

1

What Do We Recognize?

EXODUS 1:8-14



GOAL

Children make distinctions between what is fair and unfair and what God's justice might look like in a world that is often unfair.

- 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

God of justice, open my eyes and my ears. Help me to identify injustices and guide these children as you open their eyes and ears to injustice. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Working for justice begins with noticing injustice. Injustices are all around us every day. God has called us to recognize them so that we can be agents of change, or to stop them, if we catch them before they happen. The problem is, they aren't always easy to spot. In this session, children explore the story of how the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites by taking advantage of their work. Children consider fairness and justice, and how sometimes what is fair might not look the same as justice.

THE BIBLE STORY

The book of Exodus begins with the enslavement of the Israelites by a new ruler, a pharaoh who had not experienced how Joseph, an Israelite, saved the Egyptian people from famine. Instead, this pharaoh saw only how the Israelites had settled and the population had grown. He saw how hard they worked, and he enslaved them.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children often understand and feel deeply when something isn't fair or equal, especially when they are on the unfair end of the equation. Learning about injustice seems to require a higher level of knowledge, yet it really is quite simple. Justice is about treating people fairly, the way that one would want to be treated. Where the nuance comes in is between *fair* and *equal*. Helping children understand the difference between the two will help them recognize when a situation or a system may foster injustice.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “What Do You Notice?” (p. 8): Prepare a list of at least twenty items and sounds found in your space, both obvious and possibly unnoticed. Provide three blank lines at the end of the list. Make copies of the list for the children to use.
- “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.
- “Fair or Unfair” (p. 8): In large letters, write the word *FAIR* on one sheet of paper and *UNFAIR* on another sheet of paper.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Fair Is Fair?” (p. 10): Obtain *Fair Is Fair, Isn't It?* by Dr. Lindsey Wilson (Lindsey Wilson, 2020) or use the YouTube video “Fair Is Fair, Isn't It? by Dr. Lindsey Wilson” (bit.ly/FMFairIsFairWilson, 6:16).



GETTING STARTED

- Copies of prepared list of items and sounds found in the space
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?



Greet the children as they arrive. Provide them with a copy of the prepared list of items and sounds found in your space. Partner children who need assistance with reading with a reader. Invite the children to move around the room or sit and circle the items and sounds on the list that they see or hear. Suggest that they do so quietly so that possible sounds may be heard. Explain that the three blank lines at the bottom of the list are for them to add three items or sounds that they see or hear that weren't included in the list.

Once everyone has arrived and had some time to identify the items and sounds in the space, as well as add three of their own, gather the children. Go through the list and have children take turns pointing out where the items or sounds were found. Wonder which things were easier or harder to identify. Then have the children close their eyes while you remove some items from the space. Invite them to open their eyes and point out what they notice is missing.

Comment that paying attention to our surroundings, what we notice through seeing and hearing, can help us identify how we or someone else is being treated unjustly or unfairly. Suggest that the first step in changing a situation is recognizing what is happening.

- Resource Page 1, or copies of it



Keep Resource Page 1, or copies of it, for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

REQUIREMENTS



Use Resource Page 1 as a guide or distribute copies. Invite children to follow your motions as they repeat Micah 6:8 after you.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Prepared papers with the word *FAIR* on one and the word *UNFAIR* on the other

FAIR OR UNFAIR



Remind the children that as they gathered they were asked to notice items and sounds in the space and then to determine what was missing. Tell them that the Bible has many examples of times when *injustice*, or unfairness, was happening and people didn't recognize it. Prophets, or people who shared God's message, and Jesus often pointed out injustice and called people to do justice, to treat people fairly. Comment that sometimes we can recognize what is fair or unfair, and other times we don't even know that justice has gone missing. Suggest that sometimes what looks like it is fair or unfair is really not.

Tell the children that they will play a game where they need to determine if a situation is fair or unfair. Display the prepared FAIR sign on one side of the room and the UNFAIR sign on the other side of the room. Explain that you will describe a situation and the children need to move to whichever side of the room they think the situation is: FAIR or UNFAIR. Use the examples below. After the children move, invite volunteers to share why

they chose the side they did. Allow for opinions, nuances, and wrestling with the questions.

