own unique system of worship. At the time of Jesus, the Jews and the Samaritans did not have any contact with one another. Jesus, however, ministered to the people of Samaria, preaching the good news to them. ⁽²⁾A charitable or helpful person (with reference to Luke 10:33).

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.

PARABLE: A story told by Jesus to explain a moral or spiritual lesson.

SOLIDARITY: Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- White board
- Dry erase markers
- Paper
- Markers/Crayons
- Pipe cleaners
- Playdough
- Open floor space (for reenactment)
- Clothespins and material to turn pins into people

PREPARATION

Write the key words for the lesson on the board or somewhere visible that can be seen easily by the students. Write the welcome prompt on the board: "Name or draw a time when you needed help." Mark Bible passages.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Paper, markers/crayons

Greet the students, and allow them to get settled. Make sure each student has paper and something with which to write or draw. Invite students to answer the prompt, "Name or draw a time when you needed help." Share drawings or answers and follow up by asking, "Did you get the help you needed?" Allow students to talk about how it felt to either receive the help they needed, or not to receive it.

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.

Bible Time

READ LUKE 10:25-37.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Optional clothes pin puppets

ACT IT OUT

Ask for several volunteers. You will need a narrator, an expert in the law, Jesus, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan, two robbers, someone to play the victim, and an innkeeper. *(Children can play more than one role, or if you have a lot of students, consider adding a few extra robbers, priests, or Levites. You may also choose to make clothespin puppets and act out the story that way.)*

ASK: What did you see in this story? What stood out to you the most?

ACT OUT THE STORY A SECOND TIME.

ASK:

- Did you see anything new when the story was acted out again?
- Why do you think the priest and the Levite didn't stop to help?
- What would it feel like to be the person on the road that no one would help?
- Have you or someone you know ever needed help and no one responded? How did this make you feel?
- How do you think God wants us to respond when someone is in need?

EXPLAIN:

- Jesus often told parables or stories to teach difficult truths.
- We may only think of the people who live in our neighborhood or who live close to us as our neighbors. We may think that only people who look like us or come from families that look like our own are our neighbors, but Jesus teaches us that everyone is our neighbor.

ASK: What does it mean to you that everyone is your neighbor?

- Sometimes it is easy to be neighborly, loving, and kind to people who look and act like us. Yet this story illustrates God's call to love and care for people who are different from us.

- Sometimes people suffer from unfair treatment, injustice, and oppression.

ASK: How do you think God feels about this? Why?

- As people who love Jesus, we are called to consider every person as equal and important.
- The Samaritan was a neighbor in this passage. Instead of ignoring the Jewish man on the road, he put their differences aside to offer help. In other words, he stood in solidarity with the man who was hurt.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Playdough or markers

With playdough or markers show a time when you were left out or ignored, and another when you were invited to something.

SHARE AND DEBRIEF: Have children share their drawings or playdough scenes and explain how they felt.

After everyone has shared, ask how they think God felt about your being left out or invited?

How do you think God wants us to respond when we see someone who is left out?

(If someone is having a particularly difficult time with this, it might be a good time to have the children gather around and pray for this child.)

Assure the children that God loves them and delights in them.

EXPLAIN: Let's talk about what it means to stand in solidarity with someone. This means we are being united together or mutually supporting each other.

ASK: How did the Samaritan stand in solidarity with, or support, the man who was beaten?

REFLECT

SUPPLIES: Pipe cleaners

What are some ways you can stand in solidarity with people who need help?

Ask students to think about this question by taking a few minutes to draw or fashion pipe cleaners of situations where someone was in need and then discuss solutions.

Closing Activity

- Ask students to reflect on how they can personally and collectively be good neighbors.
- Charades: Invite students to silently act out ways of standing in solidarity with others. Ask the rest of the class to guess what their classmates are acting out.

DISCUSS

Encourage each student to choose a personal action they can take to help someone this week. Maybe it's standing up to a bully on someone else's behalf, watching out for someone in need, or going for help. *(Explain that going for help is also a way of standing in solidarity.)*

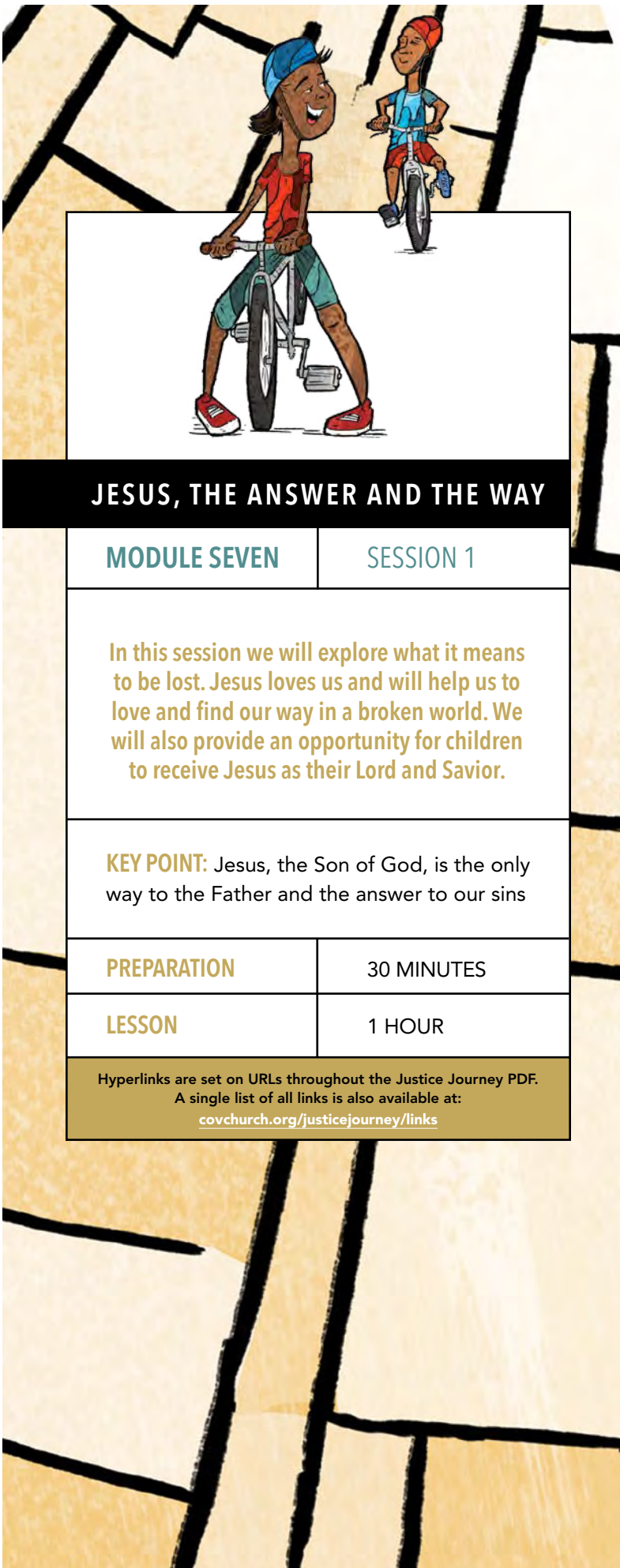
Discuss ways we can respond on our own and when it's best to go for help.

Discuss how we can follow up when we see someone who is being put down or hurt because they are different.

As a class, or maybe as an entire children's ministry, pick a project or activity that can help the students fully live into the idea of being a loving neighbor.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for making us a part of your body. We are so thankful that we are important to you. Help us to be aware when others are hurting, and give us the courage to help. Show us how to be neighbors to everyone you have created. Please give us the courage to speak up when we see wrong and to help those in need. Help us to become like Christ, standing up for those who experience injustice in our world and challenging the unfair treatment of those who treat people unfairly. Amen



JESUS, THE ANSWER AND THE WAY

MODULE SEVEN

SESSION 1

In this session we will explore what it means to be lost. Jesus loves us and will help us to love and find our way in a broken world. We will also provide an opportunity for children to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

KEY POINT: Jesus, the Son of God, is the only way to the Father and the answer to our sins

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 #



Jesus, the Way

KEY WORDS

ETERNAL LIFE: A timeless infinite relationship with God, free from the injustice, brokenness and pain of this world.

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

LORD: Someone who we follow and try to be like. Jesus, unlike other lords, is loving, caring, and just.

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.

SAVIOR: Jesus offers to forgive and save us from a life of self-focused sin, and fill us with his love and Spirit to help us live a life loving others.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A media player
- Drawing paper
- Markers/crayons
- Craft sticks
- Stuffed animal
- Glue
- Paper plates
- Three 3 x 5 index cards
- Construction paper, including different skin tones
- A large sheet of paper or poster board
- Copies of emoticon poster (one per child, see attached)
- *Amazing Grace* sung by Chris Tomlin video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbe7OruLk8I>

PREPARATION

Write the information below on three 3 x 5 cards, bold type on one side and questions on the other, then hide them in the room.

- **Jesus says he is the way. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, Jesus is always with us and will show us the way.** In what ways do you think Jesus wants us to love and treat others who are different from us?
- **Jesus says he is the truth. Jesus says we live out the truth by loving him and loving others.** How can we do this?
- **Jesus says he is the life. We have eternal life with Jesus when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.** What do you think eternal life is? What does it mean that Jesus is our Lord? Our Savior? How might Jesus help us live a life of kindness toward everyone?

