

Recognize Injustice

MICAH 6:8; JOHN 7:53–8:11

1



GOAL

Youth are introduced to injustice and justice as biblical concerns and recognize their role to confront injustice.

- 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

Open me to a new awareness of injustice, O God. Give me your wisdom and your voice. Amen.

THIS SESSION

“Recognize Injustice” examines justice from a biblical and practical standpoint to recognize unjust actions and systems. To recognize injustice is to witness discrimination and oppression, observe their impact, listen to the stories of those experiencing injustice, and wonder about what contributes to injustice in our lives. Our action entails suspending judgment and holding empathy for the other and ourselves. While seeing injustice can be an uncomfortable process, it is a necessary first step for identifying problems and sources so we can advocate and contribute to justice.

THE BIBLE STORY

When Jesus is confronted in John 7:53–8:11 to uphold the punishment of stoning a woman for an adulterous act, he challenges the community to recognize when *they* have acted with poor judgment. Jesus changes the narrative of individual sin, recognizing systems of injustice present in society. Jesus acknowledges that each of those present has sinned. By not shaming or punishing the accusers, he invites them to not shame or punish in turn. He models a different way of confronting and correcting. The passage leaves space to wonder what Jesus believes is an appropriate response to injustice.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

As concrete thinkers, younger youth may be overwhelmed with abstract and systemic understandings of justice. It may be more developmentally helpful to focus on activities that connect with their daily lives in tangible ways. For example, focus on injustice in their schools, clubs, and other communal groups rather than worldwide systems of injustice. Older youth will benefit from discussing systems and structures that impact them, their communities, and people around the world.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “A Penny of Injustice” (p. 6): Collect pennies dated 1970 or later. Depending on the options you choose:
- “Micah 6:8 Requirements” (p. 6): Learn sign language motions on Resource Page 2 and teach them to the youth. Go to www.signingsavvy.com and use the search tool to see videos of the key words. Use *show* for *shown* and *humble* for *humbly*.
- “The Scope of Justice” (p. 6): Obtain the *Do Justice* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 2 Set).
- “Identifying World Injustice” (p. 8): Display a world map.
- “Beginning a Service Project” (p. 9): Review “Service Project,” Resource Page 4. Discuss possible options with church leaders to discern realistic project areas. Note that this project will build from session to session.

GETTING STARTED

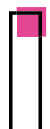
- ☐ Pennies
- ☐ Internet-connected devices
- ☐ Resource Page 1

A PENNY OF INJUSTICE

CT

As youth arrive, give each a penny. Display Resource Page 1 and have youth use it to identify as social injustice that occurred during the year their penny was made. Have them use personal internet-connected devices to research the injustice and prepare a short summary for the group.

Invite them to state the year of their penny and a short summary about the injustice from that year.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Resource Page 2

MICAH 6:8 REQUIREMENTS

AM

Display Resource Page 2. Introduce an opening ritual that will be used in each session. Invite youth to follow your motions as they repeat after you. Repeat the ritual three times for youth to become familiar with it. This ritual will be repeated to open each session. Save Resource 4 to use throughout the unit.

- ☐ Internet-connected device

JUSTICE VIDEO

T C

Show the YouTube video “Justice—What’s That Word?” (bit.ly/FMJJustice, 4:21). Use the questions to discuss the video:

- ➔ What does the biblical term *mishpat* mean?
- ➔ What are examples of *mishpat* in the Bible?
- ➔ What does *mishpat* look like in today’s world?

- ☐ Do Justice infographic poster (Year 2 Set)

THE SCOPE OF JUSTICE

Display the *Do Justice* infographic poster. Invite volunteers to read aloud the seven descriptions of justice and their accompanying Scripture passages. After each description is read, invite youth to restate the description in their own words. Work together to identify concrete examples of each description. Discuss how the poster image connects with the descriptions of justice. Continue to display the infographic poster throughout this practice.

- ☐ Newsprint and marker



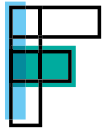
Teaching Tip: If your group already has a group norms list, use it for this activity. Adjust the activity to include the question: “What would you add to this list for our group to show justice to each other?”

GROUP NORMS

C CT

Explain that justice begins with the ways we treat one another. Have youth identify actions that they can do during your time together to show one another justice, such as listen when others talk, greet one another, suspend judgment, acknowledge when we or others act unjustly, or forgive when others make mistakes. Write the actions on newsprint. Use these questions to facilitate conversation:

- ➔ How do these actions promote justice in our group?
- ➔ When is it sometimes difficult to act justly in our group?
- ➔ How do we respond when someone shows injustice in our group?
- ➔ What might the world look like if more people followed our group’s norms?



