



A 4-WEEK SERIES FROM GENESIS ON

JUSTICE

FROM OUR ANNUAL *TEACHING STRATEGY*

BY SHUREE RIVERA



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ABOUT THIS SERIES

Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

WEEK 1

This week, we'll begin the story of Joseph by looking at the source of all of his family's conflict — a lack of love.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Justice is love in action.
- **THE BIBLE:** Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Questions, Stories, Object Lesson, Activity, Video, Reflection, Music, Discussion

WEEK 2

This week, we'll see how Joseph's brothers hatred led them to cruelly sell him into slavery.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** When there is injustice, hold on to hope.
- **THE BIBLE:** Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8; Romans 8:36-39
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Story, Object Lessons, Question, Video, Music, Discussion

WEEK 3

This week, we'll see how God blessed Joseph because of his integrity, even when he was falsely accused.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Integrity can withstand injustice.
- **THE BIBLE:** Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Questions, Poll, Story, Object Lesson, Music, Discussion

WEEK 4

This week, we'll see the conclusion of Joseph's story as he reconciles with his brothers and rescues his family from starvation.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** God's justice restores what is broken.
- **THE BIBLE:** Genesis 45:1-8, 50:15-20; Luke 6:27-38; Romans 12:17-21
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Story, Video, Response, Discussion

HOW TO PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

Outside of your teaching time, we have a few programming ideas to help this series really come to life — everything from how to **design your room**, to which **games to play**, to what **music to play and sing**.

ROOM DESIGN

For this room design, you'll recreate the series graphics, but level them up with some fancy lights and a backdrop that gets "restored" a little more each week.

First, you'll need a backdrop. There are tons of ways to create a backdrop that you can re-use multiple times each year. Check out [this post](#) for a list of ideas. For this series, **we recommend using foam board covered in black fabric or black painted hardboard**. Paint the backdrop black or cover it in black fabric.

Next, cover about half the backdrop (starting in the center where the series title will be) in scraps of white paper or newspaper. It's okay if this paper is wrinkled or irregular — so is the background of the series graphic! After that, paint the series title on the backdrop with [blue paint](#), markers, or [spray paint](#). You can do this by either creating a stencil or projecting the series graphic onto the board.

To add some interest, instead of simply painting the globe in the series graphic onto the backdrop, attach [LED light strips](#) to the backdrop in the shape of the globe.

Each week, add more white paper and newspaper to the backdrop until it is gradually completed. Before Week 4, make sure your backdrop is entirely covered — this week you'll invite students to write on the wall in the response section called, "A Dream of Justice."



GRAPHIC DESIGN

We give you editable graphics so you can make everything your own! If you're going to **edit our graphics** or **create something brand new** . . .

Use this font!

**REXON
MEDIUM**

Download this font [here!](#)

And use these colors!

 HEX #27354E
CMYK: 88/76/44/40

 HEX #AFB3BC
CMYK: 32/24/19/0

 HEX #4C5354
CMYK: 68/56/55/32

MUSIC by David Magallanes & Elle Campbell

Here are a few worship songs that tie into this month's theme of God's justice . . .

- **"Come Do What You Do"** (Temitope)
- **"There's Nothing That Our God Can't Do"** (Passion)
- **"The One I Trust"** (People of the Earth)
- **"Break Every Chain"** (Tosha Cobbs Leonard)
- **"Free"** (K-Anthony)
- **"The Story I'll Tell"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"Faithful God"** (I AM THEY)
- **"Echo"** (Elevation Worship, Tauren Wells)
- **"Same God"** (Cross Worship)
- **"The Blessing"** Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes

We've added these songs to our [Grow Students \(Volume 5\) Spotify playlist](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)

And if you want to sing or sample a non-worship song or two (maybe as an opener, a closer, a bonus song during your program), try some of these . . .

- **"There For Me"** (Aaron Cole)
- **"I'll Find You"** (Lecrae, Tori Kelly)
- **"Fallen"** (Propaganda)
- **"Redemption Song"** (Bob Marley & the Wailers)
- **"Hold On"** (Justin Bieber)
- **"Unwelcoming"** (Joy Oladokun)
- **"Fight For You"** (Jason Derulo)
- **"Pride** (In The Name Of Love)" (U2)

For more fun (and clean) song suggestions, check out all of [our Spotify playlists](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)



GAMES by Jeremiah Herring & Tyler Grant

If you have a designated time for games before your worship and teaching time, we have a few suggestions for games you can play . . .

- [Dice Justice](#)
- [The Outfit Of Many Colors](#)
- [Card Justice](#)
- [Coat Of Many Colors](#)

To tie in with your teaching time, the games recommended for this series all connect either to the concept of justice or the story of Joseph.

HOW TO PREP FOR THIS SERIES

WHAT TO GET

If you want to try all of our suggestions for this series, here's what you'll need to buy, borrow, Google, or dig for in your storage closet . . .

WEEK 1:

- A fancy coat or [robe](#), a neon windbreaker, old fur coat, or something you found in the church prop closet
- A whiteboard and markers
- A clip from [Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "I Have a Dream"](#)
- The handout provided in your Week 1 folder
- The song "[I Have a Dream](#)" by Tray Little

WEEK 2:

- [Index cards](#)
- The coat or robe from Week 1
- Canned goods
- [Blow dryer](#)
- A clip from "[Sticks and Stones](#)" (Jon Jorgenson)
- The song "[You Say](#)" by Lauren Daigle

WEEK 3:

- A rock
- A rotten piece of fruit
- A [tarp](#)
- A clip of an [interview with Bryan Stevenson](#)
- The song "[Even When It Hurts](#)" by Hillsong

WEEK 4:

- [Balloons](#)
- Permanent markers
- A clip from the [TED Talk, "The Real Risk of Forgiveness"](#) (Sarah Montana)

WHAT TO MAKE

WEEK 1:

- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

WEEK 2:

- Set up a space to play **Agree or Disagree?**
- Set up a space to do the **Tower of Hope** object lesson.

WEEK 3:

- Set up a tarp for **The Rock of Integrity** object lesson.