Write this prayer out large enough for children to read together. *Dear Jesus, we praise you for showing us the way of helping to make things right. We now know that you are the only way for us and for those who are lost and without you. We love you and we want to honor you with our lives. Amen.*

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify ways in which one can get or be lost physically, emotionally, or spiritually.
2. Name ways in which hymn writer John Newton was lost.
3. Explain what Jesus means when he says he is the way in John 14:6.
4. Invite children to receive Jesus.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing paper, markers/crayons

As children arrive encourage them to draw a picture with a hidden object in it. Then have the other children try to guess what the hidden object is. While they are drawing, ask each child what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling, and what they are looking forward to.

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: Stuffed animal

Before children arrive hide a small stuffed animal in the room. Tell the class you have lost something very special and ask them to help you find it. Once the animal is found give enthusiastic praise to all the children for looking.

EXPLAIN: Today we're are going to talk about losing our way and finding our way. We will begin by listening to a story of how a boy got lost in the woods.

Cody Sheehy is standing in a grassy meadow in northeast Oregon, surrounded by dark pines, spruce, and juniper trees. Today, Cody, lives here with his family in remote, rugged Wallowa County. But when Cody was six years old—a mere

40 pounds and three and a half feet tall—he got lost in these woods while playing with his older sister during a springtime family picnic. Within a few hours, a search party began looking for him, crisscrossing the Blue Mountains on horseback all night as rain fell and temperatures hovered just above freezing. They never found him.

As he walked Cody, got himself more lost. Over 18 hours, he walked an estimated 14 to 20 miles out of the mountains and into the sparsely populated Wallowa Valley. During that journey he fell into a river of freezing water, climbed a tree to escape two terrifying coyotes, and hid from a passing car because—as he recalls it—his reptile brain had taken over. He was cold and exhausted, and just kept on walking. Cody finally stumbled out of the forest and into a grassy meadow then kept walking down a steep mountain road until he reached town. He planned to keep going on his own and walk all the way home. But a teenager waiting for the bus saw he was having difficulty walking and talked him into accepting help. They knocked on the door of an older lady, who called the sheriff. A police officer drove Cody home. When he got there, his parents threw their arms around him and thanked God he was alive.

Story from Emma Maris, *Outside*, November 2018.

ASK:

- Have you ever been lost?
- How did it feel? What were you thinking?

EXPLAIN: Sometimes we can set off and get lost on our own. If you got lost, wouldn't you have wished someone would have told you how to find your way? Or even better, held your hand and shown you the way home?

EXPLAIN: As we grow up, it's possible we might still get lost at places we visit for the first time. For example, we may get lost or feel lost on our first day at a new school.

ASK: Who might be there to help us?

EXPLAIN: Sometimes, there are situations in life where we will not be physically lost, but we feel lost. Maybe we are angry or upset or are mean to others and we say and do things that hurt others. That's another way of being lost.

ASK:

- What are some ways you have seen others treated unfairly?
- When have you or someone else said hurtful things?
- When have you seen someone made fun of?

EXPLAIN: These are also ways of being lost—doing things that God would not want us to do.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Markers/crayons, plain white paper, and poster or sheets of emoticons

Pass out drawing supplies and instruct students to draw faces of how others feel when they are treated unfairly or have been made fun of? Or how witnessing others being mistreated made you feel?

An alternative to this activity could be to give each student a small poster with several faces showing different emotions along with the name of the emotion printed. In this manner they could articulate and name the exact emotion they have felt in the situations described above.

Talk about the activity.

Bible Time

EXPLAIN: Now let's see how Jesus, in his own words, tells us about finding our way. In this case it's not about being lost in the woods but about being lost by the way we treat others. When we say or do hurtful and sinful things, we have lost our way to love and care for others like Jesus.

In the story we will read today, Jesus is very close to his death by crucifixion. The disciples are worried about the future without Jesus. How would they know what to do or where to go? They felt lost. Let's see what Jesus said to them.

READ John 14: 1-7.

Participation Activity

SUPPLIES: The three cards with statements and questions

Encourage the children to search for the three cards you have hidden in the room. As each card is found have a child read the bold type on one side and then ask the question(s) of the class on the other. Then search for the next card and repeat.

(OPTION: act out the answers to the questions.)

Application Activity

Today we began by reading about a boy who was lost. Now we are going to learn about a man who once lost his way because he was focused on himself instead of Jesus. His name was John Newton. He did not know the truth of Jesus and treated others badly.

The story behind the hymn "Amazing Grace."

John Newton's mom died when he was six. He often got into trouble as he grew up. When he became a man, Newton was a slave ship master, which meant he brought people from Africa to be enslaved in England. Even though God lovingly created us with different color skin, John Newton and other white people thought they were better than others because they had white skin. These people treated the men, women, and children of Africa terribly, and chained them tightly in the bottom of ships, for two to six months with little or no food. Many would die before they even got to England. None of them would ever see their families again or be treated as God wanted them to be treated.

DISCUSS

Why is it wrong for one group of people to believe they are better because of the color of their skin?

Imagine if you had been taken from your parents, mistreated every day, and chained to the bottom of a ship for months, given little or no food and never having a chance to see your parents again.

How do you think God feels about this?

On his last trip John Newton's ship got caught in a violent storm. Many people who were being taken into slavery died and Newton became very sick. He prayed to God to save the ship. God helped him to see the terrible way he

was treating others. He prayed not just to be forgiven but to change his life. He stopped being a slave trader and devoted his life to God.

John Newton did not forget what God had reminded him of on the ship. He learned that living for Jesus and following Jesus's way meant changing his life and working to change the evil ways of those who had enslaved others. Newton confessed to all the terrible things he had done as a slave trader and joined the fight to abolish the African slave trade in England.

John Newton became a pastor and wrote many hymns, including the well-known "Amazing Grace."

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

Jesus changed the way John Newton lived his life. He was lost. He treated other men, women, and children as slaves. He did not treat them as God's children. Jesus changed his life.

When John Newton received Jesus as his Lord and Savior, he not only wrote hymns, he began to see everyone as God's children and worked to help those who were being hurt.

ASK:

- Do you think John Newton was lost? In which ways was he lost? Could you give examples?
- How did John Newton find the way? Who was the way for him?
- How was John Newton's life changed after he found the way? How did he show his life was changed?

In the U.S. if you are African American, Latino, or Native American you are more likely to be made fun of, be stopped by the police, not be allowed to live in white neighborhoods, make less money than a white person, and go to jail longer than a white person for the same crime. This is known as injustice—something that isn't fair, resulting from privilege or the sin of selfishness, or oppression. Privilege is an unfair advantage only available to a person or group of people. Oppression is unjust treatment or control of others through unfair systems of laws.

John Newton followed Jesus's example and worked to change the injustice. What can we do to change the

brokenness in our country and live in a world where we love one another?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Craft sticks or paper plates, construction paper, glue, crayons/markers

Stick Puppets

Make stick puppets using the craft sticks. Use construction paper to make a body and face and glue to the craft stick. Encourage children to use a variety of colors for the faces. Then have the children act out several scenarios of the way Jesus taught us to treat others who are different from us.

Alternative Activity

Pass out paper plates and markers or crayons to each student. Have the children draw a face depicting the emotion the disciples and/or John Newton might have felt when they understood that Jesus is the way and that Jesus is the answer to their lives. Beneath the face drawn, encourage students to write John 14:6.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

Close the lesson by repeating in unison John 14:6, and by everyone singing the hymn “Amazing Grace” by Chris Tomlin. This YouTube link to the video contains the written lyrics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbe7OruLk8I>

CLOSE IN PRAYER

(*IN UNISON*) Dear Jesus, we praise you for showing us the way. We now know that you are the only way for me and for those who are lost and without you. We love you and we want to honor you with our lives. Amen.