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

ILLUSTRATING THE STORY

A CT

Read aloud John 7:53–8:11 as youth follow along. Form four groups and distribute paper and drawing supplies to each group. Assign each group one of the following Scripture passages: John 7:53–8:2, John 8:3–6, John 8:7–8, John 8:9–11. Have each group draw a picture of what is happening in their assigned verses.

Gather the groups and have them describe their drawings in the order of their group number. Display the drawings to illustrate the complete narrative.

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Drawing supplies

DISCUSSING THE STORY

C AT

Invite four volunteers to read aloud John 7:53–8:11 in four sections of verses: 7:53–8:2; 8:3–6; 8:7–8; 8:9–11. Form pairs for discussion. Pose these questions for pairs to discuss.

- ➡ Consider the woman in today's passage. Who in today's society could also be placed before the crowd and Jesus? Why would they be placed there?
- ➡ Why did Jesus respond to the woman the way he did?
- ➡ Why did he respond to the crowd the way he did?
- ➡ Has there been a situation when you could have been placed in the middle of a crowd of judgment like this? How did others show you justice or injustice in that situation?

Gather youth and invite pairs to summarize their conversation without revealing sensitive information. Discuss how Jesus was able to offer grace to the woman while revealing an unjust system by his words and actions.

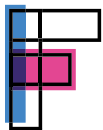
- ☐ Bibles

CONSIDERING MICAH 6:8

C CT

Write on separate newsprint sheets: "Do Justice," "Love Kindness," and "Walk Humbly." Read aloud Micah 6:8. Invite youth to call out one or two concrete examples for each phrase. Write these on newsprint. Have youth use markers to write additional examples on the newsprint. Follow up by discussing: What does it mean to do these things "with our God"?

- ☐ Three sheets of newsprint
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

CHRISTIANS FOR THE ABOLITION OF PRISONS

T C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and writing supplies. Have youth scan the QR code on the Resource Page to access "Why Abolition? Why Christians?" from Christians for the Abolition of Prisons (bit.ly/FMWhyAbolition). Read aloud the first bulleted paragraph, then assign youth to read the following paragraphs out loud in order. After each

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3
- ☐ Writing supplies
- ☐ Internet-connected devices

paragraph is read, pause and invite youth to call out key words or phrases from the paragraph. Read and discuss the full document.

Have youth complete Resource Page 3. Discuss the questions and the young people's responses.

☐ Internet-connected device

“GIVE ME YOUR EYES”

M C

Show the YouTube video “Give Me Your Eyes—Brandon Heath (Lyrics)” (bit.ly/FMHeath, 3:52). Facilitate conversation using the following questions:

- What and who did you think about while listening to the song?
- Who do you think the church has a hard time seeing and remembering?
- What do you think people would be more aware of if we had God's eyes?

Show the video again and invite youth to sing along.

☐ World map

IDENTIFYING WORLD INJUSTICE

C AT

Display the world map. Task youth with identifying places that they have heard about where people experience poverty, war, hunger, environmental destruction, oppression, or other forms of injustice. Challenge youth to name what these places and forms of injustice have in common. Acknowledge broad systems and structures of injustice across the world.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CREATING A NEW HOLIDAY

C AT

Form groups of two to four youth. Invite groups to select one group of people who have at one time experienced or currently experience injustice. Task youth to create a new holiday or reform a current holiday that acknowledges and responds to injustice this group faces. Encourage youth to include a name for the holiday, when this holiday would be, who would celebrate, how people would celebrate, and what traditions this holiday would have.

Invite groups to explain the holiday they created or reformed.

- ☐ Popsicle sticks
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Drawing supplies

PICTURE AND FRAME

A

Distribute supplies to youth. Instruct youth to make a frame and a picture with the following steps:

- Glue the popsicle sticks together at the corner edges to make a square with a blank space in the middle, making a frame.
- Cut paper to fit in the frame, making sure there is additional space to glue the paper to the frame.
- Write across the top half of the paper, “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.”
- On the bottom half, draw a vertical line down the center.
- On the left side, draw an image of an act of injustice.
- On the right side, draw an image of a response to seeing this act of injustice.
- Glue the paper to the frame.