WEEK 4:

- Set up a space to play **Forgiveness Balloons**.

WHAT TO CUSTOMIZE

You know your students better than we do, so there are probably some things you'd like to change about this series before you start teaching. Here's what you'll need to update if you make changes . . .

- **TEACHING:** Add your own stories, jokes, and any pop culture references that make sense for your group. You can edit each message using the Word documents provided or the [Grow Message Builder](#).
- **SMALL GROUP:** If you make any changes to your teaching, make sure your small group questions reflect those changes. You can edit these using the Word documents provided.
- **APP:** If you make changes to your teaching or small group questions, don't forget to update your content in the [Grow App](#) for your team!
- **GRAPHICS:** We've provided graphics in your [Graphics & Video folder](#) already, but we've also provided a blank slide in case you need to make your own.
- **EMAILS:** Customize and send the [volunteer and parent emails](#) we've provided for this series.

WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

To make sure your students, volunteers, and families are in the loop . . .

- **STUDENTS:** Throughout the month, post the [Graphics & Video](#) we've provided on social media, like the Big Idea images and Bumper Video. Post the [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) we've provided or use the One-Minute Sermon Scripts to film a recap video each week and post it on social media.
- **FAMILIES:** Before you begin teaching this series, send families the [Parent Email](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). After each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to families online. You can also copy and paste the social media examples we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Before you teach each week of this series, send volunteers the weekly [Volunteer Emails](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). Before each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to volunteers online. You can also copy and paste the social media posts we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).

For a more in-depth digital communication strategy, **customize the [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#)** we've provided. And hey! When you post on social media, **don't forget to use the [#growcurriculum](#) hashtag** to share your ideas and stories with our team and with other churches who are using Grow!

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES

Every ministry is different. Whether you're teaching middle schoolers, high schoolers, teenagers with special needs, or all three, here's how to hack this series to fit your unique and diverse audience.

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

by Eddie Witkowski and Crystal Quintero



REVISE

To make this series more accessible for middle schoolers, here's what to adjust . .

Every week, don't skip the personal stories! The subject of this series (justice) is a pretty abstract concept, which means your middle schoolers will need plenty of practical examples to help them understand what you're talking about. To help them grasp these concepts, be sure to tell the personal stories you're prompted to tell each week. The more practical stories and tangible object lessons the better!

In Week 1, go all out for the object lesson, "A Coat of Many Colors." Make it extravagant! Middle school students will be more likely to remember this object lesson if you go full-on runway model and talk up the coat. The story is memorable, but this little addition will make it more fun for them to relate with.

In Week 4, make the "Forgiveness Balloons" an upfront game or play it at the beginning of your service. If you're worried about reigning your middle schoolers back in after this game, that's understandable! Try moving the activity to the front and having only a few students involved — just be ready to make a transition from this activity to more focused attention. Or make this the first game you play when students walk through the door so they have more time to calm down.



REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

In Week 3, replace the interview with Bryan Stevenson with a local story or a story about a student. Because middle schoolers are still fairly concrete thinkers, they may relate to and understand the concept of being wrongfully accused more easily if the story you share hits closer to home. While this interview is powerful some middle school students may miss the significance of what is being shared.



REMEMBER

Keep in mind, middle school students will need your help learning to understand the concept of justice. At this stage in their lives and development, most middle schoolers are just now learning about justice-related issues for the first time. While they may have thought about justice in terms of what is fair to them, the idea that other people might be treated unfairly as well is a concept that may be new to them. Encourage them to think outside themselves.

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS by Andy Disher and Areli Ortiz

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for high schoolers, here's what to adjust . .

In Week 1, revise the question, "What is Justice?" by going deeper. Most high school students will be ready to take this question deeper, so do a quick introduction of the idea of justice but really allow the students to guide the conversation and how in-depth you go. Ask follow-up questions during this discussion section to help yourself learn where your students are coming from, what they know, what they think, and where they might be able to grow.

In Week 2, revise the activity, "Agree or Disagree?" to let students stay seated. Your high school students may not want to get up again once they've settled and sat down for your teaching time. Instead of having them move around, just have them raise and lower their hands to respond to this poll.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

In Week 3, replace the "Two Truths and a Lie" activity with more discussion later. For this week, we think high school students would be ready to jump into the conversation about integrity. Depending on the mood of your group, feel free to skip this activity and jump right into the teaching time so that you have more time to talk and go deeper in conversation later.

REMEMBER

Throughout the series, seek to better understand how your students understand justice. You might have students who are passionate about justice and will be vocal about justice-related topics. You might have some who have no interest in justice-related topics. You might also have students disagree with each other (or even you) about how justice-related topics are approached and talked about. Each week, approach the subject with care and curiosity. Listen to your students' perspectives and push to gather information (from them or maybe from their parents in advance) about how they view this subject. When you know where they're coming from, you can better guide the conversation.

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by Alyssa Roberts and Sunny Brown

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for students with special needs, here's what to adjust . .

In all weeks, revise by including a time for your transition. When you transition from a group time activity or discussion to a teaching time, have a countdown or timer to notify students that the activity is done and we are moving on.

In Week 2, revise the activity, "Agree or Disagree?" to be more inclusion for those with physical disabilities. Instead of running back and forth between two locations, have students stand and sit, or if you have a student in a wheel chair, have students raise and lower their hands.

In Week 3, spend extra time breaking down the concept of integrity. Integrity as a concept may need to be further explained for some students with special needs, so consider using visual aids or giving clear examples of what integrity looks like — and what it doesn't. You could even try a simple role-playing exercise to help them better grasp the concept.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

In Week 4, replace the activity, "Forgiveness Balloons" if you have students with sensory sensitivities. Popping balloons does not mix well with students who struggle with sensory processing or overstimulation. Instead, try replacing the balloons with beach balls or playground balls. In this version of the game, students must continuously bump or volley their team's balls in the air while the other team tries to capture them.

REMEMBER

Anytime you show videos or play music, remember to turn on closed captioning. There are a lot of videos in this series, so remember to accommodate anyone with hearing disabilities by giving them captions to follow along with.