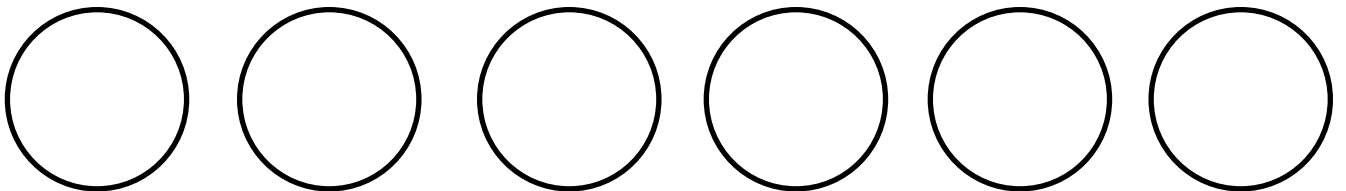
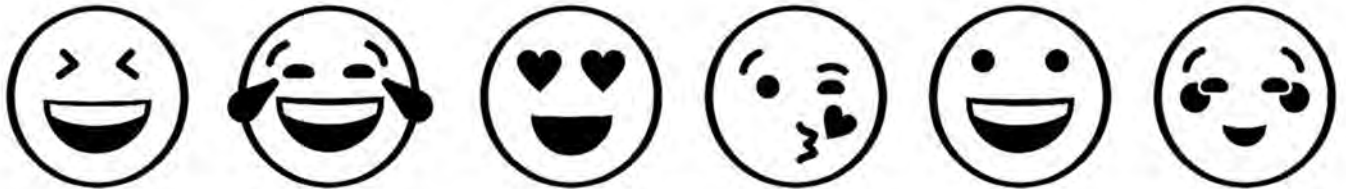
INVITATION:

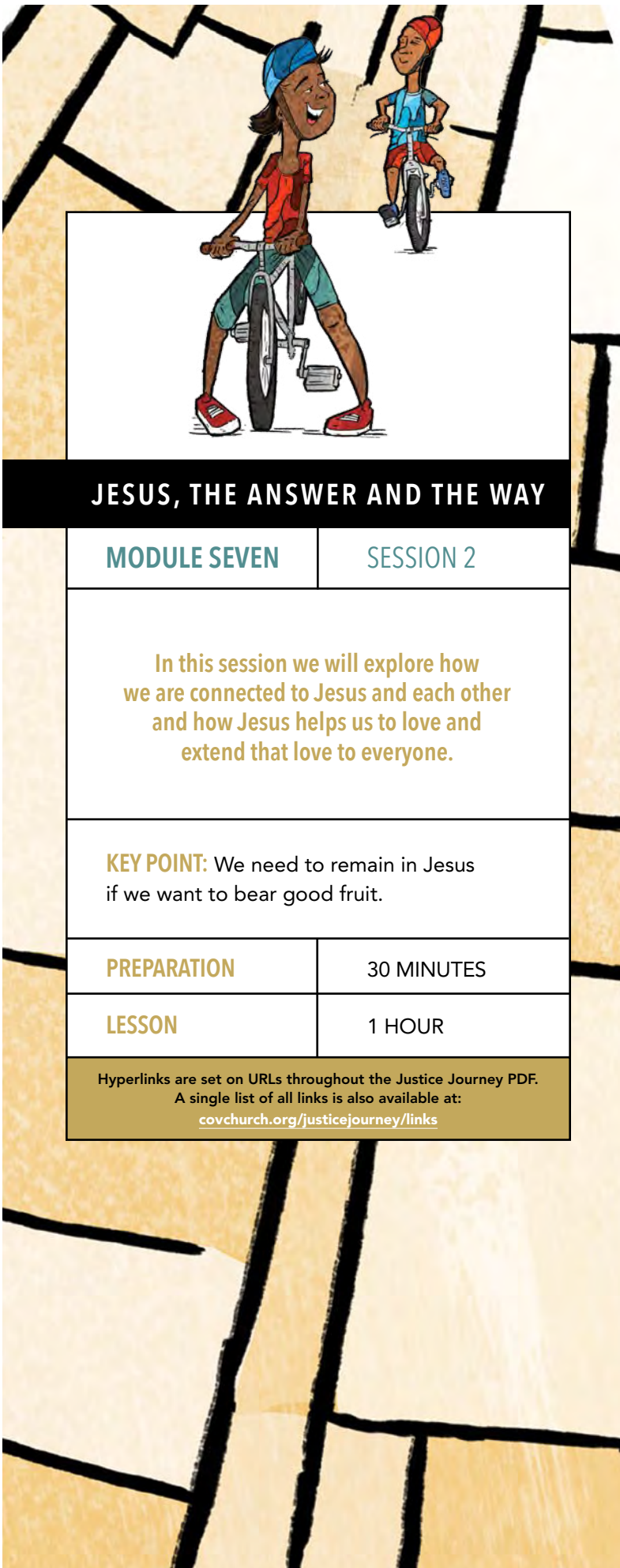
If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, but would like to do so, you can pray and ask Jesus to be your way, and ask Jesus to show you the truth of God’s love and the life that is yours with Jesus every day.

(If there are children that want to do this, then include their parents in this profound moment of their child’s spiritual journey.)

Horizontal lines for writing.

Emoticons





Session #

2

Jesus, the True Vine

JESUS, THE ANSWER AND THE WAY

MODULE SEVEN

SESSION 2

In this session we will explore how we are connected to Jesus and each other and how Jesus helps us to love and extend that love to everyone.

KEY POINT: We need to remain in Jesus if we want to bear good fruit.

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

DISCRIMINATION: Unfair treatment of others because they are different than we are.

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.

RACE: Shared common physical characteristics.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A media player
- Blue painter's tape or rope
- Cardboard crosses
- Rocks, blocks, coins, or marbles
- Markers/crayons
- Copies of grapevine picture (one per child, see attached)
- Construction paper
- Several large cardboard boxes
- Acts of kindness video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rweIE8yyY0U>
- Grapevine pruning video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VE5Aw9Wn5F4>
- This is our house video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf_n6yjr9T0

PREPARATION

Print enough grapevines from the PDF provided for each child and paste to a sheet of construction paper. Cut enough crosses from cardboard for each child to have one.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify what “good fruit” is and ways in which one can bear good fruit.
2. Reflect on separation and injustice.
3. Name ways in which the good fruit can be transformed in good actions done toward others.
4. Identify how Jesus wants us to respond to our differences.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing or craft supplies

Spend the first few minutes talking with each child as they arrive and ask what they have enjoyed this past week, what has been hard, and what they are looking forward to. It may be helpful 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: Blue painter’s tape or rope, cardboard crosses, small objects such as rocks, blocks, coins, marbles, balls, etc.

Make a circle on the floor using a rope or blue painter tape. Ask all the children to enter the circle. Have children pair up and lock elbows on one side. Hand each student a cardboard cross to hold in their hand. Tell them this is a sign they are each connected to Jesus and they may not set the cross down or leave the circle.

Next, have them place their cross in the hand of the arm whose elbow is locked around their partner’s. This will free up their outside hand to pick up objects. Now place several small objects such as rocks, blocks, coins, marbles, or balls just outside the circle. Explain that the object of

the game is to work together, taking turns as partners to move all the objects to the inside of the circle.

ASK:

- What was challenging about this game?
- Why do you think it was important not to let go of the cross?
- What was good and what was hard about being linked together?

EXPLAIN: We are connected to Jesus so we can fulfill the will of God to love others. Some people choose to break away from Jesus, but if we stay connected with Jesus and each other, we can work together to follow Jesus and love others. We need Jesus and we need each other to fulfill the will and love of God. Jesus's will is that everyone would love and be connected with each other.

The passage that we will study today talks about a vine, its branches, and the fruit it produces. As an opening activity, we are going to learn how a farmer prunes a vine. The farmer says that the vine needs pruning in order to maximize fruit production.

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

Gather the kids around the video player and play the video on pruning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VE5Aw9Wn5F4>

ASK:

- What is pruning? (Removing non-productive or dead branches)
- What is the goal of pruning? (Produce more fruit)
- Did the farmer want the growth to grow up or down? (Up)
- Why is it important to stay connected to the vine? (In order to bear fruit)

Pruning is about caring for the plant. As we read our Bible story, we will see that Jesus compares pruning to caring for those who love him.

Jesus's fruit is different from the fruit of a plant. To bear fruit means to share Jesus's love with others.

Bible Time

As we can see from the farmer in the video, it is very important that the grapevine produce fruit in abundance.

In the Bible, Jesus compares himself to the vine and he compares his followers, those who believe in Jesus Christ, to the branches. Jesus expects his followers, the branches, to bear much fruit by sharing Christ's love with others. Jesus knows that we can only bear fruit if we are connected to the vine, Jesus.

READ John 15:1-8.

DISCUSS: As we can see from this passage, bearing good fruit is an important aspect of the Christian life. The farmer (Jesus) takes care of us, just like the farmer in the video. By pruning the vine, the farmer makes the plant stronger and it produces more fruit.

ASK: Why is it important that we not let go of the vine/ Jesus?

EXPLAIN: Without Jesus we will not be able to share God's love with others. We, as followers of Jesus, must show that we remain in Jesus by bearing fruit. We do this by loving others and sharing Jesus's love with others.

ASK: What might this look like?

EXPLAIN: We can show that we remain in Jesus and Jesus remains in us by how we treat other people, regardless of their race (skin color), language, nationality (where a person is from), and abilities. We cannot remain in Jesus, and Jesus cannot remain in us, if we do not act like Jesus and we go around mistreating people.

ASK:

- Why do you think God purposefully made us look different, and each have different skills and gifts?
- Do people always act kindly toward those who look or act differently from them? Why do you think this is?
- Do you think Jesus would prefer we are connected or separated from each other?
- What do you think happens when we want to live separated from Jesus?
- What would be some of the behaviors that we begin to show when we are not living in Jesus and Jesus is not living in us?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

We are going to watch a popular story: *This Is Our House*. George, the main character, is mean and unfair, he discriminates against his friends and neighbors based on how they look or based on what they do.

Gather the kids around the video player and play:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf_n6yjr9T0

ASK:

- How did George behave?
- Can you name some of the things he did?
- How do you think his friends felt?
- Do you think George is behaving like a follower of Jesus?
- What would he have to do to behave like Jesus would want him to behave?

REVIEW: George did not want to share his house with people who: were girls, were small, were twins, wear glasses, like tunnels, have red hair, etc.

