

Use Advantage to Overturn Inequality

MARK 10:17-31; LUKE 19:1-10



GOAL

Youth reflect on their advantages and learn ways to use them to overturn inequality.

- 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.



PRAYER

Dear God, speak through me as I teach your children to be more like Christ. Amen.

THIS SESSION

It's important to note that *advantages* are simply that: advantages. They do not mean someone is inherently good or evil. The advantages we have do not negate our hard work, and naming advantages is not meant to make anyone feel guilty for the hand they have been dealt in life. Most of us have both advantages and disadvantages in our lives. Taking an honest look at them helps us realize what ground we're standing on as we work together to make an even playing field for all of God's creation.

THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible passage features a conversation between Jesus and a rich man. The man asks Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus rattles off a list of commandments: do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your parents, and so on. The rich man says he has kept these commandments ever since he was a boy. Jesus replies he needs to do one more thing: sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. The man becomes very sad because that would mean giving up many things. Jesus says that it is very hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God, but what is impossible for people is possible for God. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, remarks that they have left their homes to follow Jesus. Jesus commends their sacrifice, promising that they will gain much more than what they gave up.

This passage highlights the fact that our possessions can hold us back from entering God's kingdom. Those of us who have privilege and possessions should be willing to give up those things to help others and to follow Jesus fully. When we give up things for God's glory, God promises that we will get back so much more.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth may or may not be familiar with the concept of *privilege*, or they may not fully understand how privilege and inequality work together to create unique experiences for people. This session uses the term *advantage* instead of *privilege* for the most part, removing an instant defensiveness by some who can see their advantages, but instantly see judgment in the word *privilege*.

Be mindful that some youth may have fewer resources than others. Some may come from poverty or have lived in poverty in the past.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Infographic Poster Discussion” (p. 28): Obtain the *Honor God's Diversity* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 1 Set).
- The “Following Jesus” section (p. 31) can take a good amount of time, so plan accordingly.

GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Pens

RATING ADVANTAGES

Welcome youth as they arrive and give them a copy of Resource Page 1 and a pen. Invite them to read and follow the instructions on the page. Assure them they will not need to share their responses.

GATHERING TIME

Gather as a large group and discuss the experience of rating their advantages. Affirm responses, especially if some are uncomfortable talking about the topic. Say that, in this final session on honoring God's diversity, we talk about how to use advantages to overturn inequality.

Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

God our provider, we thank you for all you have blessed us with. Guide our minds and open our hearts to receive what you are saying to us today. Give us the courage to do what you ask of us. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Honor God's Diversity* infographic poster

INFOGRAPHIC POSTER DISCUSSION

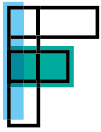
Gather around the *Honor God's Diversity* infographic poster and repeat the theme of the day. Looking at this image of God's diversity, are there any creatures who have advantages here who might use them to overturn inequality? Some may mention the humans who can stop global climate change. You might mention that, among humans, some suffer from environmental racism, forced to live in polluted areas and drink unfit water. Those with advantages might use them to change this inequality.

- Internet-connected device

DISCUSS ADVANTAGE

Show the YouTube video "Heartbreaking Moment When Kids Learn about White Privilege | The School That Tried to End Racism" (bit.ly/FMAdvantageYouth, 4:08). Discuss reactions in general, then ask:

- ➔ Was the race fair?
- ➔ How did it make you feel seeing this video? If you have participated in an activity like this before, how did you feel when doing it?
- ➔ Who was the person at the very front of the starting line? Who were the people at the very back of the starting line? (*Be sure that they note race and gender.*)
- ➔ What, if anything, can people with advantages do to change situations where some are disadvantaged?



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

DISCUSS THE BIBLE STORIES

C

Form two groups and give them the same instructions. They are to read the biblical text they are given and then, together, retell the story to the whole group without looking at their Bibles. They can retell the story in their own words, but it must include the information in the story.

Assign one group Mark 10:17–31 and the other Luke 19:1–10. After a few minutes, gather as a whole group and have each group retell their story.

Discuss:

- Why did Jesus say it was hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God?
- What do you think of Jesus asking the rich man to give away all his possessions? Was it fair for Jesus to ask him to do this?
- Based on the passage, how should we treat people who live in poverty?
- In what way did Zacchaeus promise to use his advantage to overturn inequality?

Bibles



If there is time, you could adapt the next activity to work with this one by creating pairs and having each pair create the modern-day version to share.

CREATE MODERN-DAY VERSIONS OF BIBLE STORIES

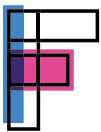
C

Form pairs and ensure each pair has at least one Bible. Tell them their assignment is to retell the Bible story you assign them as though it happened just last week in your town. They can adapt the characters and situation, but the essence of the story must stay the same.

Assign half the pairs Mark 10:17–31 and the other Luke 19:1–10. After a few minutes, invite each pair to tell their modern-day version of the story to the group. When all have reported, read the biblical texts aloud as a group and discuss how their stories differed. Discuss:

- What does Jesus expect of those with possessions?
- How did Zacchaeus promise to use his advantage to overturn inequality?

Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BELIEVERS IN ACTS

Prepare to read Acts 2:42–47 by explaining that the book of Acts tells of how the followers of Jesus continued his mission once he was no longer with them in person. Read Acts 2:42–47 aloud to the group and discuss how Christians reflect, or don't reflect, the ways the first communities practiced sharing. Ask how your community might live more like the early communities.

Bibles

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- Internet-connected device
 - Resource Page 2

SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE T C

Give a brief history of the Self-Development of People program from Resource Page 2. Show the Vimeo video “OGHS Engagement Map Introduction Video (2016)” (bit.ly/FMSDOP, 6:35).

