

1

See Injustice

JOHN 8:2-11



GOAL

Children hear the story of Jesus protecting a woman from injustice and then identify and name experiences of injustice they see.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy God, help me be present to love and guide your youngest disciples as they learn to recognize injustice in the world around them and become doers of justice. Amen.

THIS SESSION

The beginning of doing justice is recognizing the injustice that surrounds us in the world, as well as our participation in it. This session is about both seeing and hearing hurtful actions and how we may be involved in them, knowingly and unknowingly. While it is not our intention to harm others, injustice is found in systems that create advantages, often for those who are already privileged, and keep others in places of oppression and harm. When injustices are recognized and named, work can be done to correct them.

THE BIBLE STORY

Often called “the woman caught in adultery,” this does not seem like the most child-friendly story. Stripped to its core, however, John 8:2–11 is not about the accusation, the accused, or even the punishment. It is about the hypocrisy of perceived justice. In inviting anyone who has not done wrong to be the first to punish, Jesus holds up injustice for all to see. We harm others when we think ourselves better than another. Told in an age-appropriate way, as well as in a modern-day story, the truth of Jesus’ message is an important one at any age.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children feel injustice frequently as their friends or siblings invade their space, disrupt their play, take their things, or treat them unfairly. This session encourages children to see and hear injustice around them. Whether they feel it for themselves, they see it happening to others and even how they might be participating in it. Children are presented with language to name what they see as fair or unfair. Introducing the elements of seeing and hearing injustice and naming it prepares children to carry out the work of equity as they get older.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Requirements” (p. 8): Learn the sign language motions for the key words to Micah 6:8 on Resource Page 1 so that you can teach them to the children. 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*. Keep Resource Page 1 for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “What If Everybody Did That?” (p. 10): Obtain *What If Everybody Did That?* by Ellen Javernick (Two Lions, 2012) or use the YouTube video “What If Everybody Did That? by Ellen Javernick & Illustrated by Colleen M. Madden” (bit.ly/FMEverybodyDidThat, 4:34).



GETTING STARTED

- Approximately 4" heart shapes cut from white paper
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Poster board or mural paper
- Glue sticks
- Marker



After this session, display the collage in a public place where everyone can see it.

- Resource Page 1



Keep Resource Page 1 for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

- Copies of Resource Page 2
- Crayons, colored pencils
- Internet-connected device

HEART COLLAGE

A

Greet the children as they arrive and invite them to decorate a heart shape as they choose. When they have completed decorating their heart, have them glue it to a piece of poster board or mural paper. Have them write their first name by their heart, or assist with writing as needed. Title the collage “God Loves Us All.” Display the collage in your space. Once everyone has had a chance to add their heart to the collage, point out that all the hearts are unique, with no one heart better than the others. Read the title of the collage and emphasize that God loves each person and no one is loved more or less because they have red or yellow in their heart, or no one is more special or less special because . . . (*pointing out other elements that make each heart unique*).

REQUIREMENTS

AM X

Using Resource Page 1 as a guide, invite children to follow your motions as they repeat Micah 6:8 after you.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

SEEING AND HEARING

G T C

This activity uses both sight and hearing to help children begin to pay attention to more than is first experienced. Acknowledge that using sight to understand a situation is common for most people, but that listening can be just as important to understand people’s feelings, especially if sight is limited or impaired. Tell the children that sometimes we don’t see things that are around us, and sometimes we don’t hear things in the midst of other noise. Explain that they are going to have two activities, one using their eyes and one using their ears, to discover what they can see and hear in the midst of other things.

Provide copies of Resource Page 2 to the children and invite them to find the two penguins and the two cupcakes that are the same and color them. Ask the children what they had to do to find the two that were the same. Point out that they had to look carefully and pay attention to details. Suggest that listening is also an important skill in understanding feelings and situations around us.

Tell the children that you will play some sounds from a playground. Invite them to listen to what they hear. Play the YouTube video “Elementary School Kids Playground Ambience (Background Sound Effects)” (bit.ly/FMPlaygroundSound, 1:48), stopping at 0:30. Ask the children what sounds they heard. Wonder if anyone heard what game was mentioned. If not, play the clip again and see if anyone hears “Hide and Seek” (it is first said at 0:10 and then again at 0:14).

Then tell the children they will hear a voice saying the same sentence using five different emotions. Choose one of the three lines spoken (0:09, 0:56, or 1:42) and play the YouTube video “Voice Acting Practice Lines and Emotions!” (bit.ly/FMVoiceEmotions, 3:14), starting at the place you have chosen. Stop after each emotion is spoken and invite the children to guess how the person speaking is feeling by hearing their voice.