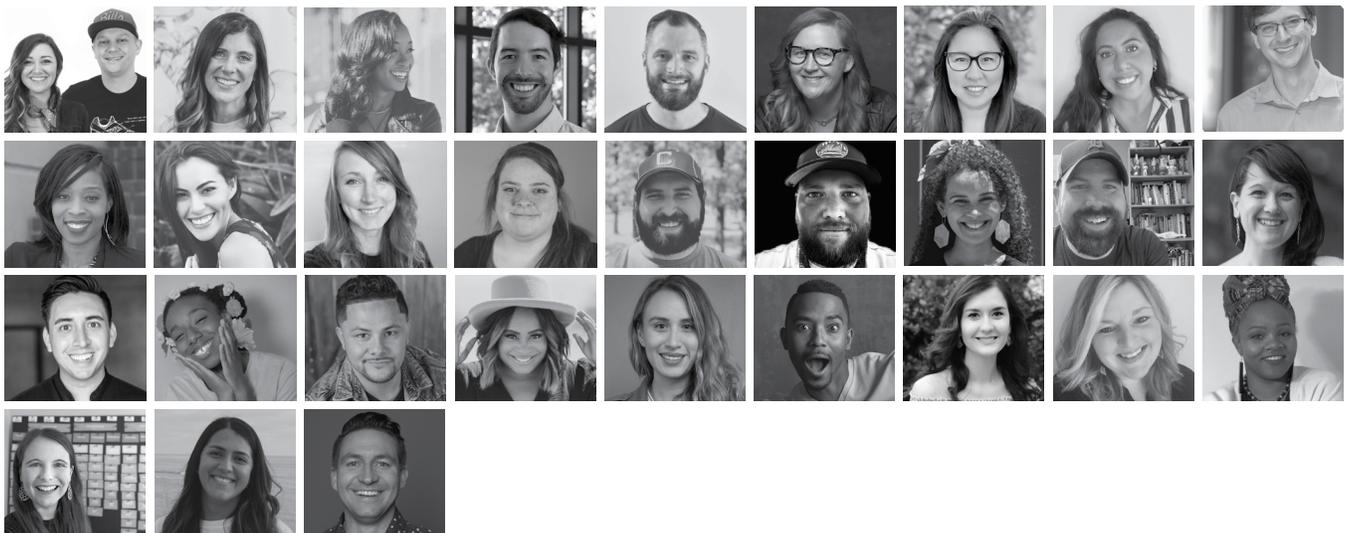
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shuree Rivera is an urban activist and performing vocal artist with a demonstrated history of working in the music industry and in urban communities. Shuree is best known for her more than a decade of work as an influencer and social change agent in urban communities. If you'd like to connect with Shuree about paddle boarding, music and creative projects she would love to connect with you.

CONNECT WITH SHUREE!



ALONG WITH . . .



SERIES DEVELOPMENT: Shuree Rivera, Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, David Magallanes, Amber Stephens, Stephen Switzer, Candace Williams, Jeremy Zach, Liliana Reza, Jasmine Murias, Bill Mauldin, Steph Whitacre

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS: Eddie Witkowski, Crystal Quintero

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS: Andy Disher, Areli Ortiz

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Alyssa Roberts, Sunny Brown

GAMES: Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant, Jordan Floro

MUSIC: Elle Campbell, David Magallanes

ONE-MINUTE SERMONS: David Magallanes, Elle Campbell, Jose Rodriguez, Erica Rodriguez, Vanessa Serrano Cruz, Damean Easter, and the Rescue a Generation team

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Josh Gosney, Jules Gray, Amber Gaddis

LAYOUT DESIGN: Jules Gray, Elle Campbell

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Linda Moon, Ali Anne, Kellee Gentry, Emily Acton, Jada Smith, Jay Logan, Eddie Irvin, Daniel Wallis

DEVOTIONAL FOR VOLUNTEERS



STUDY

Whether you know it or not, you care about justice. If you didn't, you wouldn't be committed to serving teenagers. You wouldn't be an advocate for people on the margins. But even so, the path to living justly can seem unclear. Studying the life of Joseph can be helpful because it reveals what justice truly is. **Justice is love in action.** When injustices happen, we can **hold on to hope.** And **integrity is what withstands injustice.** You can do so many things as an adult that will set an example for students to follow as they are growing and learning. Your life can show that **God's justice restores what is broken** no matter what has happened or what is happening now. To get ready for this series about justice, **spend a few minutes reading the stories you'll be teaching students this month.** As you do, think about what God has taught you (and is still teaching you) through these passages, and how these Big Ideas have been true in your life.

WEEK 1: Justice is love in action. (Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7)

WEEK 2: When there is injustice, hold on to hope. (Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8; Romans 8:36-39)

WEEK 3: Integrity can withstand injustice. (Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17)

WEEK 4: God's justice restores what is broken. (Genesis 45:1-8, 50:15-20; Luke 6:27-38; Romans 12:17-21)

PRAY

During your prayer time this month, think about something you've witnessed, heard about, or experienced that broke your heart – a situation so unjust that you couldn't unsee it or unfeel the emotions connected to it. If justice is love in action, what can you actively do to support those in that situation? How can you hold onto hope that justice can happen and then share that hope with others? What kind of integrity can you practice to resist that injustice? Then thank God for the hope of justice and for being able to fix everything that has been broken. **Which passage of Scripture or Big Idea from this month is most relevant to you right now?** Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how you've already grown in this area, plus the next step you need to take in order to keep growing.

GROW

If God wants "justice For all," then who has been left out of that equation? Who still needs justice? Who can you become more aware of and more vocal for? How do you get closer to the pain of the problem in order to be able to understand it better? If you want justice for others, then begin by taking steps to communicate that you do. So what's your next step? **Whatever your next step is right now, take it. Then help kids do the same.**

WEEK 1 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Justice is love in action.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | “What comes to mind when you hear ‘justice for all?’”