ASK:

- How did George feel when the other kids did not let him into the house?
- What is the conclusion of the video?
- What would you have done if you were George?

EXPLAIN: In the United States, there have been people like George who felt they were better than others because their skin was white and they did not want to share. These people stole the land of Indigenous people, and made laws that said Native Americans, African Americans, people from Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America could only live in certain places away from white people. Their racism even led them so far away from God’s love that they said that Asian, African American, Indigenous, and Latino students couldn’t even go to the same schools as white students, which also meant that they did not get the same new textbooks, nice playground equipment, and weren’t allowed to drink from the same water fountains as the white students.

Sin led these people to abuse their privilege in ways that caused oppression. Like George, some people do not want to treat others fairly, share, and let others into their spaces. They want it all for themselves.

ASK:

- What do you think God has to say about this?
- What do you think God would want us to do to change it?

Let’s make a list of the ways God made people different. Examples: ethnicity, gender, abilities, size, age, etc.

ASK: How does God want us to respond to people who are different from us? How can we celebrate our differences? How can our actions toward others bring glory to God?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Large cardboard boxes or blue painter’s tape, paper and markers/crayons

The cardboard house

Pass out large flat boxes to each group of 4 or 5 or more (depending on how big the cardboard box is) and ask each group to create a house and get in it.

Alternative house activity

Mark off a square on the floor with blue painter’s tape for each child or every 2-3 children. Explain that each child/group receives a square which is their home and they can then use paper to draw or create things that are in their house.

With each option, encourage students to invite others to their houses. In this manner, students will visit different houses and feel welcome as they go from house to house.

Invite students to share, how they felt being welcomed at the houses they visited?

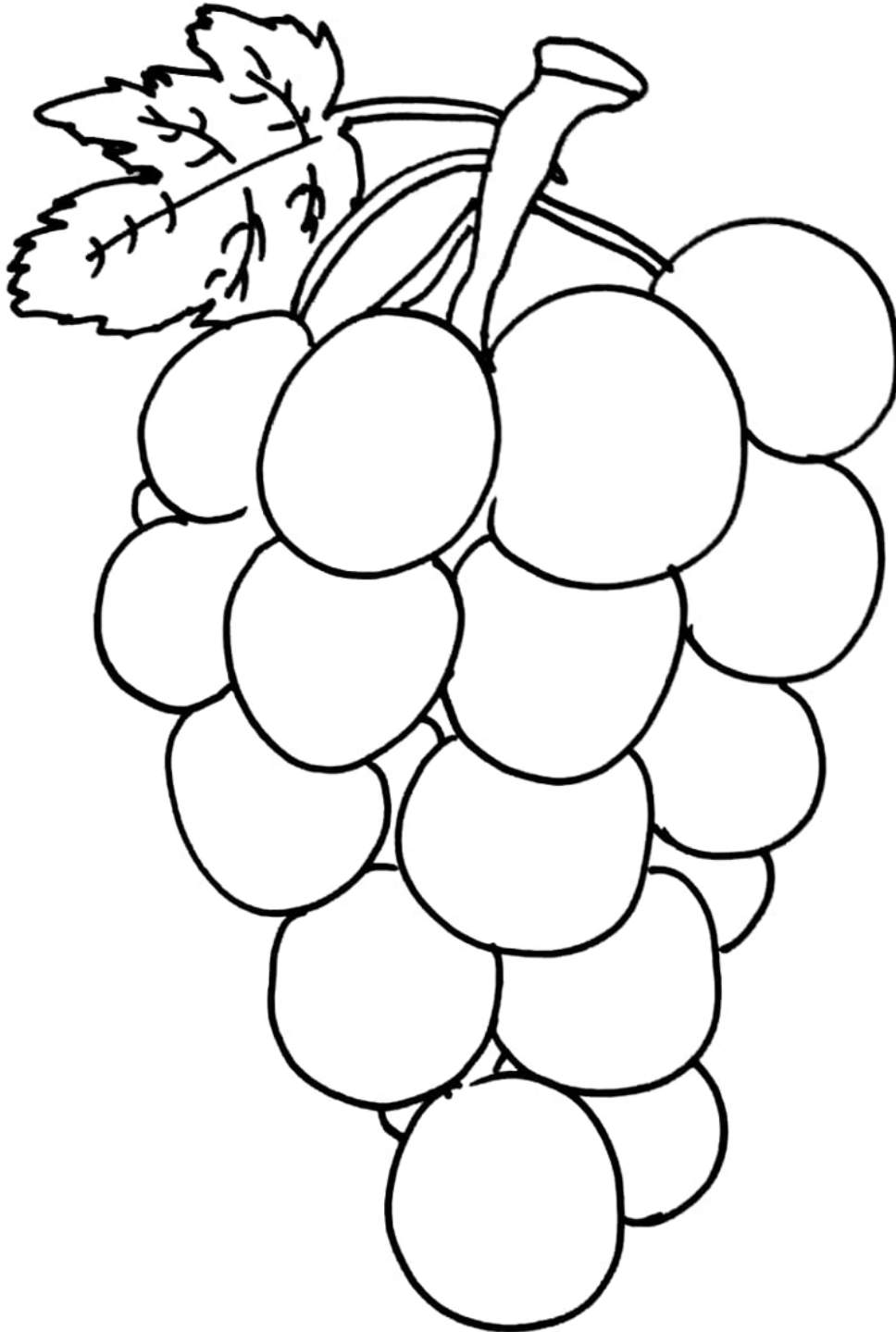
Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player, grapevine paper, markers/crayons

Gather the kids around the video player and watch the video *Color Your World With Kindness*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rweIE8yyY0U>

After watching the video, pass out the sheet with the drawing of a grapevine. Instruct students to write in each grape acts of kindness that they will practice in their lives to show others that Jesus remains in them and they remain in Jesus. Allow a few minutes for this activity. Depending on the age of the students, they could color the drawing also.

Grapevine





JESUS, THE ANSWER AND THE WAY

MODULE SEVEN

SESSION 3

In this session we will discuss how important it is to see every human being as a brother and sister in Christ and for that understanding to shape how we care for people, especially people who are different from us.

KEY POINT: In sessions 1 and 2, we explored how we are one body, each created differently but each equally important. In this session we will encourage students to take an active part in caring for people who are different.

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 #

A New Commandment

KEY WORDS

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.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A media player
- Copies of heart puzzle picture (*one per child, see attached*)
- A poster with the Ten Commandments (*attached*)
- A piece of poster board or cardboard
- Markers/crayons
- 3 x 5 index cards
- Glue sticks
- White and red construction paper
- Plain paper
- Envelopes
- Strips of paper
- Masking tape
- Heavy paper or file folders (*one per child*)
- Healing of paralyzed man video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LqHYkGU4Zg>

PREPARATION

Cut out hearts, then cut them into pieces. Place the pieces for each heart into separate envelopes (see puzzle attached). Cut out a large red heart. Write out John 13:34 on the heart and glue it to the piece of cardboard or poster board. Write the "What if" questions from within the lesson on separate 3 x 5 cards. Write out the Bible verse, John 13:34, on strips of paper.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify ways in which one can show love to others.
2. Name ways in which Jesus set an example for us on how to love one another.
3. Give examples of how you can show love for others.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Paper, markers/crayons

As children arrive encourage them to draw ways we can love and care for someone. While they are drawing, ask each child what they enjoy, what has been hard about their week, how they are feeling and what they are looking forward to.

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: Heart pieces in envelopes, large heart

Give children an envelope with the pieces of the heart puzzle, and a sheet of white construction paper with a heart traced on it. Ask students to put the puzzle together. Explain that they will be able to glue it together at the end of the lesson.

Showing a heart on a large piece of red construction paper, ask:

- What do you think of when you see a heart?
- How can you tell when someone loves you?

ASK:

- How do you feel when people show that they love you?
- How do you think other people feel when you show love to them?

EXPLAIN: We all need to feel loved. We all crave love from others.

In the Old Testament, before Jesus lived on the earth, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, and people tried to live their lives honoring God by following the Ten Commandments (show the table of the Ten Commandments). But of course, people don't always live by these commands of God. Often, we do hurt others. We say mean things, we are sometimes mean to others who look or act differently from us. But when Jesus came to the earth, he gave us a new commandment, a new way to live, and a new way to relate to others regardless of someone's background, religion, race, gender, language, nationality, or if they have a disability. This new command was to love everyone, including those who are different from us because we all belong to God's one diverse family.

Bible Time

Jesus is having his last meal (The Last Supper) with the disciples. During this meal, Jesus told the disciples he would soon be leaving, and Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment.

READ JOHN 13:34-35.

“A new command I give you: 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.”

ASK:

- What is a commandment? Is it a suggestion, a question, a request, or God’s instructions to us?
- What is a command? (*Something God tells us to do.*)
- How does Jesus tell us we should treat each other? (*Love one another*)
- What does that look like?

ASK:

- Where is the commandment in the verses that we have read?
- Did Jesus mention who is worthy of love in his new commandment?
- Do you think that there are people that do not deserve to be loved?
- How does it feel to be loved?
- How does it feel to be rejected?

EXPLAIN: Now we are going to focus on the phrase “As I have loved you.”

