

Work for Liberation While Challenging Oppression

LUKE 6:20–31

3



GOAL

Youth identify issues of liberation and ways to challenge oppression.

- 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

Holy God, open my heart to your will and your Word that I may be faithful to your teachings, working for liberation and challenging oppression. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Today’s practice has two aspects: working for liberation and challenging oppression. These two aspects go hand-in-hand. It can be tempting to focus solely on the part that feels good; after all, who doesn’t want to work for freedom? The idea of challenging the oppressive forces at work in the world can be overwhelming and intimidating. Who likes conflict? But the truth is, liberation cannot come if oppression is not challenged. And frequently, the places we have to challenge are close to home: our own families and communities, our own neighborhoods, even our own churches.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 6:17–49 is commonly called the Sermon on the Plain. It includes a number of Jesus’ sayings, many of which are also found in a similar collection in Matthew 5–7 called the Sermon on the Mount. There are many other instances in the Bible of the people of God working for liberation while challenging oppression. In Luke 6:20–31, the first verses affirm those on the margins and those who suffer for following Jesus. The last verses are a strong warning to those who oppress others and pay no attention to their suffering.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth can be very passionate about justice issues. The first part of today’s theme—work for liberation—should be engaging as they articulate what issues they are most passionate about. The second part of the theme—while challenging oppression—may provide an opportunity to talk about the importance of speaking out and handling conflict that naturally arises when oppressors are challenged. Youth are constantly learning limits of just how much to say and how to express themselves in helpful and meaningful ways.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Reflecting on the Infographic Poster” (p. 22): Obtain the *Honor God’s Diversity* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 1 Set).
- “Images of Resistance” (p. 22): Find images on the internet of current struggles for liberation of marginalized groups, such as Native Americans, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, immigrants, LGBTQ+. Either print the images or prepare to show them.
- “#MeToo” (p. 24): Preview the YouTube video to determine if it is appropriate for your group.
- “Local Actions” (p. 24): Invite a community activist to talk with youth about how their group addresses today’s theme.

GETTING STARTED

Play dough

SCULPTURES DEPICTING DIVERSITY A X

Welcome youth as they arrive and direct them to a table with different colors of play dough. Tell them to create a sculpture depicting the theme of this unit, *Honor God's Diversity*. They are free to design whatever they think of when they consider the theme.

Gather as a whole group and invite youth to explain what they created. Spend a few minutes reviewing what has been discussed so far in this practice and allow youth who were present at the last two sessions to tell what they remember. (*Session 1's focus was on Genesis 1 and celebrating and respecting God's diversity. Session 2 was on centering marginalized voices and reading about how Jesus was challenged to extend his ministry to the entire world.*)

Ask if anyone had a chance to center other's voices since the last session. Maybe they read something by a marginalized group, or heard a podcast, or intentionally listened to someone marginalized at school give their point of view. Tell the group that today's aspect is "Work for Liberation While Challenging Oppression."

PRAYER QC

Lead the group with 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 work for liberation and challenge oppression of anyone. Inspire us to use what we have been given for the flourishing of all. Amen.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

Honor God's Diversity infographic poster

REFLECTING ON THE INFOGRAPHIC POSTER C



While much attention is focused on wildlife species extinction due to global warming, remind youth that people of color and poor communities are also victims of climate change as toxic waste dump sites and polluting industries are disproportionately located in areas where they live.

Gather around the *Honor God's Diversity* infographic poster and invite youth to reflect on how today's theme—Work for Liberation While Challenging Oppression—might relate to all the groups on the infographic poster.

Images of resistance pictures

IMAGES OF RESISTANCE AT C

Either post images of resistance you found or show them on a screen. Invite youth to explain what's going on in each picture and what they know about the reasons people are protesting. Ask:

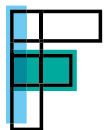
- ➔ How are people working for liberation?
- ➔ What oppression are they challenging?
- ➔ Can we work for liberation without confronting those who are causing it? If so, how?