- Welcome to our new series, *Justice for All!* **When you hear that phrase, what comes to mind?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- When you hear the word “justice,” you might think of the American pledge of allegiance, or the Snyder cut, or court TV, or maybe a Metallica album. But does anyone think about love?

QUESTION | “What’s something extreme a fictional character has done for love?”

- We’ll come back to the idea of justice in a minute, but for now let’s talk about love. Think about some of the love stories from your favorite books, movies, or shows. **What’s something extreme one of those characters did for love?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- Whether you’re into love stories or not, there’s something about them we can all relate to. We all want to feel loved by other people, and these extreme gestures of love we see in stories definitely accomplish that.

STORY | Talk about a time you saw love expressed in an extreme way.

- We’ve all seen extreme gestures of love portrayed in books and on film, but sometimes we see them happen in real life too.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a lighthearted story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when you either went above and beyond to show someone love or you saw someone else do so. Make this story either cute or funny – you’ll get to more substantial examples in a minute. You might talk about a dramatic prom proposal or a time when you tried to impress a crush and failed miserably.*
- Sometimes we do ridiculous things for love. But there’s a not-so-ridiculous truth underneath these ridiculous gestures. Deep down, we all understand that . . .
 - Love isn’t just an emotion you feel.
 - Love isn’t just a word you say.
 - Love is something you demonstrate with your actions.

STORY | Talk about a time you wanted revenge against a loved one who hurt you.

- But sometimes the people we love don’t do this very well – at least, not in our opinions. Sometimes the people who are supposed to love us don’t show it with their actions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you wanted revenge against someone you loved who hurt you or made you angry. Try to choose a story that is relatable to all of your students. Share what happened, how you felt, and what kind of revenge you wanted to take.*
- Have you ever wanted to get even with someone who hurt you? I mean, they hurt *you*, so it’s only fair if they experience some pain in return, right? I’ve get it. I’ve been there. When we’re hurt, we want revenge! We want consequences! We want justice!

QUESTION | “What is justice?”

- Now that we’ve sort-of defined love, let’s see if we can sort-of define justice. What do you think?
What is justice?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- **Talking about justice can be tough. When we try to define, many of us define justice as . . .**
 - **A punishment.** We see it as the thing that happens to people when they’re caught doing something wrong, like prison.
 - **Revenge.** We see getting justice as the same thing as getting revenge against someone who hurt us.
 - **A trend.** Some see justice as a trendy term that gets thrown around in politics, at protests, or on social media.
- Sometimes our desire for justice is well-intentioned, sometimes it’s misguided, and sometimes it’s a little bit of both. But when we realize our idea of justice is actually just about revenge, there’s a good chance we’ve gotten it wrong.
 - There’s this saying, “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.” It’s a reminder that, when we’re all trying to get revenge every time we’re hurt, the cycle of pain never ends.
 - But what’s the alternative? What do we do when something unjust happens to us? How should we respond when someone really hurts us? How do we balance forgiving others with standing up for ourselves? And is it possible that “getting justice” is about more than just punishing people who’ve hurt us?

- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about what God says justice is (and isn't) — and we'll see what justice and love have to do with each other too.

SO WHAT? WHY DOES IT MATTER TO GOD AND TO US?

OBJECT LESSON | A Coat of Many Colors

- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about justice by taking a look at a family from the Old Testament (that's in the Bible) that not only experienced, but also carried out, unspeakable injustice.
- At the center of this story is a guy named Joseph.
 - Joseph was the second youngest sibling in a family with eleven brothers. As one of the younger of the bunch, the Bible seems to suggest Joseph was kind of a tattletale. His father often asked him to "keep an eye on" his older brothers.
 - By the way, Joseph's older brothers were actually his half brothers. Yep, Joseph was raised in a blended family. Joseph and his younger brother, Benjamin, had a different mother than their older brothers, and this created some serious sibling rivalry.
 - Joseph's brothers were convinced their father, Jacob, loved Joseph more than them. And guess what? They were right. Jacob's favoritism created an "us versus them" mentality in their home.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, find yourself a fancy coat or robe! It could be a neon windbreaker, your grandma's old fur coat, or something you found in the church prop closet. When you introduce the idea of Joseph's coat, put it on or show it off.*
- There was already tension in the family, but Jacob re-enforced this "us versus them" mentality by giving Joseph a custom-made coat! Imagine if your parents bought your little brother Air Jordans, and made you wear knock-offs. Jacob's gift spurred a lot of jealousy and made an even bigger mess.
 - Don't we all want to be a part of a family or friend group in which there is unconditional love? We want to be accepted for who we are — free from all prejudice, biases, and favoritism. But Jacob didn't do that. He allowed his personal preferences to impact how he loved his children.
 - Many believe Jacob preferred Joseph simply because he liked Joseph's birth mother better than the mother of his other children. Maybe you've even experienced this in your own life — being treated unfairly simply because of who you came from.
 - Whatever the reason, Joseph's dad created an unhealthy family dynamic. But to be honest, Joseph didn't help the situation. Let's see how Joseph added to the unhealthiness.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:1-11

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 37:1-11.*
- In Joseph's dreams, God revealed some important things. But ouch! Joseph kind of just flexed on his brothers!

- It's true God was speaking to Joseph through his dreams. It's true God showed Joseph his future — that one day he *would* be in a position of authority over his brothers. But that's not really the point.
- The problem wasn't that Joseph had these dreams in the first place — it was the way Joseph bragged about his prophetic dreams. The way he shared his dreams with his brothers lacked love.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 13:1-7

- We sort-of defined love a few minutes ago, but let's see if we can define it a little more clearly with the help of some Scripture. In the New Testament of the Bible, a long time after Joseph and his brothers lived, a guy named Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in a city called Corinth. In that letter, he gave us a definition of what love is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 13:1-7.*
- Joseph was like a clanging cymbal to his brothers. Yeah, he could see the future, but without love, this dream meant nothing to his brothers. In fact, they grew to hate Joseph.
- As we'll see over the next few weeks, Joseph's lack of love in this moment set off a painful chain of events. Ultimately, we'll see how over two decades of heartache could have been avoided if Joseph had chosen to take a different approach toward his family.