Here, Jesus is referring to himself, and Jesus wants us to love one another, just as Jesus loved us, even to the point of offering His life in sacrifice so that we may be saved.

Jesus says we are to follow his example to love others.

Discuss the following situations that God handled with love.

- Jesus fed 5000 people (Matthew 14:13-21). People were hungry, and Jesus fed them.
- Jesus healed the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-17). No one would want to be near someone who had leprosy, a skin and nerve disease. Lepers were forced to live outside of town. But Jesus touched and healed them.
- Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-10). Jesus was a Jew and Jews didn’t like Samaritans. The disciples were surprised Jesus would talk to a Samaritan woman and offer her love and everlasting life.
- Jesus forgave and healed a paralyzed man. (Mark 2:1-12).

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

Play the video of the healing of the paralyzed man. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LqHYkGU4Zg>

ASK:

- What is the example that Jesus left to us? Why did Jesus say, “as I have loved you.”
- Who in the story was exercising the commandment to love one another?
- By what actions can you tell the people in the video were showing love to each other?

EXPLAIN: In our last session, we learned of some people who made laws to give themselves an unfair advantage. We call this privilege, an advantage only available to a person or group of people, and oppression, unjust treatment or control of others through unfair systems of laws. They didn’t want to share and made laws that hurt people whose skin was different than theirs by taking their land, separating them from places where white people lived, making them sit in the back of buses, and putting some in jail, because they didn’t obey these unfair laws.

- What do you think Jesus would say about this?
- Do you think you can follow Jesus’s new commandment?
- How do you think you can show that you are following Jesus’s new command?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Cards with “What if” questions

Give a card to each child, or one card to a group of two or three children, depending on the size of your class. Give them two to three minutes to work on the answer to their question, and then ask each group to give their answer to what they would do in this situation.

1. What if a new child comes to your school that does not speak English and other children tell them to “go back to their country” or do not want to play with them? How could you follow Jesus’s commandment and love them? How could you help the students understand why what they were doing was wrong?

2. What if there is a child in your Sunday school class who is not dressed in nice clothes like the rest of your friends? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
3. What if a blind child your age lived in your neighborhood? How would you act? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
4. What if your best friend's parents get divorced and now your friend feels sad because they must move? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
5. What if there was a classmate who did not have a lunch? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
6. What if someone isn't good at sports but still wants to try and play? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
7. What if one of your classmates has autism and they tend to disrupt the class by walking around, raising their voice, or getting on top of the desk? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
8. What if a student who is in a wheelchair is being made fun of by other students? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them? How could you help the students who were being mean understand why what they were doing was wrong?
9. What if there is a senior citizen who comes alone each Sunday to church, but they have trouble getting out of the car and going up the stairs? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them?
10. What if your friends tell you not to play with the students who are a different race than you? How could you follow Jesus's commandment and love them? How could you help the students who were being mean understand why what they were doing was wrong?

Finally, let's remember Jesus's loving response when he saw others struggling. He noticed, asked, and listened before he acted. Sometimes we need to act immediately, but when we see the hurt we have been talking about today it can be helpful to ask and listen to the person who is struggling or being left out before thinking we have the right answer.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Construction paper, heavy paper or file folders, markers or crayons, masking tape

Tape a piece of construction paper with masking tape to the upper back of each student. Give markers or crayons to each student. Have kids go to each other and write "put-ups" rather "put-downs" on the paper attached to the back of each student. The activity ends once every student has written a "put-up" on the paper of each student.

Students cannot see what is being written about them while the activity is taking place. At the end of the activity, they can remove the paper from their backs, and read all the positive comments their peers have written about them. This is an encouraging activity for students to help them recognize the value of kindness and affirm what is good about everyone.

NOTE: If using construction paper for this activity, there is a possibility that the ink from the markers may stain the students' clothes. File folders cut in half or heavy paper will help prevent the ink from bleeding through.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Glue sticks, strips of paper with Bible verse, paper hearts

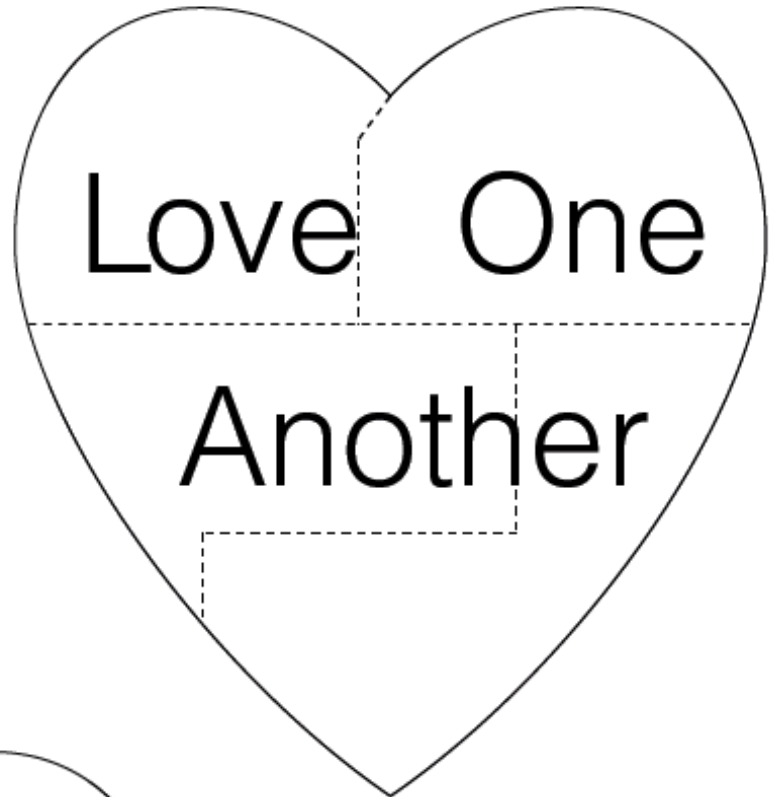
Pass out glue sticks to students and ask them to finish the puzzle by gluing the pieces to the heart you gave them at the beginning of class to a sheet of paper. Ask them to write the Bible verse John 13:34 on their hearts, or you can pass out the strip of paper with the John 13:34 written to each of them.

Ask the class to repeat in unison John 13:34.

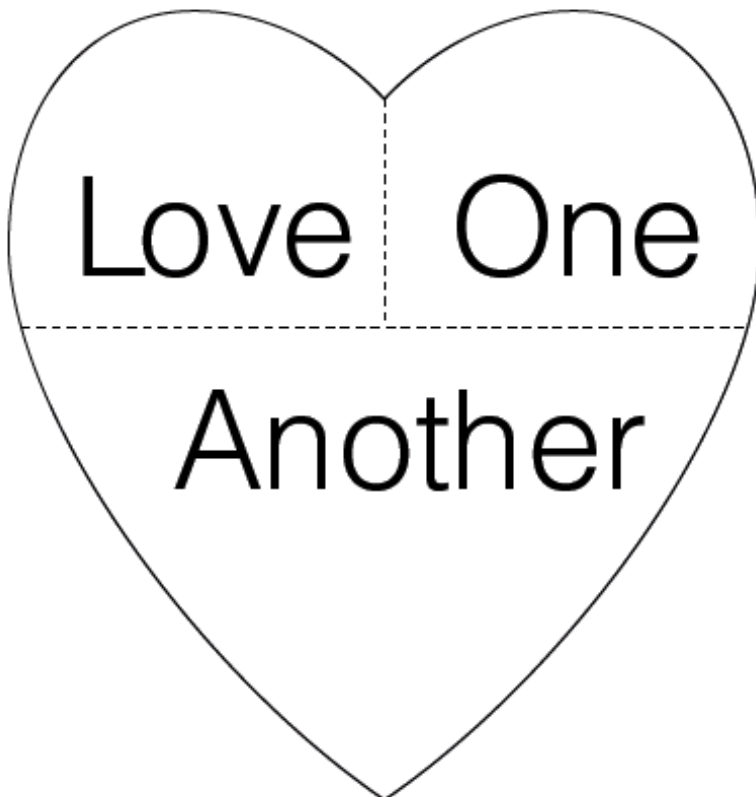
CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, thank you for creating each of us unique and different. This was your plan from the beginning. Thank you for loving us always. God, we confess that we mess up and don't always love others the way you have commanded us to. Thank you for your son Jesus who died to take away our sin and who lives with us always. Jesus you are our Lord and Savior, please help us to follow your command to love others. Amen.

Paper Hearts



Use this puzzle for older children.



Use this puzzle for younger children.

The Ten Commandments for Kids

#1	Love God more than you love anything else.
#2	Don't make anything in your life more important than God.
#3	Always say God's name with love and respect.
#4	Honor the Lord by resting on the seventh day of the week.
#5	Love and respect your mom and dad.
#6	Never hurt anyone.
#7	Always be faithful to your husband or wife.
#8	Don't take anything that isn't yours.
#9	Always tell the truth.
#10	Be happy with what you have. Don't wish for other people's things.



MOVING TOWARD SOLIDARITY

MODULE EIGHT

SESSION 1

In this session we will explore what it means to listen carefully to our neighbors, so that we can understand what it takes to faithfully stand in solidarity with them.

