

Check Your Prejudice

JAMES 2:1-7

2



GOAL

Youth examine ways they judge themselves and others, remembering that they are siblings in Christ.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.

THIS SESSION

Humans make judgments about other people and situations to assess our safety and well-being. We are challenged to consider if the judgments we make are fair, true, or just. Often our judgments of others and ourselves are guided (consciously or not) by racist, sexist, ableist, heteronormative, classist, or xenophobic standards. Justice requires that we recognize systems from which we benefit as much as those that cause harm to us or others.

THE BIBLE STORY

The letter of James addresses a faith community that is challenged to think about ways to welcome and interact with wealthy people as well as people experiencing poverty. While James 2:1-7 portrays economic inequality, you may consider other systems of racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia that contribute to some people looking down on others.

This passage describes people experiencing poverty as “rich in faith.” This theology can contribute to romanticizing poverty. One’s material condition is not an indicator of one’s character. In addition, people experiencing poverty still have real material needs. The act of checking our prejudice to do justice includes suspending judgments of others and advocating for the inclusion and well-being of people who are oppressed.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth discern their role in community and social order. They can be self-conscious as they consider how peers and adults view them. They can be prone to judge and consider the status of others and themselves as they align with some groups and exclude others. While youth may be aware of their tendencies to judge, they may not recognize the way systems of oppression have taught each of us about what is considered beautiful, popular, and valuable. An informed conversation about systems of oppression can help youth hold grace for themselves and others, recognize the roots of their judgments, and create new narratives of beauty and value.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Micah 6:8 Requirements” (p. 18): Display the opening litany instructions on Resource Page 2 from session 1 (p. 11)
- “Personal Confession” (p. 21): Bring a large bowl of water.
- “Service Project” (p. 21): Review “Check Your Prejudice” instructions on Resource Page 4 from session 1 (p. 15).
- “Praying Not This but That” (p. 21): Write the words to the prayer on newsprint.



PRAYER

God, let me lead humbly, graciously, and with empathy. Amen.

GETTING STARTED

SAME AND DIFFERENT

C

As youth arrive, have them find one thing they have in common with each person in the room and one way they are different from them.

When everyone has gathered, discuss:

- What new things did you learn about people?
- How does this help you to understand them better?
- Why do you think you did not know these things before this activity?



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- ☐ Resource Page 2 from session 1 (p. 11)

MICAH 6:8 REQUIREMENTS

AM

Use instructions on Resource Page 2 from session 1 (p. 11) for an opening litany.

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- ☐ Internet-connected device

DIFFERENT

T C CT

Show the YouTube video “Different—Award Winning Short Film by Tahneek Rahman” (bit.ly/FMDifferent, 5:17). Invite youth to talk about their initial reactions to the video. Use the following questions to facilitate conversation.

- What were the assumptions made in the video?
- How did Emily feel when she realized her assumptions about John were wrong?
- What did Emily and John do to amend their judgments?
- When have you made an assumption about someone and been wrong?

GUIDED REFLECTION

QC

Invite youth to assume a comfortable position and close their eyes. Read the guided reflection prompts slowly, pausing between each sentence to allow time for youth to imagine and form their silent responses.

- Imagine a room full of people.
- Notice who is present in the room. Notice who is not present in the room.
 - What do people in the room look like? How do they act?
 - Who in the room would you gravitate toward?
 - What is it about these people that draws you to them?
 - Who in the room would you avoid?
 - What is it about these people that makes you want to avoid them?

Invite youth to open their eyes. Encourage them to name the appearances and attributes that they judge in others. Discuss when it is helpful to notice these things. Acknowledge that certain judgments can keep us safe—such as when we witness bullying, oppression, or lack of well-being—and we can advocate for change. Discuss when it is unhelpful to notice attributes and appearances, such as when the judgments cause us to exclude or treat others unfairly. Explain that, in this session, we explore our prejudices and judgments about others as we consider how to treat people justly.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

MODERN RETELLING

AT C

☐ Bibles

Invite two volunteers to read James 2:1–4 and 5–7 aloud while the group follows along.

Form groups of three. Have each group work together to retell the Scripture using modern terminology. Gather the youth. Invite the groups to share their retelling. Invite them to identify similarities and differences between their retellings. Discuss why they interpreted the Scripture differently. How might these differences represent different judgments.

SCRIPTURE HAIKU

CT

☐ Bibles

☐ Paper and pens

Distribute Bibles, paper, and pens. Invite two volunteers to read James 2:1–4 and 5–7 aloud while the group follows along.

Explain that a *haiku* is a three-lined poem form that originated in Japan. The first line has 5 syllables, the second line has 7, and the third line has 5. Read aloud the example haiku. Have youth write a haiku summarizing the Scripture passage. Invite volunteers to read aloud their haiku poetry.