ACTIVITY | Joseph: Take Two

- So what could Joseph had done differently? How could he have shown love to his brothers instead? How could he have been more . . .
 - Patient?
 - Kind?
 - Not boastful?
 - Not proud?
 - Not dishonoring to them?
 - Not self-seeking?
 - Protective of them?
- Let's imagine Joseph gets a redo on telling his dream to his brothers and let's write a new script.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a whiteboard, write Joseph's words from the Genesis 37 passage. Then circle all of the times he said "I" or "me." Together, try rewriting Joseph's words in a way that would communicate the same message in a more loving way. As you go, erase or cross out Joseph's words and add your own. Try changing "I" and "me" language to "us" and "we," and add some humility!*
- Given the fact that there was already division between his brothers, Joseph needed more love in his words to break down the wall of hostility.

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

- Jacob's favoritism had created an imbalance in their family by showing favoritism to Joseph.
 - His brothers were filled with hatred for Joseph and the injustice of their father's favoritism.

- Joseph was arrogant and insensitive to the ways his brothers were hurting.
 - In this family, there was a lot of hurt. As we've said, when people get hurt, they usually want justice — but what is justice?
 - Justice is when something is just, fair, lawful, or right.
 - But "justice" can't be the same thing as "revenge." If everyone in Joseph's family who had been hurt tried to take revenge on each other, it would never end!
 - Their family didn't need more vengeance. They needed more love — but not the kind of love that's only communicated with words. They needed love communicated through actions, like Paul described in I Corinthians. Because justice isn't revenge.
- Justice is love in action.**

NOW WHAT? WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO ABOUT IT?

LOVE IN ACTION

- You may not have eleven brothers who hate you like Joseph did, but I know you know what it's like to hurt and be hurt by others. Too often, it's easier to act unjustly than it is to act with love . . .
 - **IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:** In what ways do you need to choose love instead of revenge? Humility instead of pride? Kindness and gentleness instead of cruelty? Are you, like Joseph, creating conflict with others because of your lack of love?
 - **IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** In what ways can you show love in your school, neighborhood, or community? Even if you didn't cause the problem, how can you put love into action and help solve it? Is there a conflict where you can help restore peace? Is there a need you can help meet?
 - **IN THE WORLD:** In Joseph's family, his father Jacob's favoritism and brokenness caused conflict and division between Joseph and his brothers. When you look at the world around you, do you see conflict and division there too?

VIDEO | A Clip from Martin Luther King Jr.'s Speech, "I Have a Dream"

- Throughout history there have been leaders who had dreams for the world that were rooted in God's justice and love — especially when hatred and division have been common.
 - In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s saw a historic movement that fought against racial injustice. In that time, many voices rose up to address the racial divisions in America and call for love and justice.
 - Probably the most famous of these voices was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was a pastor who had a God-given dream and knew how to share it in love — not in a way that wasn't arrogant or self-serving.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:55-3:20) of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)

REFLECTION | What's Your Dream?

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream inspired others to fight for justice by turning their love for others into action. So what's your dream? Where do you want to see more love and less hatred?
- You don't have to wait for God to speak to you in your sleep. You can start dreaming now! What if you . . .
 - Wrote a kind note to someone you don't always agree with?
 - Try to find common ground with someone who seems different than you?
 - Go grocery shopping for an elderly person in your neighborhood, or someone who has a difficult time getting out of the house on their own?
 - Offer to tutor a child of a single parent who's struggling to maintain balance?
 - Doing something kind for a sibling — just because?
- **What is your dream? And what can you do to make it a reality?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.*
- In Joseph's story, God gave him a miraculous prophetic dream.
 - Although Joseph selfishly mishandled that dream, the message of that dream was rooted in love and justice — Joseph just missed it.
 - In the next few weeks, we'll discover more about what Joseph's dream meant. But for now, keep asking this question: "If **justice is love in action**, how can my actions demonstrate more of God's love?"

MUSIC | "I Have a Dream" (Tray Little)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *During your time of reflection, or as you close, play the song "I Have a Dream" (Tray Little), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Justice is love in action.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7

- **What's your favorite fictional love story and why?**
- **If love is a combination of feelings, words, and actions, which do you think is least important and why? Which is most important?**
- **Who is someone who makes you feel loved? How do they make you feel that way?**
- **Why do you think the people we love most are sometimes the people we hurt most?**
- **In Joseph's family, who hurt who and how?**
- **In your own words, what is love? What is justice?**
- **What do you think love and justice have to do with each other?**
- **Re-read I Corinthians 13:1-7. Using the key words in this passage, in what ways do you sometimes struggle to show love at home? In your friendships? To people you don't know?**
- **What obstacles might you face when trying to love those people with your actions?**
- **This week, where do you want to put more love into action: at home, in your friendships, or in the world? How will you do that?**

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Justice is love in action.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7

- **What's your favorite fictional love story and why?**
- **Who is someone who makes you feel loved? How do they make you feel that way?**
- **In Joseph's family, who hurt who and how?**
- **Re-read I Corinthians 13:1-7. Using the key words in this passage, in what ways do you sometimes struggle to show love at home? In your friendships? To people you don't know?**
- **What obstacles might you face when trying to love those people with your actions?**
- **This week, where do you want to put more love into action: at home, in your friendships, or in the world? How will you do that?**

WEEK 1 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Justice is love in action.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 13:1-7

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | “What comes to mind when you hear ‘justice for all?’”

- Welcome to our new series, *Justice for All!* **When you hear that phrase, what comes to mind?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- When you hear the word “justice,” you might think of the American pledge of allegiance, or the Snyder cut, or court TV, or maybe a Metallica album. But does anyone think about love?

QUESTION | “What’s something extreme a fictional character has done for love?”

- We’ll come back to the idea of justice in a minute, but for now let’s talk about love. Think about some of the love stories from your favorite books, movies, or shows. **What’s something extreme one of those characters did for love?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- Whether you’re into love stories or not, there’s something about them we can all relate to. We all want to feel loved by other people, and these extreme gestures of love we see in stories definitely accomplish that.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.*

- What's your favorite fictional love story and why?
- ✪ If love is a combination of feelings, words, and actions, which do you think is least important and why? Which is most important?