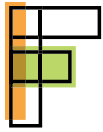
Invite youth to describe what they drew. Ask them where they plan to display the picture and frame in their house as a reminder to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly.

BEGINNING A SERVICE PROJECT

S

Introduce the service project described on Resource Page 4. Lead youth through the first step of the service project: See Injustice.

- ☐ Resource Page 4
- ☐ Newsprint
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Sticky dots (three 3 per youth)



FOLLOWING JESUS

PRAYING FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Read aloud this prayer and invite youth to respond, "We are all God's children," after each line you read.

O God of Abraham, Rebecca, Hagar, and their children,

We are all God's children.

We know you care for us, you love us, and you are with us.

We are all God's children.

Help us to care for, love, and stand with our neighbors.

We are all God's children.

Inspire and empower us to witness, to care, to advocate, and to promote justice.

We are all God's children.

Amen.

A Penny of Injustice

Each event below contains either an element of injustice, or the results of the event had unjust consequences. Use an internet-connected device to research the event that corresponds with the date on your penny and prepare a brief summary to explain the event to the group.

1970s

- 1970 Kent State massacre
- 1971 President Nixon's War on Drugs, which leads to mass incarceration, disproportionately impacting Black people
- 1972 Munich Olympics hostages
- 1973 Rockefeller Drug Laws
- 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Milden v. Bradley*
- 1975 Pine Ridge Reservation shootout
- 1976 Italy's Seveso dioxin cloud
- 1977 New York City blackout
- 1978 France's *Amoco Cadiz* tanker spill
- 1979 Death to the Klan march

1980s

- 1980 Miami's Liberty City riot
- 1981 AIDS epidemic
- 1982 President Reagan expands War on Drugs
- 1983 Corrections Corporation of America
- 1984 India's Bhopal cyanide gas leak
- 1985 Anthony Ray Hinton arrested
- 1986 Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear disaster
- 1987 U.S. Supreme Court rules racial bias inevitable in criminal justice
- 1988 Study finds the addictive properties of nicotine are similar to heroin and cocaine
- 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill

1990s

- 1990 Iraq invades Kuwait
- 1991 Kuwaiti oil fires
- 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement
- 1993 Walter McMilliam released from prison
- 1994 California's Proposition 187
- 1995 Oklahoma City bombing
- 1996 Defense of Marriage Act
- 1997 Great Pacific Garbage Patch discovered
- 1998 UCC's toxic waste in U.S. study
- 1999 Tokaimura nuclear plant accident

2000s

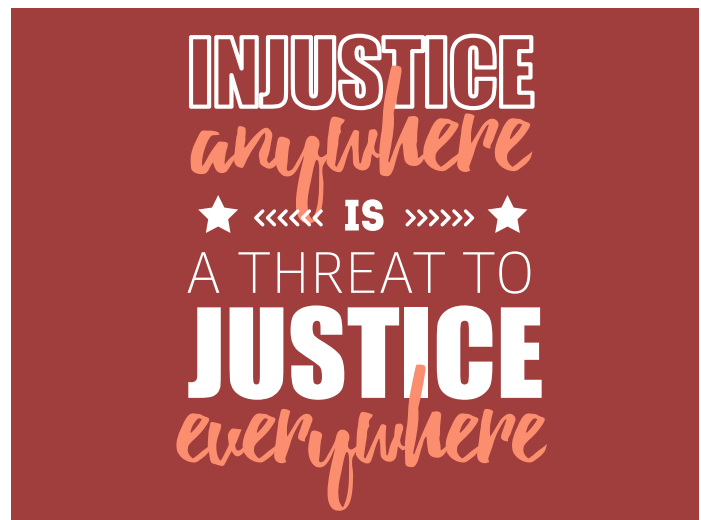
- 2000 Romania's cyanide spill
- 2001 The Patriot Act
- 2002 Guantanamo Bay opens
- 2003 War in Iraq
- 2004 Minuteman Project
- 2005 Hurricane Katrina
- 2006 Ivory Coast's toxic waste dumping
- 2007 Great Recession of 2007
- 2008 Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash spill
- 2009 CNN racial inequality statistics 2009

2010s

- 2010 Arizona's HB 1070
- 2011 Georgia's HB 87
- 2012 Trayvon Martin killed
- 2013 States refuse Medicaid expansion of ACA
- 2014 Flint water crisis
- 2015 Freddy Gray killed; Walter Scott killed
- 2016 Pulse nightclub shootings
- 2017 California wildfires
- 2018 U.S.-Mexican border wall construction
- 2019 Amazon wildfires

2020s

- 2020 COVID-19 pandemic; Breonna Taylor killed
- 2021 Atlanta spa shootings



Micah 6:8 Requirements

Display this Resource Page. Introduce this opening ritual that will be used in each session. Invite youth to follow your motions as they repeat after you. Repeat the ritual three times for youth to become familiar with it.