Example Haiku:

*Include the rich one.
Push away the one with less.
This is not justice.*

CHARACTER STORY

C AT

☐ Bibles

Distribute Bibles. Read aloud James 2:1–7 as youth follow along.

Form two groups. Assign one group to focus on the wealthy person, the other on the person experiencing poverty. Have each group reread James 2:1–3 and work together to tell the story of their assigned person. Encourage them to consider what contributed to that person's wealth or lack of wealth, what the person's schedule may have looked like the day they went to the assembly, and what the person felt and thought when they were treated the way they were at the assembly.

Gather youth and invite them to talk about their small-group discussions. Acknowledge the differences in both persons' stories and the systemic and structural contributions to the way the people were treated. Discuss what could make the situation more just for all involved.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

CHURCH LEADERS CONFESSING

T C

☐ Internet-connected device

Show the YouTube video “White Faith Leaders Address Systemic Racism” (bit.ly/FMConfess, 3:51). Invite youth to talk about their initial impressions of the video. Select from these questions to continue discussion:

- ➡ What did these church leaders confess?
- ➡ Why did they confess?
- ➡ What difference do you think their confession can make in their churches? In their community?

- ☐ Newsprint
- ☐ Markers



Teaching Tip: This activity is similar to the “Service Project” activities. You might choose this if you are not participating in the service project, or if you want to dive deeper into the service project.

- ➔ What other groups or issues or prejudices do you think the church needs to confess and commit to doing differently?
- ➔ What do you think God thinks about these groups and issues?

CONSIDERING OTHERS

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Challenge youth to identify groups who experience prejudice, discrimination, or injustice. Record these on newsprint. Give each person a marker and invite them to place a check mark next to a named group if they have friends or family members who identify with that group.

Invite volunteers to describe experiences of witnessing friends or family members facing prejudice, discrimination, or injustice. They may also describe their own experiences if they feel comfortable. Take care to not put anyone on the spot.

Discuss why they think discrimination happens. Have them describe what they can do when they witness discrimination. What support is needed for them to act?

LOOKING AT OUR CHURCH

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Facilitate a conversation using the following questions to help youth look at how people in your group and your church may feel included and welcome or unwelcome. Encourage them to move from judgment to problem solving.

- ➔ What are some things we may do, even unintentionally, that wouldn't make people feel welcome in our group?
- ➔ Who does our church include?
- ➔ What does our church do to welcome people?
- ➔ Who is not represented at our church, and why do you think this is?
- ➔ What does our church do that may make people feel unwelcome?
- ➔ What can our church do better to check our assumptions and be more welcoming?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Newsprint and various colored markers

CHECKING ASSUMPTIONS

AT CT C

Invite youth to brainstorm pairs of groups that seem to be different from each other, such as tall and short people, old and young people (or one of many generational groups), haves and have nots, and so on. Record these on the top half of a newsprint sheet. Select one pair from the list to discuss further.

On the bottom half of the newsprint, identify what makes the two groups different. Record these with one color marker. Then identify what the two groups have in common. Record these with a different color marker. Review the two lists. Mark which differences are assumed and which are known differences. Repeat the activity, marking assumed or known similarities.

Discuss how what is known or not known about another can lead to judgment, prejudice, or division. Identify activities that might decrease judgment, prejudice, or division among people.

PERSONAL CONFESSION

Invite youth to silently think about a group of people or a particular person whom they sometimes judge. Consider how their judgments hurt this group or person, and in what ways their judgments also hurt themselves. Challenge them to think about what they can do to learn more about these groups or people and build relationships with them.

Distribute paper and pens. Have youth work independently to write a prayer of confession for themselves and pray for the people or individual whom they thought about during their reflection.

As youth finish writing, invite them to fold their paper and to drop it into the large bowl of water. Tell them that God loves and forgives them.

QC

- ☐ Paper and pens
- ☐ Large bowl of water



Teaching Tip: You may play soft music during this activity.

“Oceans (Where Feet May Fail) Lyric Video—Hillsong United” (bit.ly/FMOceans, 9:00) is a good choice as it includes the lyrics of loving others without borders.

SERVICE PROJECT

Use the instructions from Resource Page 4 from session 1 (p. 15) to lead the youth in a discussion for the second step of the service project: Check Your Prejudice. Save the Resource Page for use in later sessions.

S

- ☐ Resource Page 4 from session 1 (p. 15)
- ☐ Newsprint and markers



FOLLOWING JESUS

PRAYING NOT THIS BUT THAT

Display prepared newsprint with the following prayer. As leader, read aloud the non-bolded parts. Invite youth to read the bolded parts.

O God of justice,

Let us consider others **as you consider them**
and consider us **as you consider us:**

To not judge, **but to witness.**

To not exclude, **but to include.**

To not shame, **but to support.**

To not vilify, **but to befriend.**

As you have loved us, **let us love others.**

Amen.

QC

- ☐ Prepared newsprint