Tell the children that they will be learning to look and listen carefully, paying attention to their surroundings and to people’s feelings.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

SEEING INJUSTICE



☐ Resource Page 3

Set the scene for the Bible story by telling the children that they will hear a story about Jesus, some religious leaders, and a woman. Invite the children to use their eyes and ears to see and hear more than what is happening in this story. Suggest they picture the story in their minds as they listen. Read aloud the adapted Bible story from John 8:2–11 on Resource Page 3. After the story, wonder together:

- What did you see happening in your mind?
- What was fair or unfair in what was happening?
- What do you think Jesus was writing on the ground?
- Why do you think everyone walked away?
- How did Jesus call out the injustice, or unfairness, of what was happening to the woman?
- How do you think we can point out unfairness when we see or hear it?

Comment that Jesus saw more than what was happening when the religious leaders brought the woman to him. They may have been trying to test him, but he also saw the injustice, or unfairness, of wanting to punish the woman for her mistakes when everyone has made mistakes. Tell the children that some people think Jesus was writing down things that the religious leaders and others in the crowd had done wrong, things that they could be punished for as well. Jesus saw this unfairness and pointed it out to everyone.

Invite the children to act out the story as you tell it again. This time as Jesus is writing, improvise inserting a few actions that young children might have done, such as telling a lie, hitting someone, having a tantrum, disobeying, and so forth, and suggesting that it is unfair for the leaders and crowd to judge the woman when they, too, have made mistakes.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

Blocks

BUILDING TOWERS



Form pairs. Give each pair a different number of blocks, making sure there is a large gap between the pair that receives the most blocks and the least. Invite the children to build a tower as tall as possible. Hopefully, children will notice that this activity is unfair, given that some have more or less blocks than others. When they do, wonder how this activity could be more fair. They may suggest sharing blocks, everyone getting the same number of blocks, building a tower together, or joining teams to build a tower. Follow their suggestions. Point out that they saw injustice, or unfairness, and called it out for others to see. Wonder what other situations they may be in where something isn't shared fairly and what they could do about it so that everyone has what they need.

If the children don't notice, let them finish building their towers and make a show of measuring which one is the tallest. Ask them why this group's tower was the tallest. Repeat the activity, inviting the children to suggest how the activity could be more fair, and follow their suggestions.

What If Everybody Did That? by Ellen Javernick (Two Lions, 2012) or internet-connected device

WHAT IF EVERYBODY DID THAT?



Remind the children that paying attention to what's going on around them and to people's feelings can help them see or hear when something is unfair. Tell them that they are going to hear a story about a boy who didn't think about what he did and the consequences it had for others and the world around him. Read aloud *What If Everybody Did That?* by Ellen Javernick or show the YouTube video "What If Everybody Did That? by Ellen Javernick & Illustrated by Colleen M. Madden" (bit.ly/FMEverybodyDidThat, 4:34). After the story, ask:

- What parts of the story did you like best?
- Other than giving a hug at the end of the story, what was something that the boy did in which the response was "What if everybody did that?"
 - As the children share some of the boy's actions, wonder how his actions were unfair to others or to the world around him.
 - Comment that the person asking the question each time was pointing out injustice, or how the boy was acting unfairly toward others.
- What are some examples of injustice, or unfairness, that you see or hear in the lives of others around you or in your own life?
- What can you do when you see or hear actions of injustice or unfairness?

Tell the children that paying attention is important, as is asking questions and naming what is happening so that others are able to see and hear injustice or unfairness too.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

PRACTICING A RESPONSE

C D

One at a time, show the group a picture cut apart from Resource Page 4. Ask the children to make up a story about what is happening in each picture. After each story, wonder what was fair or unfair in their story. Wonder together how they might respond if they saw this situation happening. Then invite three or more children at a time to act out the story with one of the responses they considered. After all four picture scenarios have been discussed and acted out, wonder if the children have any stories from their lives that they would like to share and act out where something unfair is happening; have the group think of a response.

-
- Pictures cut apart from Resource Page 4

DRAWING A STORY

A C

Show the children the four pictures cut apart from Resource Page 5 and invite them to describe each picture. As they do, wonder how they might see themselves in the picture, and then how they might see themselves helping someone else in that picture. For example, the children will describe toys that they see and how they could play with them and then how they might share their toys with another child or put the toys away to be helpful.