STORY | Talk about a time you saw love expressed in an extreme way.

- We've all seen extreme gestures of love portrayed in books and on film, but sometimes we see them happen in real life too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a lighthearted story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when you either went above and beyond to show someone love or you saw someone else do so. Make this story either cute or funny – you'll get to more substantial examples in a minute. You might talk about a dramatic prom proposal or a time when you tried to impress a crush and failed miserably.*
- Sometimes we do ridiculous things for love. But there's a not-so-ridiculous truth underneath these ridiculous gestures. Deep down, we all understand that . . .
 - Love isn't just an emotion you feel.
 - Love isn't just a word you say.
 - Love is something you demonstrate with your actions.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **Who is someone who makes you feel loved? How do they make you feel that way?**
 - ✪ **Why do you think the people we love most are sometimes the people we hurt most?**

STORY | Talk about a time you wanted revenge against a loved one who hurt you.

- But sometimes the people we love don't do this very well – at least, not in our opinions. Sometimes the people who are supposed to love us don't show it with their actions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you wanted revenge against someone you loved who hurt you or made you angry. Try to choose a story that is relatable to all of your students. Share what happened, how you felt, and what kind of revenge you wanted to take.*
- Have you ever wanted to get even with someone who hurt you? I mean, they hurt you, so it's only fair if they experience some pain in return, right? I've get it. I've been there. When we're hurt, we want revenge! We want consequences! We want justice!

QUESTION | "What is justice?"

- Now that we've sort-of defined love, let's see if we can sort-of define justice. What do you think?
What is justice?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

- **Talking about justice can be tough. When we try to define, many of us define justice as . . .**
 - **A punishment.** We see it as the thing that happens to people when they're caught doing something wrong, like prison.
 - **Revenge.** We see getting justice as the same thing as getting revenge against someone who hurt us.
 - **A trend.** Some see justice as a trendy term that gets thrown around in politics, at protests, or on social media.
- Sometimes our desire for justice is well-intentioned, sometimes it's misguided, and sometimes it's a little bit of both. But when we realize our idea of justice is actually just about revenge, there's a good chance we've gotten it wrong.
 - There's this saying, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." It's a reminder that, when we're all trying to get revenge every time we're hurt, the cycle of pain never ends.
 - But what's the alternative? What do we do when something unjust happens to us? How should we respond when someone really hurts us? How do we balance forgiving others with standing up for ourselves? And is it possible that "getting justice" is about more than just punishing people who've hurt us?
- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about what God says justice is (and isn't) — and we'll see what justice and love have to do with each other too.

SO WHAT? WHY DOES IT MATTER TO GOD AND TO US?

OBJECT LESSON | A Coat of Many Colors

- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about justice by taking a look at a family from the Old Testament (that's in the Bible) that not only experienced, but also carried out, unspeakable injustice.
- At the center of this story is a guy named Joseph.
 - Joseph was the second youngest sibling in a family with eleven brothers. As one of the younger of the bunch, the Bible seems to suggest Joseph was kind of a tattletale. His father often asked him to "keep an eye on" his older brothers.
 - By the way, Joseph's older brothers were actually his half brothers. Yep, Joseph was raised in a blended family. Joseph and his younger brother, Benjamin, had a different mother than their older brothers, and this created some serious sibling rivalry.
 - Joseph's brothers were convinced their father, Jacob, loved Joseph more than them. And guess what? They were right. Jacob's favoritism created an "us versus them" mentality in their home.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, find yourself a fancy coat or [robe](#)! It could be a neon windbreaker, your grandma's old fur coat, or something you found in the church prop closet. When you introduce the idea of Joseph's coat, put it on or show it off.*

- There was already tension in the family, but Jacob re-enforced this “us versus them” mentality by giving Joseph a custom-made coat! Imagine if your parents bought your little brother Air Jordans, and made you wear knock-offs. Jacob’s gift spurred a lot of jealousy and made an even bigger mess.
 - Don’t we all want to be a part of a family or friend group in which there is unconditional love? We want to be accepted for who we are – free from all prejudice, biases, and favoritism. But Jacob didn’t do that. He allowed his personal preferences to impact how he loved his children.
 - Many believe Jacob preferred Joseph simply because he liked Joseph’s birth mother better than the mother of his other children. Maybe you’ve even experienced this in your own life – being treated unfairly simply because of who you came from.
 - Whatever the reason, Joseph’s dad created an unhealthy family dynamic. But to be honest, Joseph didn’t help the situation. Let’s see how Joseph added to the unhealthiness.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:1-11

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 37:1-11.*
- In Joseph’s dreams, God revealed some important things. But ouch! Joseph kind of just flexed on his brothers!
 - It’s true God was speaking to Joseph through his dreams. It’s true God showed Joseph his future – that one day he *would* be in a position of authority over his brothers. But that’s not really the point.
 - The problem wasn’t that Joseph had these dreams in the first place – it was the way Joseph bragged about his prophetic dreams. The way he shared his dreams with his brothers lacked love.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 13:1-7

- We sort-of defined love a few minutes ago, but let’s see if we can define it a little more clearly with the help of some Scripture. In the New Testament of the Bible, a long time after Joseph and his brothers lived, a guy named Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in a city called Corinth. In that letter, he gave us a definition of what love is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 13:1-7.*
- Joseph was like a clanging cymbal to his brothers. Yeah, he could see the future, but without love, this dream meant nothing to his brothers. In fact, they grew to hate Joseph.
- As we’ll see over the next few weeks, Joseph’s lack of love in this moment set off a painful chain of events. Ultimately, we’ll see how over two decades of heartache could have been avoided if Joseph had chosen to take a different approach toward his family.

ACTIVITY | Joseph: Take Two

- So what could Joseph had done differently? How could he have shown love to his brothers instead? How could he have been more . . .