STARTING A LIST

C

Post newsprint and create two columns. Title the first column “Work for Liberation” and the second column “Challenge Oppression.” Remind the youth of the aspect of *Honor God’s Diversity* we are focusing on today. One way we honor diversity is protecting it when parts of God’s creation are being harmed. Invite youth to name struggles and causes they know about where people are working for liberation and challenging oppression. Add each one mentioned to the appropriate column.

- Newsprint
- Marker



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

JESUS BLESSES AND WARNS

C AT

As youth prepare to read Luke 6:20–31, explain that this text is often called the Sermon on the Plain. It is a collection of Jesus’ sayings, many of which are also found in a similar collection in Matthew 5–7, called the Sermon on the Mount. Based on his preaching, Jesus obviously feels it is very important to challenge oppression.

Take turns, with each person reading a verse through verse 26. On the newsprint, create two columns. Title the left column “Blessed” and the right column “Woe’d.” Have participants name what goes in each column and take time to discuss verses 22–23 and 26 to clarify what Jesus might be saying about people who are hated and people who are liked.

Continue taking turns reading by verse through verse 31. Add to your list on the newsprint. Lead a discussion about how this text relates to today’s theme.

- Bibles
- Newsprint
- Marker



In verses 22–23, Jesus takes care to clarify who is blessed when they are hated. It is those who, like the prophets, fight for liberation. The reverse is in verse 26 where he warns those who say what everyone wants to hear.

A DIFFICULT TEXT TO RECONCILE (optional)

AT C G

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 2:11–15. It may be helpful to read these verses in a few different translations. Consider one or more of the following questions for discussion:

- ➔ What was your initial response to hearing this passage?
- ➔ Why do you think the author wrote these verses?

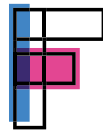
Explain that the authors of the Bible wrote from the customs and norms in their particular location and time. Throughout the Bible, there are instances of things people did or believed that we do not do or believe today.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and pens. Tell youth the 1 Timothy 2:11–15 passage is just one perspective on women in the Bible. However, there are several other instances in the Bible where women did great works. In many cases, these women were instrumental in saving their communities from danger. Have youth draw lines on the Resource Page between the two columns. Check answers using the answer key.

- Bibles
- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Pens



Answer Key:
1-d, 2-i, 3-b, 4-g, 5-e, 6-j, 7-a,
8-k, 9-c, 10-l, 11-f, 12-h



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

Internet-connected device



Watch this video before showing it and determine if it's appropriate for your group in terms of the language and possible reactions from those in your group who may have experienced the same abuse.

Paper
 Pens



In 1993, the US government put in place a military policy referred to as “don’t ask, don’t tell.” It was still illegal for members of the military to engage in same-sex relationships, but they could keep their jobs as long as no one found out. This policy was finally abolished in 2010, and LGBTQ+ people can now serve openly in the military.

Internet-connected device

Guest speaker

#METOO

T C AT

Ask youth if they are familiar with the #MeToo movement and have volunteers tell what they know about it.

Show the YouTube video “Growing Up in the Me Too Movement” (bit.ly/FMMeToo, 3:57). The young girls are describing their experiences of mistreatment by some boys. Discuss:

- ➔ Why did the boys treat these girls so badly?
- ➔ Are you surprised that these girls were treated in this way? Why or why not?
- ➔ How does the #MeToo movement relate to today’s theme?
- ➔ What can boys do to help ensure girls and women are treated with respect?

“DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL”

C AT

Ask if anyone in the group is familiar with “don’t ask, don’t tell.” If anyone knows, invite them to tell what they know. Use the sidebar to explain the military policy. Ask:

- ➔ How did this policy of “don’t ask, don’t tell” continue to silence LGBTQ+ persons?