Don’t miss the story about the Fair Food Program, which begins at 4:00. Discuss how this group practices today’s aspect of using advantage to overturn inequality. Discuss any other groups you or the youth know that do this sort of work.

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- Internet-connected device

THE JUBILEE CAMPAIGN T C

Tell the group that, since biblical times, it has been an expectation that people with advantages, especially unjust advantages, should use them to change the system. The concept of Jubilee comes from the Old Testament (or Hebrew Scriptures) where, periodically, all debts would be canceled so that those buried in debt could survive and thrive. Many churches today are involved in a world campaign to relieve poor countries of their debts.

Show the YouTube video “Jubilee Debt Campaign: Toxic Debt” (bit.ly/FMJubilee, 3:37). Discuss how this effort practices today’s aspect of using advantage to overturn inequality.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Resource Page 1 from “Rating Advantages” (p. 28)
 - Pens

PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME QC C

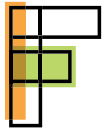
Have youth look at Resource Page 1 they filled out at the beginning of the session (see p. 28). Allow a brief time of silence for them to look at the page and write ways they might use the advantages they have, whatever they are, to overturn inequality. Perhaps there is a cause or effort they might join. Invite a few volunteers to share some ideas of things they might do. Encourage all to take the page home and continue reflecting on this.

CREATE A SERVICE OPPORTUNITY CT C

As a group, plan a service opportunity to benefit people who are disadvantaged in your community. Allow the youth to use technology to research outreach programs in the community. They should consider:

- ➔ Who will the project benefit?
- ➔ How might they participate?
- ➔ Who should they contact if another group is in charge?
- ➔ When would be a good time to do the service activity?

Invite adult volunteers and church leaders to support youth in carrying out their proposed service project. Over the course of the next few weeks, revisit the service project. Help the youth put the project into action.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Choose one or more activities.

GROUP DISCUSSION

C

Ask participants to name the four ways you have discussed honoring God's diversity and write them on newsprint: Celebrate and Respect God's Diversity, Center Voices from the Margins, Work for Liberation While Challenging Oppression, Use Advantage to Overturn Inequality. Under each aspect, brainstorm things you might do as a group going forward. For example, you might celebrate Pride month. Discuss how you can remember to do these things. Close with the prayer and charge below.

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- Newsprint
 - Marker

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and a pen to youth and provide some time for them to write one thing in each aspect of this practice that they will do going forward. Invite each participant to tell what they wrote if they are willing. Thank the group for their participation in this practice.

Close with the prayer and charge below.

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- Copies of Resource Page 3
 - Pens

PRAYER AND CHARGE

QC

Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

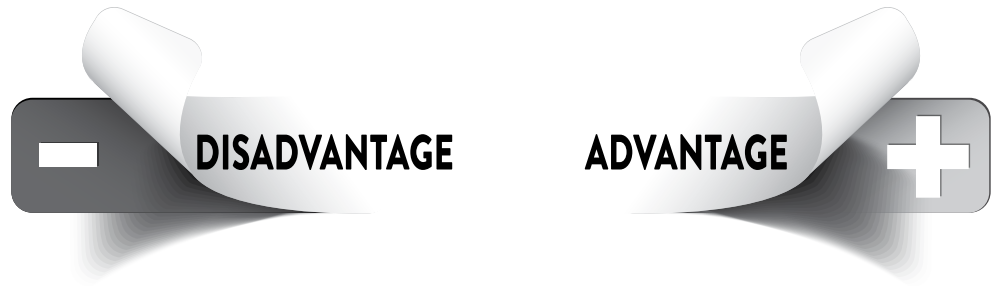
Living God, who comes to us in many and varied ways, open our hearts to recognize your image in every person. Open our minds to experience you in stories that are not our own. Give us courage to challenge the forces of evil that harm your people, and inspire us to use what we have been given for the flourishing of all. Amen.

Give this charge to the group:

Go out into the world in peace;
have courage;
hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil;
strengthen the faint-hearted;
support the weak, and help the suffering;
honor all people;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Considering Advantages

We all have varying degrees of advantage and disadvantage in life. Using the scales below, make a dot where you think you fit on each category.



Your race _____

Your gender _____

Your English fluency _____

Your sexual orientation _____

Your family's wealth _____

Your nationality _____

Your age _____

Your physical ability _____

Your mental health _____

A Brief History of the Self-Development of People Program

During the civil rights period in the United States, Black leaders held a conference to discuss challenges of economic development among people of color given the injustice they faced and the unjust laws in the United States.



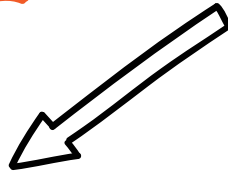
A group at that conference wrote the Black Manifesto, which called for reparations (re-payment) from white churches for all the harm and injustices they had committed against people of color. The white churches had advantages and they were called to use these to help overturn inequality. This was a concrete way to do that.



James Forman, a great civil rights leader, was at that conference. He took this Black Manifesto to the pulpit at Riverside Church in New York City and read it aloud. It caused quite a stir among churches throughout the country.



He went to many church conferences of mostly white churches and read it to them. Most white churches ignored it.



In 1969, he shared it at the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and he was heard. The assembly recommended and approved creation of the Self-Development of People program and gave it \$1.25 million.



The program now gets money from the One Great Hour of Sharing program as well and funds hundreds of projects run by and for people who are poor and people of color all over the world.

What Will You Do?

Spend some time thinking about one thing you will do to practice each of the four dimensions of honoring God's diversity. Write in the space provided.

Honor God's Diversity