- Patient?
- Kind?
- Not boastful?
- Not proud?
- Not dishonoring to them?
- Not self-seeking?
- Protective of them?
- Let's imagine Joseph gets a redo on telling his dream to his brothers and let's write a new script.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a whiteboard, write Joseph's words from the Genesis 37 passage. Then circle all of the times he said "I" or "me." Together, try rewriting Joseph's words in a way that would communicate the same message in a more loving way. As you go, erase or cross out Joseph's words and add your own. Try changing "I" and "me" language to "us" and "we," and add some humility!*
- Given the fact that there was already division between his brothers, Joseph needed more love in his words to break down the wall of hostility.

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

- Jacob's favoritism had created an imbalance in their family by showing favoritism to Joseph.
 - His brothers were filled with hatred for Joseph and the injustice of their father's favoritism.
 - Joseph was arrogant and insensitive to the ways his brothers were hurting.
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 - Justice is when something is just, fair, lawful, or right.
 - But "justice" can't be the same thing as "revenge." If everyone in Joseph's family who had been hurt tried to take revenge on each other, it would never end!
 - Their family didn't need more vengeance. They needed more love – but not the kind of love that's only communicated with words. They needed love communicated through actions, like Paul described in I Corinthians. Because justice isn't revenge.

Justice is love in action.

NOW WHAT? WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO ABOUT IT?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **In Joseph's family, who hurt who and how?**
 - ☆ **In your own words, what is love? What is justice?**
 - ☆ **What do you think love and justice have to do with each other?**

LOVE IN ACTION

- You may not have eleven brothers who hate you like Joseph did, but I know you know what it's like to hurt and be hurt by others. Too often, it's easier to act unjustly than it is to act with love . . .
 - **IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:** In what ways do you need to choose love instead of revenge? Humility instead of pride? Kindness and gentleness instead of cruelty? Are you, like Joseph, creating conflict with others because of your lack of love?
 - **IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** In what ways can you show love in your school, neighborhood, or community? Even if you didn't cause the problem, how can you put love into action and help solve it? Is there a conflict where you can help restore peace? Is there a need you can help meet?
 - **IN THE WORLD:** In Joseph's family, his father Jacob's favoritism and brokenness caused conflict and division between Joseph and his brothers. When you look at the world around you, do you see conflict and division there too?

VIDEO | A Clip from Martin Luther King Jr.'s Speech, "I Have a Dream"

- Throughout history there have been leaders who had dreams for the world that were rooted in God's justice and love — especially when hatred and division have been common.
 - In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s saw a historic movement that fought against racial injustice. In that time, many voices rose up to address the racial divisions in America and call for love and justice.
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REFLECTION | What's Your Dream?

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream inspired others to fight for justice by turning their love for others into action. So what's your dream? Where do you want to see more love and less hatred?
- You don't have to wait for God to speak to you in your sleep. You can start dreaming now! What if you . . .
 - Wrote a kind note to someone you don't always agree with?
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 - Go grocery shopping for an elderly person in your neighborhood, or someone who has a difficult time getting out of the house on their own?
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- In Joseph's story, God gave him a miraculous prophetic dream.
 - Although Joseph selfishly mishandled that dream, the message of that dream was rooted in love and justice — Joseph just missed it.
 - In the next few weeks, we'll discover more about what Joseph's dream meant. But for now, keep asking this question: "If **justice is love in action**, how can my actions demonstrate more of God's love?"

MUSIC | "I Have a Dream" (Tray Little)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *During your time of reflection, or as you close, play the song "I Have a Dream" (Tray Little), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **Re-read I Corinthians 13:1-7. Using the key words in this passage, in what ways do you sometimes struggle to show love at home? In your friendships? To people you don't know?**
 - **What obstacles might you face when trying to love those people with your actions?**
 - **This week, where do you want to put more love into action: at home, in your friendships, or in the world? How will you do that?**

I HAVE A DREAM...



I HAVE A DREAM...



WEEK 2 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

When there is injustice,
hold on to hope.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8;
Romans 8:36-39

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Agree or Disagree?

- Welcome back to *Justice for All*, where we're talking about what justice is (and what it isn't). We've got a great conversation ahead of us today, but to start us off, let's talk about who you are (and who you're not).
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Designate one side of the room as the "Agree" side, and the other side of the room as "Disagree." After reading each of the following statements, have students run (or skip, walk, or roll) to the side of the room they think is true of themselves. After each statement, give a few students a chance to share why they chose the side they did.
- I'll read a few statements and you can decide: agree or disagree?
 - **You have an interesting life.** Maybe you're just lucky or maybe you work to make your life interesting!
 - **You are bold.** You're fierce! You're strong! You take risks!
 - **You attract attention.** People seem to like you and want to be around you!
 - **You've paid your dues.** You've worked hard for all the things you've achieved!
 - **You think outside the box.** You don't think like everyone else does! You're comfortable being a little different.
 - **You stand for something.** You know who you are and what matters to you!
- No matter how you responded, these qualities and traits are all great to have, but let's be honest — if you are any of these things, you probably have some haters. Having these qualities can sometimes make others feel . . .

- Jealous.
- Uncomfortable.
- Intimidated.
- Annoyed.
- Threatened.

STORY | Talk about a time someone was “ruthless” to you.

- We all get into conflict with others once in a while. But sometimes our “haters” can be ruthless.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when someone was ruthless to you. You can keep this story lighthearted by talking about a friendly prank war or some goodnatured teasing between friends, or you can be more vulnerable by talking about a time you really struggled because of someone else’s cruelty.*
- In both small and big ways, humans can be ruthless to one another.
 - Bullies can be ruthless. Fake friends can be ruthless. Internet trolls can be ruthless. But nothing hurts more than when your own flesh and blood – your family – attacks you.
 - Ruthless behavior isn’t something that just happens now in the 21st century. People have been cruel toward one another for a long time. For as long as there have been humans, there has been jealousy and fights for power.