KEY POINT: When we see injustice, we might believe we know exactly how to fix it and bring about needed change without taking the time to listen and to learn from those who are actually experiencing injustice. As we partner with God to correct injustice and stand in solidarity with our neighbors, we must develop ears to hear by listening to those who suffer.

CENTRAL VERSES: MATTHEW 13: 15-16
*For people's hearts have become hard;
 They hardly hear with their ears
 And they have closed their eyes.
 Otherwise, they may see with their eyes,
 Hear with their ears,
 Understand with their hearts
 And turn, and I would heal them.
 Blessed are your eyes because they see and
 your ears because they hear.*

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

Hyperlinks are set on URLs throughout the Justice Journey PDF.
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covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

Session #

Eyes to See

KEY WORDS

DISCRIMINATION: Unfair treatment of others because they are different than we are. The difference could be gender, religion, race or language.

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

PRIVILEGE: An advantage only available to a person or group of people.

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

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Blue painter's tape
- Paper
- Crayons/markers
- Prizes or snacks
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Bibles
- Tape
- Inflated ball and deflated ball

PREPARATION

- Tape a starting line on one side of the room. Measure 20 sheets of paper in length across the room. Tape another line, the finish line, at this distance. Pick up the papers.
- Two copies each of skits 2-5.

KEY VERSES JAMES 2:1-4

Welcome

As children enter, invite them to look around the room and take turns sharing what they see. Then ask them why they think those things are in the room.

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: Blue painter's tape, paper, prizes or snacks

This game is designed to help children see everyone is capable of winning the game, but because those with an abundance are often self-focused and fail to notice those who are struggling, everyone does not actually win. The game also reveals the frustrations that arise when those with fewer resources struggle and no one notices or shares their excess resources. Everyone could "win" if we noticed and shared our resources like Scripture calls us to do when we see our neighbors in need.

Build a Bridge

Depending on the size of your class, divide into 3 or more equal-sized groups. If you only have a few children, they can each work individually. Point out the lines of painter's tape previously placed on the floor.

EXPLAIN: We're going to play a game together. Between these two lines of tape is a sea of water. Your challenge is

to get to the other side without stepping in the water (on the floor). I'm going to give you sheets of paper as stepping stones. You must lay them down on the floor one at a time to make a bridge to the other side.

You will step on the sheets of paper to get to the other side. If you step on the floor, you must start over. You can only lay down a stone once. It cannot be picked up. Once you (or your team) get to the other side, you will receive a prize.

Hand out different amounts of paper to the groups or individuals. Some will receive 12 sheets, some receive 8 sheets, and some receive 4 sheets. (Arrange varying numbers in piles before handing them out, rather than counting them out to each group.) If some children notice and complain that they received fewer sheets of paper, explain that they will need to be creative in how to use the stepping stones to get to the other side. Repeat the instructions with the added encouragement to give it their best effort.

For the Teacher: Remember, this game is about those with abundance noticing the unfair advantage they have and working together to share resources so everyone can make it to the other side.

You cannot tell them this while playing, but there is no rule that says a team cannot give some of their paper to another team or person. However, they cannot give their paper stones after they have laid them down on the floor.

If there are some who are unable to finish, because they were not offered additional paper by other teams, offer them some extra pieces of paper at the end of the game so that they can make it to the finish line and receive a prize.

ASK:

- What did you like or not like about this game?
- What did you notice or not notice?
- Why do you think we failed to notice some of the class was struggling?
- What do you think was most important, getting your team to the other side for the prize or stopping to help another team so everyone could get a prize?
- What could have been done to make sure everyone got across the finish line?

EXPLAIN: Solidarity is sacrificially loving your neighbors who are being mistreated or overlooked and living together as mutual friends. Standing in solidarity means we must develop eyes to see those around us who are hurting, ears

to hear how and why they are suffering, and hearts that respond to their needs. Jesus did this, and it serves as our model, helping us see why we cannot become so focused on ourselves that we miss opportunities to share God's love with others and help our neighbor in times of need.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Construction paper, scissors, crayons/markers, Bibles

READ MATTHEW 13:15-16.

Invite children to draw or cut out a heart while you read through the passage several times.

DISCUSS: Hold up your hearts. Where is the heart in your body? Let's think about what a soft heart is and what a hard heart is.

Guide children toward the understanding that a soft heart is open to the direction from Jesus to love, and a hard heart means we are focused on ourselves rather than others.

Sometimes, we are so focused on ourselves that we fail to see how others are struggling. How did that happen today during our game?

READ JAMES 2:1-4.

While you read the passage several times, encourage children to draw or write what they are hearing. Explain that the word discrimination means unfair treatment. Discrimination is the opposite of privilege.

REFLECT:

- What is happening in this story?
- Who is being treated unfairly?
- Why is this happening?
- How would you feel if you were the poor man?
- Do you think this is what Jesus would want?

EXPLAIN

- Why do you think we treat poor people differently?
- How can we love poor people in ways that show they are as important as rich people?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Inflated ball and deflated ball, copies of skits

EXPLAIN: Sometimes, even those of us who have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior fail to see the unfair treatment of others.

ASK: What was unfair about the game we played today?

EXPLAIN: We're going to play another game called Eyes to See. There will be five skits.

The object of the game is to notice unfair treatment in each skit and decide how you could respond. We will need two volunteers to act out each skit.

SKIT 1

The teacher says, "It's recess time." The teacher hands the first student an inflated ball and tells them to have a good time. The student walks away and starts to bounce the ball. The teacher then throws a deflated ball to the other student and walks away.

DEBRIEF: What did you see? What do you feel? How could you respond?

SKIT 2

KID 1: I'm going to be on the soccer team this year. I just bought my uniform!

KID 2: I love soccer! Where can I sign up?

KID 1: Well, you can only be on the team if you buy a uniform and pay the registration fee.

KID 2: I didn't know it would cost money.

KID 1: Just ask your parents.

KID 2: Maybe next year...

DEBRIEF: What did you see? What do you feel? How could you respond?

SKIT 3

KID 1: I got straight A's!

KID 2: That's awesome! So, did I!

KID 1: Who asked you?

KID 2: What?

KID 1: No one who dresses like you could get straight A's! Get out of here!

DEBRIEF: What did you see? What do you feel? How could you respond?

SKIT 4

KID 1: I had a great time playing in the park yesterday with my friends.

KID 2: We don't have a park in my neighborhood, but I did help my neighbor, Mrs. Samuelson, bring in the groceries because she is old and needs help.

KID 1: Lame! I guess that's what you get for living in a poor neighborhood. Bye Dumpy!

DEBRIEF: What did you see? What do you feel? How could you respond?

SKIT 5

KID 1: Hey speak English! This is America!

KID 2: Many languages are spoken in the United States.

KID 1: Anyone who doesn't speak English is not a true American, loser!

DEBRIEF: What did you see? What do you feel? How could you respond?

EXPLAIN: Jesus noticed when people were overlooked or treated unfairly and lovingly responded. Jesus wants us to not only notice when people are mistreated and oppressed, but to respond in love as well.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Construction paper, tape

Have students make a telescope by rolling a piece of construction paper and taping it. Ask them to look through their telescopes and share what they see with their neighbor.

ASK: How is looking through a telescope different compared to seeing with our eyes?

EXPLAIN: Sometimes our vision is limited. We fail to see unfair treatment or speak up or take action to change it. Jesus wants us to see injustice and unfair treatment, and to speak up and take action to change it. Let's sharpen our vision so that we can see and respond like Jesus.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for teaching and helping us to see injustice, to notice unfair treatment, and to stand in solidarity with our neighbors who suffer. Help us to stand together and speak out when we see injustice and take action to help each other.



MOVING TOWARD SOLIDARITY

MODULE EIGHT

SESSION 2

In this session we will explore what it means to listen carefully to our neighbors, so that we can understand what it takes to faithfully stand in solidarity with them.

KEY POINT: When we see injustice, we might believe we know exactly how to fix it and bring about needed change without taking the time to listen and to learn from those who are actually experiencing injustice. An old proverb explains, “Those closest to the problem are also closest to the solution.” As we partner with God to correct injustice and stand in solidarity with our neighbors, we must develop ears to hear by listening to those who suffer.

CENTRAL VERSES: MATTHEW 13: 15-16
*For people’s hearts have become hard;
 They hardly hear with their ears
 And they have closed their eyes.
 Otherwise, they may see with their eyes,
 Hear with their ears,
 Understand with their hearts
 And turn, and I would heal them.
 Blessed are your eyes because they see and
 your ears because they hear.*

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

Ears to Hear



KEY WORDS

EQUALITY: Being equal in status and opportunities.

EQUITY: The quality of being fair and just.

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 or oppression.

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

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Blue painter’s tape
- Paper
- Crayons/markers
- Construction paper
- Tape
- Bibles
- Two copies of the labyrinth grid

PREPARATION

- Using blue painter’s tape, create a 10-foot by 10-foot grid on the floor (see diagram at the end of the session).
- Thoroughly read the directions for the labyrinth game for each team before beginning the game.
- Make plans to create an obstacle course.

KEY VERSES JAMES 2:5-9

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Paper, crayons/markers

As children enter, ask them to draw something that they did this last week. As each child shares their drawing, remind them how important it is to listen quietly to what their friends are sharing. Then explain we are going to enter into a time of prayer.