After looking at the four pictures, invite the children to choose a picture that they would like to color and add their own drawing to it to make a story. Provide paper and glue sticks. Show them how to glue the picture they chose to the left side of the paper and then draw their own picture with themselves in it and how they might help another person. When they are finished drawing, invite each child to share the story they have created with the two pictures. Write a short phrase or sentence on the picture that has the child's name and the action they are performing, such as "Julia shares toys." Encourage children to share their art with their family so that they can talk together about paying attention to what they can do to be helpful.

-
- Pictures cut apart from copies of Resource Page 5
 - Paper
 - Glue sticks
 - Crayons



FOLLOWING JESUS

STICKERS AND PRAYERS

QC

Give each child two stickers with the backing still on. Ask the children to hold the stickers very still in their hands. Tell the children that these stickers are blessings to show God's love to everyone, even when they are sad or having a tough time. Ask the children to put one sticker on their clothing and hold it there while you say the following prayer:

Dear God, I know that you love me. Help me to show your love to others who need it. Amen.

Invite the children to take their second sticker and give it to someone who they have noticed needs help.

-
- Stickers

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

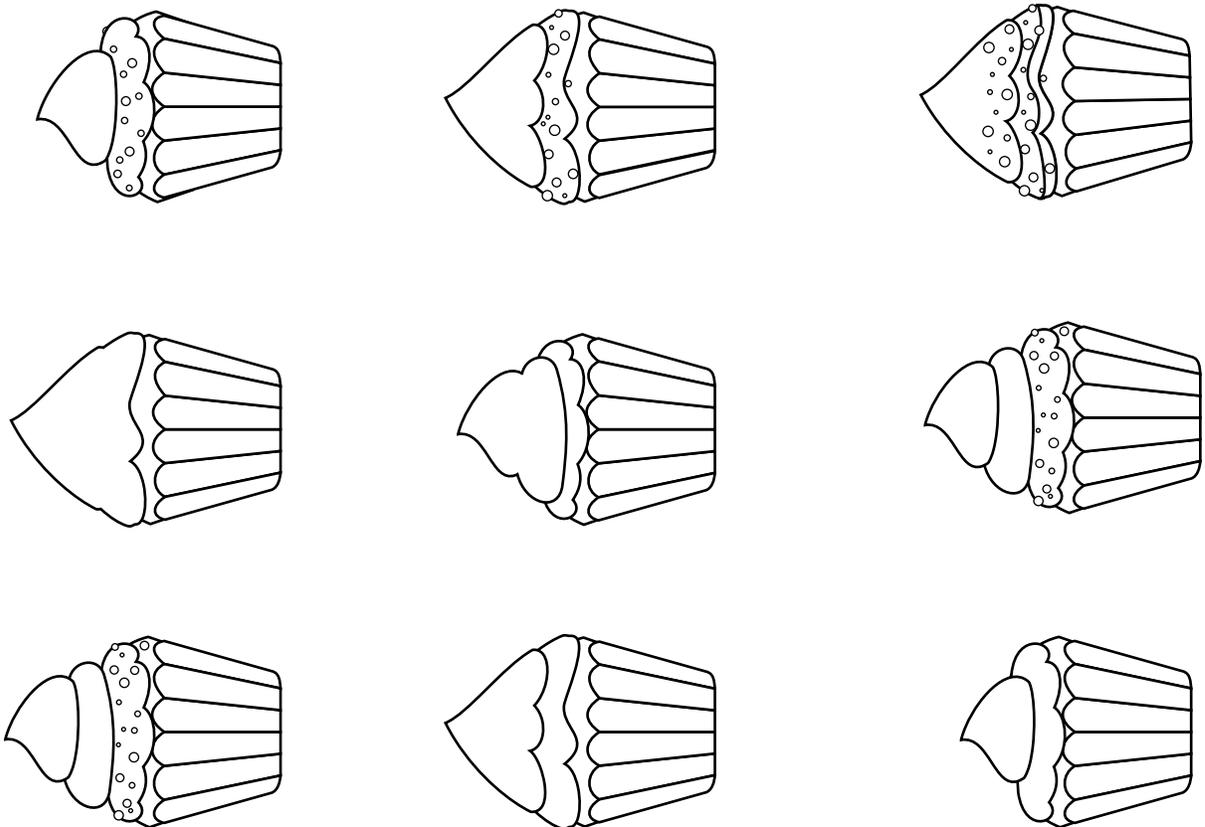
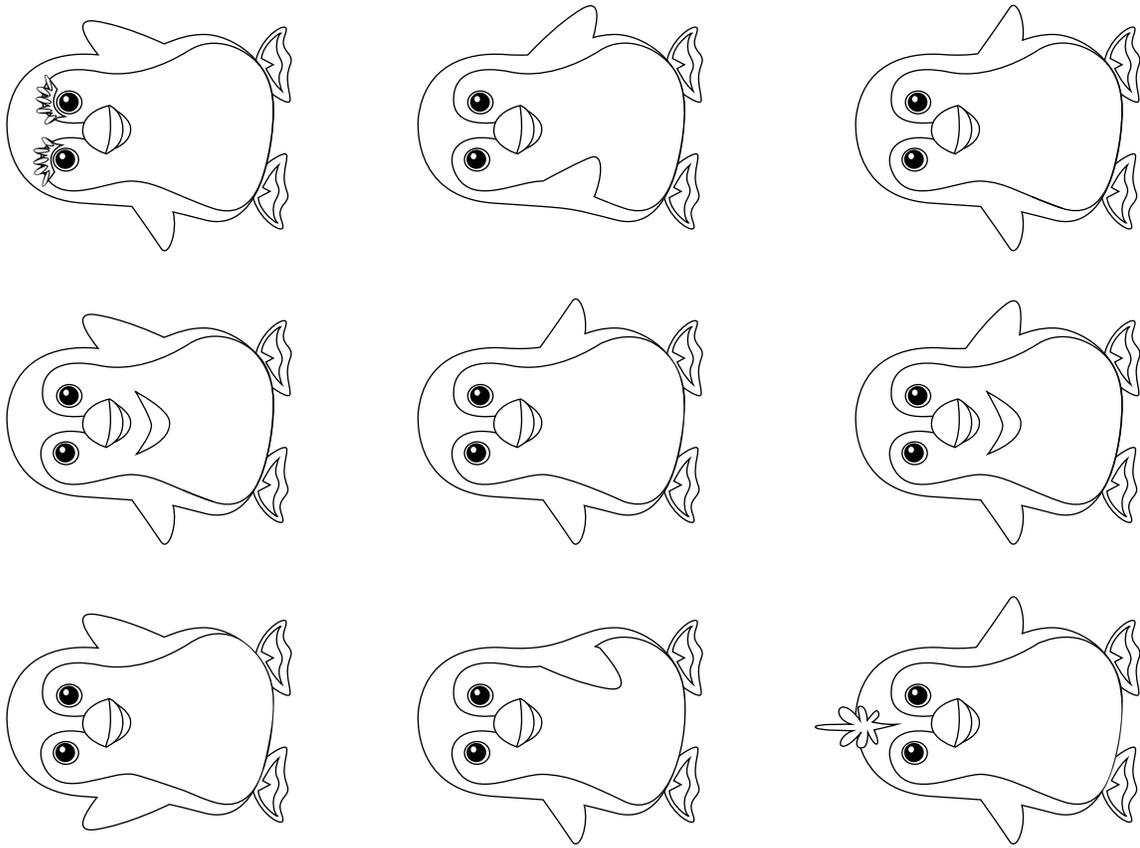
Love kindness. /