Tell the group that many other organizations adopted similar policies: colleges and universities, churches, and other businesses. Although the military did away with “don’t ask, don’t tell,” some organizations still have this policy today, whether officially or unofficially.

Form groups of three or four people. Encourage each group to come up with people they believe are often silenced or marginalized in society. Why do they think society marginalizes this group of people? How can they work for liberation and challenge oppression in some of these instances?

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

T C

Show the YouTube video “WATCH: Greta Thunberg’s Full Speech to World Leaders at UN Climate Action Summit” (bit.ly/FMGretaThunberg, 5:19) and discuss how Greta is working for liberation while challenging oppression. Discuss ways the youth can do the same.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

LOCAL ACTIONS

X C CT

Introduce the guest speaker to the group and remind all of today’s theme: honoring God’s diversity by working for liberation and challenging oppression. Allow youth to tell the guest what has been discussed so far in this practice and then invite the guest to tell youth how their group addresses today’s theme. Facilitate discussion and, if appropriate, allow the guest to tell how youth can get involved.

ADAPTING LUKE 6:20–31

AT QC

Give youth paper and pens and invite them to think about all that has been read and discussed in this session and the last two sessions (if they were present). Encourage them to write or draw something that articulates the theme of working for liberation and challenging oppression, however big or small. Prime them with some examples of what they might do, including:

- Rewrite Luke 6:20–31 in their own words.
- Choose a justice issue they are passionate about and write what working for liberation and challenging oppression means in that area.
- Draw themselves involved in this work with a caption of what they will do.
- If you watched the Greta Thunberg speech, they might write what they would say to leaders about challenging climate change.
- Write a prayer that challenges oppression.

Invite volunteers to share what they did. If appropriate, display their work in a space where others can see.

- Paper
- Pens



Alternatively, work in pairs or as a whole group on this activity.

CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL

“Ella’s Song” is based on words from civil rights activist Ella Baker. Show the YouTube video “Sweet Honey in the Rock — Ella’s Song” (bit.ly/FMWeWhoBelieve, 5:14).

Reflecting on the themes of this session, identify ways “Ella’s Song” speaks to all three. Discuss:

- ➔ How does this song give voice to marginalized persons? What messages are expressed?
- ➔ What effect does this message have when you consider persons on the margin?
- ➔ What can you do with this message?

- Internet-connected device



FOLLOWING JESUS

SHARE COMMITMENTS

C

Invite volunteers to tell one thing they can do this week to work for liberation and challenge oppression.

PRAYER AND CHARGE

QC

Lead the group in this prayer or one of your own:

God of healing, thank you for what we have learned today. Open our eyes to see our siblings who are in need. Open our ears to hear the voices of those who have been silenced. Open our hearts to act when we see others being mistreated. 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.

Women in the Bible

Draw a line from the woman's name in the left column to the description that most fits what she did on the right. They are all women in the Bible who were leaders or who spoke up for themselves.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. Miriam | a. financially supported Jesus' ministry and helped start the early church, according to Luke |
| 2. Deborah | b. mother of Jesus |
| 3. Mary | c. mother of Moses who placed her baby in a basket on the river to save his life |
| 4. Hannah | d. older sister of Moses who devised a plan to keep him safe |
| 5. Mary Magdalene | e. follower of Jesus who was the first person to spread the "Good News" of his resurrection |
| 6. Esther | f. prophet who lived in the temple and foretold Jesus' arrival |
| 7. Susanna | g. gave her son Samuel to the Lord who later appointed the first king of Israel |
| 8. Rahab | h. deacon in the early church entrusted with delivering Paul's letter to the church in Rome |
| 9. Jochebed | i. a judge, warrior, and leader of the people of Israel |
| 10. Martha | j. becomes queen in order to save her people |
| 11. Anna | k. hid two Israelite men in order to save their lives as well as the lives of her and her family |
| 12. Phoebe | l. a close friend of Jesus |