PRAYER

First, we will quietly listen to what God might be saying to us. Give children an opportunity to share anything they might have heard from God. Next, ask if anyone has prayer requests. Pray together, lifting these requests to God, thanking God for hearing our prayers, and asking God to help us listen for ways we can help others this week.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Labyrinth grid created with blue painter's tape, paper, two copies of the labyrinth grid map

Object of the game: Find the path through a labyrinth to rescue your teammates.

This game is designed to help children understand the importance of seeing and hearing. When one group with an abundance of resources tries to help another group that lacks resources, the group with a surplus may try to act to solve the problem of inequity without taking the time to listen to the group that is hindered by the inequalities. This instinct to act without listening can cause problems and often worsens the situation.

For the teacher: Thoroughly read and share the directions below for each team before beginning the game. There are 14 sheets of paper needed to create a specific path through the labyrinth. Give Team One 12 sheets of paper and 10-14 minutes to find their way through the maze.

Give Team Two 2 sheets of paper and a map through the maze. Keep one map for the teacher.

Team Two's map must stay hidden. Team Two cannot help Team One find the way unless Team One asks for help. If

Team One has not asked for help at the half-way point, 5-7 minutes, Team Two can ask them this one question: "Can we help?"

Playing the game: Divide everyone into two teams. Take Team Two outside the room and give them their directions. Have Team One stay in the room for directions and line them up on one side of the grid.

Team One Directions: Your group has become divided in a dense jungle and there is only one safe way through the jungle to find them. Use these papers to create a path through the jungle labyrinth to join Team Two who will be returning soon and taking a position on the other side of this jungle grid. You must determine the exact path through the labyrinth by laying down sheets of paper as stepping stones, creating a path to the other side.

Here is the challenge. There is only one right way through the jungle labyrinth. Each player on your team will take turns stepping on a block in the grid to find the path to Team Two. The teacher will announce if that block is the correct step to take on the path through the jungle. If the guess is incorrect, the next student will make a guess by stepping on another block. Once you have guessed a correct block in the labyrinth, lay down a sheet of paper to mark that block. The next team member will now step on that block and seek to find the next block through the labyrinth. It could be forward, to the side or at an angle. Each time you find another block through the labyrinth, lay down a sheet of paper to mark the path and work your way back out of the grid the same way you went in. Then the next person will walk in on the blocks you have found and make the next guess. Only one person can be in the labyrinth at a time until the path is completed. The path must be connected from end to end. You are only given a short time to fulfill your task. The teacher will give you warnings as the time is ticking down.

Team Two Directions: Team One has been told your group has become divided in a dense jungle and there is only one safe way through the jungle to find you. Team One is trying to determine the exact path through the labyrinth by laying down sheets of paper as stepping stones, creating a path to the other side, but they do not have enough papers. Here are two sheets of paper that you must keep hidden until Team One asks for your help.

Each player on Team One will take turns stepping on a block in the grid to find the path to you. When the teacher tells them the correct block is found, they lay a piece of

paper on that block. They take turns to find the next block through the labyrinth. Here is the key: I am giving you the map that shows the way through the labyrinth. But it must stay hidden, and you cannot help Team One find the way unless they ask for your help. Only a short time will be given to fulfill the task. I will announce when half the time has expired. If Team One has not asked for your help at the half-way point, you can ask them this one question: “Can we help?”

For any question Team One asks, Team Two can respond with this statement, “We believe we know the way and can help you.”

If Team One invites you to help by saying something like, “Please help us.” You may help them get to the other side by giving them directions from the map and adding the two pieces of paper you have, at the end, to complete the path. I will give you warnings as the time is ticking down.

Once the path is completed, everyone from Team One should travel across the path to join Team Two to complete the game.

DISCUSS:

- **TEAM TWO**, how were you feeling watching Team One play the game?
- **TEAM ONE**, why do you think it took a while to ask Team Two for help?
- **TEAM ONE**, why did you assume Team Two didn’t have anything to offer?
- If Team Two had all the resources Team One had, would they have needed rescuing?
- Who was actually rescued in this game?
- How did you end up standing in solidarity (together as one group)?

In our last session together, we talked about “seeing” or noticing unfair treatment. When something isn’t fair, resulting from privilege or the sin of selfishness or oppression, this is called injustice. This week we are going to talk about the importance of listening. Sometimes we may notice unfair treatment and just want to fix it without first listening to those who are being treated unfairly.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Construction paper, tape, Bibles

READ MATTHEW 13:15-16.

Invite children to roll up their construction paper into a tube and tape it.

Read the verses again while children are working on the tubes. Ask them to hold their tubes up to their ear and listen carefully as you read Matthew 13:15 again.

EXPLAIN: These paper tubes help us to focus our hearing. There can be a lot of noise and a lot of voices, but we can also focus on what God says to us. Today it’s about listening to God and others, especially listening to those who are treated unfairly or unjustly. Read the verse a couple of times.

ASK: What causes us to see but not understand?

READ JAMES 2:5-9 (NLT or NIV recommended for comprehension).

EXPLAIN: There are some people who have plenty and are unkind to those who are poor. They do not think people who are poor have anything of value to offer. Let’s read James 2:5 again.

ASK:

- What does the very first word in this verse tell us to do? Listen.
- What does this verse say the poor are rich in? Faith in Jesus.
- Are the poor just as important to God as someone who has money? Yes.
- Who do the poor love in this verse? Jesus.

READ JAMES 2:6.

ASK:

- How do the rich often treat those who are poor? Put them down and fail to share.
- In this passage, the rich even take the money of the poor. How do you think Jesus feels about this? This is called exploitation. It is the action of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work, such as working long hours for little or no pay. Jesus doesn’t believe this is right.

READ JAMES 2:8.

Our “neighbor” is everyone. But sometimes money makes us forget this. We can start to think that only people who have the same things as we have, and live in homes like ours, are our neighbors. When we live this way, we keep everything God has blessed us with for ourselves and look down on our neighbors who are poor. This is not equitable. We forget that what we have is a blessing from God, and God has blessed us so we can be a blessing to our neighbors who are in need.

What do you think it means to love our neighbor? We listen to them and learn from them so we can share and make life equitable. Unfortunately, those who have more than they need usually don’t listen well to those who have less and are in need.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper, crayons/markers

Encourage each child to think of a sound they could make. Have each child share their sound and have the rest of the class try to guess what the sound is.

ASK: What did you have to do to figure out what the sound was? Listen, concentrate, think.

Listening shows we care about someone. Jesus listened to people that others didn’t listen to. Jesus listened to and spoke with:

- Children
- Those who were hurt
- Women as well as men
- The poor
- The sick
- Servants
- The homeless.
- Those who sinned and hurt others, to help them change their ways

When we listen to someone, it shows we value them. We stand together with them.

Often listening is more important than having an answer for someone.

LISTENING EXERCISE

- Instruct everyone to draw something that made them sad or mad.
- After the drawings are completed, have the students pair up.
- First, have one explain what they drew and then have their listening partner pray for them.
- Next, have partners switch places and do the same.

EXPLAIN: Most of us would prefer to talk rather than listen. During this time, I saw how well you listened to one another; by listening, you knew how to pray for one another. The same holds true for our relationship with God. When we pray, we can listen for what God might say to us. Prayer helps us to notice, listen, and care well for each other.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper, obstacle course

Either mark out some squares with paper on the grid you used earlier or create an obstacle course using paper on the floor. Have students pair up and take turns closing eyes and having each partner guiding one another through the course by voice. The object is to move through the course without stepping on the paper.

ASK:

- How easy or hard was it to listen?
- Why did you need to trust the voice of your partner?
- How is moving through this obstacle course together an example of standing in solidarity?
- Why is listening important when we see injustice?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, when we see injustice, help us to listen to those hurt by these sins, learn from them how we can help end them, and speak up to show the world your love. Everyone is valued in your eyes. Help us to pay attention and have the courage to stand with those who are made fun of or are hurting or left out. We are all your children and you love us all. Help us to love the way you love us.

Grid for the Labyrinth Game

END

TEAM 2's POSITION

						O			
						O			
						X			
					X				
			X	X	X				
		X							
		X		X					
			X		X				
						X			
					X				

BEGIN

TEAM 1's POSITION

The X's are symbols for the number of sheets of paper the beginning team has.
The O's represent the number of sheets of paper the end team has.



MOVING TOWARD SOLIDARITY

MODULE EIGHT

SESSION 3

In this session we will explore what it means to have a heart that responds to injustice.

KEY POINT: We may have eyes and ears that notice injustice, but we also need a heart that responds to injustice in order to stand in solidarity.

CENTRAL VERSES: MATTHEW 13: 15-16
*For people's hearts have become hard;
 They hardly hear with their ears
 And they have closed their eyes.
 Otherwise, they may see with their eyes,
 Hear with their ears,
 Understand with their hearts
 And turn, and I would heal them.
 Blessed are your eyes because they see and
 your ears because they hear.*

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

1 HOUR

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covchurch.org/justicejourney/links

Session #

Hearts that Respond

KEY WORDS

FAITH: Complete trust in something we can't see but believe is there.