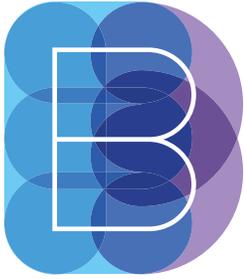
- **Love:** cross arms over chest
- **kindness:** bend middle finger in toward palm on right hand and move palm in a circular motion over your heart

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







BIBLE STORY

BASED ON JOHN 8:2-11

Long ago when Jesus lived and told people about God's love, he was teaching at the temple. Many were there to hear him. A group of religious leaders brought a woman to Jesus and made her stand in front of everyone. The leaders said that she had made mistakes, acted badly, and needed to be punished. They wanted to see if Jesus would obey or break the laws. If he followed the laws, the woman would have stones thrown at her, hurting her, and even killing her. If he didn't follow the laws, the religious leaders would be able to charge Jesus with breaking the laws.

Without saying a word, Jesus bent down and wrote in the dirt with his finger. The leaders kept asking what should be done, and Jesus kept writing. Then he stood up and said, "Whoever has not made any mistakes or acted badly in their life can be the first to punish her."

Everyone around, including the religious leaders, stopped and had to think.

Of course they had made mistakes in their lives.

Of course they had acted badly.

Of course.

One by one, everyone turned and walked away. Jesus and the woman were the only ones left. Jesus said to her, "Where are all those who wanted to punish you? Is anyone left?"

The woman looked around her and said, "There's no one here but you."

Jesus told the woman, "I do not judge you. Go and try to do better."