- Kim's brother takes one of her pencils without asking, but their mom says to let him have it because she has plenty of pencils. Fair or unfair?
- Kim and her brother are both invited to a birthday party, but Kim's brother is in trouble for taking her pencil without asking and isn't allowed to go. Fair or unfair?
- Because Kim's brother doesn't get to go to the birthday party, Kim doesn't get to go either. Fair or unfair?
- Three girls in your class at school are really good at jump rope so they always get the jump ropes and nobody else ever gets to jump rope. Fair or unfair?
- Everyone else has to do chores at home, but you don't have to because you have a broken arm. Fair or unfair?
- Everyone else gets to go for a horseback ride, but you can't go because you have a broken arm. Fair or unfair?

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

NO FAIR PHARAOH!



Set the scene for the Bible story by explaining that long, long ago a man named Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph. His brothers weren't very fond of him because he was his father's favorite and he bragged a lot about how special he was. They sold him as a slave and Joseph ended up in Egypt. Show the children the map of Egypt on Resource Page 2, pointing out where Israel and Egypt are. Continue with background information, explaining that eventually Joseph became a trusted adviser to the pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, and even saved the Egyptians from famine. Joseph's family and their people, God's faithful people known as Israelites or Hebrews, moved to Egypt as well. They got along well with the Egyptians, but then things changed.

Give each child a small cup and place one or more bowls of pony beads, crayons, or other small items where children can reach them. Tell the children you will read an adapted Bible story from Exodus 1:8–14. As they listen to the story, invite them to put one of the small items in their cup when they hear something that is unfair; two items if they think it is really unfair; and three items if what they hear is extremely unfair. Read the story from Resource Page 3, showing the picture of the Egyptians forcing the Israelites to work as slaves from Resource Page 2 when mentioned in the story.

After reading the story, ask the children to count the items in their cup. Wonder what the children noticed that was unfair. Ask them how they decided what was unfair, really unfair, and extremely unfair.

Provide drawing supplies and invite the children to draw a picture reimagining as fair something that they heard in the story that was unfair, really unfair, or extremely unfair. Encourage them to wonder what a scene might look like that would have been fair. When they are finished, ask for volunteers to share about what they drew.

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- Small cups
 - Pony beads, crayons, or other small items in one or more bowls
 - Resource Pages 2 and 3
 - Paper
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Fair Is Fair, Isn't It?* by Dr. Lindsey Wilson (Lindsey Wilson, 2020) or internet-connected device

FAIR IS FAIR?



Read aloud *Fair Is Fair, Isn't It?* by Dr. Lindsey Wilson (Lindsey Wilson, 2020) or show the YouTube video “Fair Is Fair, Isn't It? by Dr. Lindsey Wilson” (bit.ly/FMFairIsFairWilson, 6:16). After the story, engage the children in conversation about what is fair and what is not using the following questions:

- ✦ How would you define *fair*?
- ✦ What are some examples of *unfair* that you heard in the story?
- ✦ What are some examples of *fair* that you heard in the story?
- ✦ What are some examples of *fair* you can think of with our group? At home? At school? In our community?
- ✦ How might you recognize something that is unfair and help to make it fair in one of the examples mentioned?

- Internet-connected device
- Copies of Resource Page 4
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Mural paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

BEING F.A.I.R.



Show the YouTube video “Video 2 01 FAIRness Rules” (bit.ly/FMFairnessRules, 3:14). After the video, engage the children in a conversation about the characteristics of being fair using the following questions:

- ✦ We've been learning about recognizing injustice or unfairness. When a situation isn't friendly, accepting, inclusive, and responsible, how does that make you feel? Do you get a sense that something isn't quite right with a situation?
- ✦ What do you think about the four words to describe being FAIR: *Friendly, Accepting, Inclusive, and Responsible*?
- ✦ What is a situation where one or more of those characteristics is missing?
- ✦ What is a situation where the FAIR words are portrayed?

Provide copies of Resource Page 4 and invite the children to choose a fair or unfair situation to draw in the circle on the page. Tell them that if they choose a fair situation, they should color the outline circle green; if they choose an unfair situation to draw, they should color the outline circle red and add a red line going diagonally across the picture from one side of the outline to the other, creating the symbol for *no* or *not*.

While the children are coloring, draw large letters on the mural paper spelling out FAIR. Under each letter, write the corresponding characteristic: Friendly, Accepting, Inclusive, and Responsible. When the children are finished coloring, have them cut out their pictures along the outside of their green or red circle outlines and glue them to the mural. Wonder what other words they want to include in a definition of *fairness*. Have them add those words to the mural. Display the mural in a place in your church where many may see it.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

JUSTICE JUST IN TIME

C

Return to the scenarios in “Fair or Unfair” (p. 8), reminding the children of the first three about Kim and her brother. Wonder together about what justice might look like by using these questions:

- What if Kim’s brother gave back the pencil he took and apologized, or what if Kim gets to go to the party and he stays home?
 - Should he get to go to the party?
 - Would that be fair to Kim? To her brother?
- What would be a just solution to this problem?