Save this Resource Page for subsequent sessions.

God has **shown** you what is **good**. /

- **God:** move right palm, facing left, down from above head to center of face
- **shown:** place right pointer finger on outward-facing left palm and move from right to left in front of you like you are showing something
- **good:** move right hand, palm facing up, from lips to left hand, palm facing up at waist

And what does the Lord require of you? /

- **Lord:** move right hand in L position from left shoulder to right hip
- **require:** move right fist with pointer finger curled out (R sign) touching left palm facing right toward chest/point outward
- **you:** point out toward someone

Do justice. /

- **Do:** move right and left hands, facing down, back and forth
- **justice:** make a circle with thumb and pointer finger on both hands with rest of fingers out, move hands up and down like balancing a scale

Love kindness. /

- **Love:** cross arms over chest
- **kindness:** bend middle finger in toward palm on right hand and move palm in a circular motion over your heart

Walk humbly with your God. /

- **Walk:** move pointer and middle fingers pointing down and away from you as if walking
- **humbly:** begin with right pointer finger at lips, move right palm facing left under left palm facing down
- **God:** move right palm, facing left, down from above head to center of face



Christians for the Abolition of Prisons



bit.ly/FMWhyAbolition

➔ What does *Christians for the Abolition of Prisons* claim is unjust about the United States' current prison system?

➔ What does this group suggest a more just system would include?

➔ What Christian principles does this group include to support their argument?

➔ What do you think Jesus would say about the United States' current prison system?

➔ What do you say about the United States' current prison system?

Service Project

The service project activity for this practice is presented across the four sessions. Youth will tackle a different aspect of a service project as it relates to the focus of each session. Keep this Resource Page and any newsprint sheets to use in each session. Invite youth to summarize from session to session.

Recognize Injustice : Have youth list on newsprint where they see injustice (or a lack of commitment to justice) in their church. Encourage them to consider worship accessibility, inclusive language and themes in liturgy and music, outreach missions, or areas discerned by the youth, youth leaders, and other church leaders.

Distribute colored sticky dots to youth (three each). Have them place the dots on the newsprint next to the top three areas of injustice that they want to address. They may place more than one sticky dot next to an area if they wish to emphasize it. The listed area of injustice with the most dots is the one the youth will address with their service project. Circle that area.

Invite youth to discuss their feelings about selecting this particular project focus. Encourage deciding on an area that each of the youth can support. Invite youth to reflect on the area of injustice during the week and consider potential actions they might engage in.

Check Your Prejudice: Focus discussion on the area of injustice (or lack or commitment to justice) that youth chose in the previous session. Make two columns on newsprint. Label these *What* and *Who*. Invite youth to list assumptions they hold about the chosen area of injustice. Record their comments in the columns. Next have youth list who is impacted by these assumptions. Discuss the lists they created.

Have youth research what they (or their church) could do to address the injustice and particular needs that impact people. Include the Christian values of justice that the church is called to uphold.

Speak Up: Invite youth to describe what they learned about their prejudices from their research following the last session. Be sure to include what you learned as well.

Invite youth to list on newsprint what they (or their church) could do to address the chosen area of injustice and particular needs that impact people. Support youth as they work together to choose one tangible, concrete action they want to promote and do.

Work with the youth to create a proposal for this action. Use the following format to create a three-paragraph proposal:

- First Paragraph: Describe the injustice or lack of commitment to justice that the youth witness. Include who is impacted and how.
- Second Paragraph: Describe the Christian values of justice that the church is called to uphold.
- Third Paragraph: Describe the action items the youth want to implement. Include how the youth plan to implement the actions. Note that the youth will make this concrete plan in the next session.

Have youth list who they think should read this proposal. Commit to share the proposal with the identified people.

Do the Work: Update youth on the church leaders' response to their action proposal. Work with youth to make a concrete plan to implement their chosen action. Identify dates and times to meet to work on the project, create a supply or resource list, name people whom they can partner with, and secure other details as applicable.

Plan to share this concrete plan with the people who received your initial proposal. Work together to follow through on the action.