INJUSTICE: When something isn't 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 only available to a person or group of people. But not to other people.

SELFISHNESS: To be concerned for one's self or one's own advantage, regardless of others.

SIN: Anything that is against God's will.

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

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Crayons/markers
- Playdough
- Drawing paper
- Construction paper
- Pens and pencils
- Broken crayons and unsharpened pencils
- Tape
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or 2 poster boards

PREPARATION

- On the board/poster write: Jesus said, "A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another." John 13:34.
- On another board/poster write: sin, privilege, selfishness, and oppression.

KEY VERSES JAMES 2:14-17

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

John 13:34, James 1:19, Philippians 2:1-11, Matthew 25:35-40, Mark 12:41-44, Romans 12:4-6.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Markers/crayons, drawing paper, playdough, paper, board/poster with John 13:34 written on it

As children arrive, point to the passage, have them read it, or read it for them. Offer them markers/crayons and drawing paper, or playdough. Ask them to draw or mold a picture of a way we show love to someone. This could also be a time to ask them when they felt closest to God this week or something that was special to them this week.

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: Drawing paper, construction paper, markers, pens, crayons, pencils, broken crayons, and unsharpened pencils, both boards with Bible verse and words

Have the children share their drawings or clay moldings of ways we can show love to someone.

EXPLAIN: Today, we are going to talk about why we, as Christians, need to respond to injustice lovingly. Injustice is when things are not fair.

Show the board with sin, privilege, selfishness, and oppression written on it. Ask the children what they think each word means.

EXPLAIN: Sin is anything that is against God's will. Privilege is an unfair advantage gained because of oppression, or the exclusion of others. This advantage allows some people to be treated better and respected more than others. Selfishness occurs when we do not take on the mindset of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11). Oppression is when people are harmed by injustice and hurt by unfair systems and laws. Injustice occurs because of sin and results in privilege, selfishness, and oppression. Injustice hurts people and leads to groups being mistreated.

Application Activity

EXPLAIN: We are going to divide into two groups, and together we are going to create an art gallery. I will be giving you supplies to draw something you love to do, and then we will put them up to form our art gallery and share what we created.

Give one group an excess of drawing paper, construction paper, markers, pens, crayons, and pencils. Give the second group a few broken crayons, an unsharpened pencil, and one piece of paper.

DISCUSS: In a moment, we are going to create our art gallery. But before we begin, do you notice anything that's not fair? Why is it not fair?

When one group has much better resources than another, this is called privilege. It's wonderful that we have access to these supplies, but is it fair that some have so much, and others were given so little? We see we have more than we need, and others do not have enough, shouldn't we share?

Part of having privilege is also having power because the group that has more resources gets to choose if they will share those resources. Why do you think it's sometimes hard to share even when we have more than enough?

The group that doesn't have enough resources, or even the nice resources, may also choose to share their broken crayons with you, but if you already have nicer crayons and markers will you accept them?

How would you feel if you offered what little you had, and it was rejected?

Those that have more than they need have the power and the privilege to turn something down. This group also has the privilege of deciding what is considered good or bad.

ASK:

- What do you think Jesus thinks about this?
- To whom can we turn to know what is good and what is bad?
- What do you think Jesus would do?
- What does it look like to love one another when things are unjust?
- How can we change something that is unjust, and make it "just" right now?

EXPLAIN: Let's work together to create our gallery and then share what we have each created with one another.

Bible Time

Remember, today, we are exploring what it means to have a heart that responds to injustice.

READ JAMES 1:19.

ASK:

- What should we be quick to do and slow to do? Quick: listen. Slow: speak, become angry
- Should we tell our neighbor what we are going to do for them, or listen to what they say will help?
- If their solution is different than ours, should we become angry? Why, why not?

READ JAMES 2:14.

ASK: What is faith? Complete trust in something we can't see, but we believe it is there.

We can't see the wind or gravity. Yet we have faith, it's there. In the same way, we may feel the love and presence

of Jesus and have faith Jesus is with us. Jesus asks us to live out our faith by sharing God's love with others.

We're now going to read what faith looks like.

READ JAMES 2:15-17.

ASK:

- What are the needs that someone has in this passage? Clothes and food.
- Does Jesus want us to say, "Well, I hope you keep warm and find food." Or do you think Jesus wants us to listen to what this person has to say and then help?
- What are some of the loving deeds or actions you think Jesus wants us to live out?

Let's read how Jesus calls us to love those who are in need.

READ MATTHEW 25:35-40.

Jesus knows what it is like to be in need:

When Jesus was born, there was no room in the inn (inside) for him and his family. (Luke 2:6-7)

Jesus was an immigrant and was a stranger in a new land, that needed to be invited and welcomed in. (Matthew 2:13-14)

Jesus was unjustly put in prison. (Matthew 27:15-17)

Jesus was hungry and asked for something to eat. (Luke 24:41-42)

Jesus was thirsty while on the cross and asked for something to drink. (John 19:28-30)

EXPLAIN: If we're going to stand in solidarity with those who face injustice, we need eyes to recognize it, ears to hear from those who are hurt by it, and a heart like Jesus that responds to injustice.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper, crayons, markers, pencils

Today we are going to talk about having a heart like Jesus and exercising a different kind of power. We will be talking about ways to use our power like Jesus did.

THE POWER OF LISTENING OVER TELLING.

Invite the children to pair up.

EXPLAIN: You will listen to a story from the Bible,

and then you will share with your partner the part of the story you were most surprised about, or you have a question about. Then you will switch places, listen to the story again, and your partner will share the part they were surprised about or had a question about. After that, you will each share with the class what your partner said surprised them, or a question they had.

Read Mark 12:41-44.

Allow time for the partners to discuss the story and then have each child share what their partner shared with them. Praise students letting them know you believe they are capable of excellent listening, and listening well enough to share.

THE POWER OF SHARING OVER TAKING.

As you give each student supplies, ask them to draw ways they can share. Give each student either two pieces of paper, two crayons, two pencils, or two markers. No student will have enough supplies to complete the assignment because no one will have both paper and something to write with.

ASK: What’s the difference between sharing and taking?

EXPLAIN: You obviously don’t have enough supplies to finish. You will have to decide with whom to share to create your drawing.

DISCUSS: It’s not always easy to share. We may not end up with all the items we want.

In this case, you were not sharing out of abundance, but shared what you had, like the widow who put in the two coins. Encourage children to share their drawings.

THE POWER OF CARING OVER IGNORING.

EXPLAIN: I will read some real-life situations. You will decide what you would do.

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being made fun of because of their race?

What could happen if you cared? *(Note the response could be positive or negative. Doing the right thing is not always easy.)*

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being made fun of because they speak another language or struggle to speak English? What could happen if you cared?

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being left out of a game because they are in a wheelchair? What could happen if you cared?

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone who doesn’t have money to buy lunch? What could happen if you cared?

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being made fun of because of their clothes? What could happen if you cared?

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being made fun of for sharing? What could happen if you cared?

What would happen if you ignore...

Someone being made fun of because they can’t answer a question? What could happen if you cared?

EXPLAIN: Jesus tells us listening, caring, and sharing are examples of the true power of love. Jesus shared his life with us and gave his life for us. Jesus loves us that much. Jesus has shown us how to give something up to stand in solidarity together.

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper, tape, markers

READ ROMANS 12:4-6.

DIRECTIONS: On the paper, write one gift/talent/ experience you could share with a friend. Once you are done, tape it to your shirt.

Form the class into a circle. Have each student read out loud, the gift or talent of the student across from them. (If the circle is large, have each neighbor read the gift.)

EXPLAIN: None of us looks exactly alike or has the same gifts or talents. God has made each of us unique, and you are all special and loved by God. Each of you has special gifts to share. And it is God’s hope and desire that we would stand together as one body, listening to each other, sharing with one another, caring for each other—standing in solidarity.

Standing in solidarity and taking action against the sins of racism, oppression, injustice, and exploitation is not easy. We can’t do this work on our own. We need Jesus to help us make things right. This is what Jesus lovingly calls us to.

An Invitation

Jesus loves us so much that he wants us to be one with him. Jesus promises to give us strength through the difficult times. When others may not love us, Jesus will still love us and never leave us. Jesus will take away our sin and help us to love those around us. Jesus will fill us with his Spirit to guide us and help us to overcome injustice and once again be the one loving body that all are invited to.

If you want Jesus to wipe away your sin and be the loving leader and guide of your life, you can simply pray, talking to Jesus and Jesus will hear you and accept you as his disciple.

If this is something you would like to do, then we will invite you to pray with one of your teachers at church, your pastor, your mom or dad, or other family member. And we will celebrate your new life in Jesus who loves you and will guide you and be with you forever.

If there are children that want to do this, then include their parents in this profound moment of their children's spiritual journey.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Help us, Jesus, to love one another as you first loved us. Show us how to honor others above ourselves. Help us, Lord, to keep our eyes on you so we might be joyful in hope, patient when things don't go as we wish, and remain faithful in prayer. Help us to stand together in solidarity, as one body, listening to each other, sharing with one another, caring for each other. Give us hearts that respond with sacrificial love when we see injustice.

JUSTICE JOURNEY *for kids*

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The Evangelical Covenant Church