Using the next scenario about the girls and the jump rope, wonder together about what justice might look like by using these questions:

- What if the teacher helped everyone take turns and share?
- What if the school made sure that there were enough jump ropes for everyone to play?
- What would be a just solution to this problem?

Using the last two scenarios about the broken arm, wonder together about what justice might look like by using these questions:

- What if you found some of the chores you could do with only one hand, or what if you helped the family with whatever you could or did some of their chores later on?
- What if you got to go horseback riding later, after your arm healed?
- What would be a just solution to this problem?

UNFAIR TO FAIR SKITS

D

Form groups of three or four children of mixed ages, or work together as one group. Invite the children to create a skit without words that depicts a situation that is unjust or unfair using all group members in the skit. Suggest that these may be situations that the children notice at home, in school, at church, or in the community. After one group acts out their skit, invite the rest of the children to guess what is being portrayed. Have another group reimagine the scene with the situation being fair. Continue having a group act out their unfair skit, followed by another group acting out a reimagined fair skit. After the skits, engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- How does recognizing injustice or unfairness make you feel?
- Once you identified what was happening that was unfair, how easy or difficult was it to change the situation to being fair?
- Do you think you could make changes like this in a real-life situation? Why or why not?



FOLLOWING JESUS

☐ Internet-connected device

BLESSING FOR JUSTICE MAKERS



Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you lead the following blessing:

May God bless our eyes to see injustice (*place hands over eyebrows and look back and forth*) /

and may God guide our vision to see how to restore justice. (*move hands palms up from an outward position inward placing right hand on top of left*) /

May God bless our ears to hear the cries of oppression (*cup hands around ears*) /

and may God give us courage to act. (*make strong arms*) /

May God bless our hearts to feel the pain of unfairness (*place hands over heart and then scrunch as if in pain*) /

and may God fill our hearts with compassion for others. (*place hands over heart and then spread arms outward*) /

May God give us voice to speak up when we recognize injustice (*move hand from throat to mouth and outward*) /

and may God give us the words to speak. (*continue previous motion with right hand and left hand several times*) /

May God give us wisdom and humility to do the work of justice (*point to head, then bow head*) /

and may God guide us to know what to do and when to do it. (*hold hands out with palms up, move one hand pointing to watch on wrist on opposite hand*) /



This blessing and song are used in each session of this unit so the children can become familiar with the words and motions to the blessing and words and tune to the song.

Show the YouTube video “For Everyone Born By Shirley Erena Murray” (bit.ly/FMForEveryoneBorn, 5:26) inviting the children to sing along, especially with the chorus, as the tune and the words become familiar.

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. /

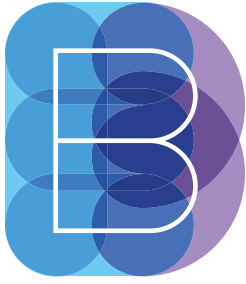
- **Love:** cross arms over chest
- **kindness:** bend middle finger in toward palm on right hand and move palm in a circular motion over your heart

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 EXODUS 1:8-14

Long, long ago, a new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph. This pharaoh did not remember all the good things that Joseph and his people, the Israelites, had done in Egypt. He was afraid of how their population was growing. He said, "The Israelite people are now larger in number and stronger than we are. They outnumber us, so we better be smart and deal with them now. Otherwise, they will only keep growing in number. And if war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and then escape from the land."

So the Egyptians forced the Israelites to do hard work building cities for the pharaoh. They put supervisors over them who treated them harshly. (*Show the picture of the Egyptians and Israelites on Resource Page 2.*)

Even though the Egyptians were treating them badly, the Israelites stayed strong and healthy. They had big families, and there were more and more Israelites. This made the pharaoh and the Egyptians more afraid of them and hate them even more.

So the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. The Egyptians treated the Israelites like animals, making them work very hard for no pay and doing whatever they were told. The Egyptians made the Israelites' lives miserable. The Israelites didn't have any choice about their work. The Egyptians forced the Israelites to do the hardest jobs, making mortar and bricks, doing field work, and all kinds of other brutal work. And more cruelty was to come . . .