OBJECT LESSON | Tower of Hope

- Have you ever experienced someone’s ruthlessness? Have you ever felt like someone (or everyone) was completely against you?
 - Maybe you’ve been hurt by someone in your family. Maybe you’ve been devastated by something that’s been done to you.
 - How do you hold on to hope when you’ve been a victim of ruthless injustice? How do you get past bitterness when everything within you hurts?
 - When it feels like people are out to get us, we need a firm foundation to help us withstand the weight and pressure of those challenges.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring a few students or volunteers to the front of the room to construct towers out of [index cards](#) while you teach and the rest of the room watches. Split the students into two teams and give both teams a roll of tape, three cans of canned goods, and some index cards – but here’s the trick: give Team #1 75 index cards and give Team #2 only 35 index cards. Let your teams know they’ll be competing to build the strongest tower they can in the time you’ve allotted. If you need a visual of what a strong tower might look like when it’s finished, [check this out](#). Let your teams know that when time runs out, their towers must . . .*
 - *Be able to support three canned goods.*
 - *Be at least four feet high.*
 - *Be able to withstand a hairdryer blown from three feet away.*

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

OBJECT LESSON | A Coat of Many Colors

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring back that coat or robe from last week. When you talk about it, put it on or show it off. When the coat is taken from Joseph, take it off or throw it on the ground.*

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:12-24

- Last week, we were introduced to a guy named Joseph. We're going to continue that story today. In case you missed it or forgot, here's what's happened so far:
 - Joseph has eleven brothers, and most of them hate him.
 - That's because their father, Jacob, loves Joseph more than the rest of them, and it's really obvious — Jacob even gives Joseph a special coat and tells him to spy on his brothers for him.
 - But that's not the only reason. God speaks to Joseph in a dream. In the dream, Joseph sees he will one day be in a position of authority, ruling over his brothers. So Joseph brags about it.
 - When Joseph tells his brothers he's going to be in charge of them, they are not happy. Their hatred for him grows and grows, until — well, let's see what happens next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 37:17-24.*
- As Joseph was arriving to where his brothers were working, they saw him coming from a distance. Remember, Joseph's father had given him a bright designer coat that his brothers were jealous of. Everyone in the neighborhood could probably see Joseph coming from a mile away!
 - When Joseph's brothers saw him coming their way and remembered how he thought he was so much better than them, they were filled with jealousy and anger.
 - In their anger, they made a decision. They didn't just want to kill his dreams. They wanted to kill *him*.
- But luckily for Joseph, Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben, intervened.
 - He said, "We're not going to *kill* Joseph. No murder. But yeah, he needs to go, so let's just throw him in this well out here in the wilderness and leave him there."
 - Reuben secretly planned to go back later, get Joseph out, and take him back to their father. But he couldn't tell his brothers that because otherwise they might not agree to go along with the plan.
- Joseph's coat was torn from his body to send a message: "You're no better than us! You're just an arrogant little boy with dreams!"

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:24-36

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 37:24-36.*
- Joseph's brothers decided not to kill him. But they didn't think leaving him in a hole was a good idea either. So they took their plan a step further and sold him as a slave, without Reuben's knowledge.

- They wanted to make sure they didn't have to cover up a death, but in reality selling a human into slavery is also a violent, hateful act.
- With this sinful and unjust transaction, Joseph's brothers took the situation from bad to worse.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 138:7-8

- We'll learn more about what happened to Joseph next time, but for now I want to introduce you to someone else who experienced cruel and unjust treatment – David.
 - David was once a young shepherd boy who God chose to lead the nation of Israel. The only problem was Israel already had a king named Saul.
 - Nobody hated David more than Saul. He was jealous of David's talent and leadership skills and constantly bullied, threatened, attacked, and even tried to kill David.
- Like Joseph, David's hater wanted to see him destroyed. But here's what David said about it . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 138:7-8.
- David trusted God would protect him, even when people were out to get him. He faced incredible injustice from someone who wanted to do him harm, but he knew God was with him.

QUESTION | Tower of Hope Debrief

- No one ever wants to experience cruelty at the hands of other people. But when we do face those things, we get to see just how strong our foundation really is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** When the teams' towers are complete, carefully stack the canned goods on top of them. If they're still standing, turn on a [blow dryer](#) and try to knock them over from a distance of three feet. After your tower activity is complete, debrief with your players by asking the following questions.
 - **Did you have what you needed to get the job done?**
 - **Team #2, how hopeful did you feel when you realized you'd been given 35 cards instead of 75?**
 - **Team #1, how did you feel when you received 75 cards versus 35?**
 - **Team #2, how did you maintain hope to try when you were given less to work with?**
- We can't avoid the weight and pressure of people's ruthlessness and injustice forever. But when our foundation is made of hope in the goodness of God, we can stay strong when the pressure mounts.
- So the next time you feel like Joseph or David, being crushed by the weight of other people's cruelty, remember what David wrote about. **When there is injustice, you can hold on to hope.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

VIDEO | A Clip from "Sticks and Stones" (Jon Jorgenson)

- We've all heard the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But if you've ever been hurt by someone's words, you know that's not quite true.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short [clip](#) (0:28-1:28) from Jon Jorgenson's poem about bullying called "Sticks and Stones." For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- **In this spoken word poem, the artist explains how the words others have hurt him and invites those who bully to wonder about their own hurt and pain. I wonder . . .**
 - Has anyone ever treated you cruelly or unjustly?
 - Have you ever treated anyone else that way?
 - Why do you think bullies do what they do?
 - Have you ever felt like you needed someone to remind you that you're loved? That there's hope?
- Toward the end of this poem, the art says, "Even though there's still a trace of the pain you caused, those scars are hard as armor and so faint that sometimes I can't see them anymore." How is that possible? As an answer, he points to Jesus, who . . .
 - Also experienced the cruelty of people who hated Him.
 - Speaks love and truth when others speak hatred and lies.
 - Has our future in His hands even when we feel hopeless.

HOW TO HOLD ONTO HOPE

- "Holding onto hope" might sound like a good idea, but when you're feeling crushed under the weight of everything that's wrong with the world and with other people, this isn't so easy to do. If holding onto hope is a challenge, here are some things you can do.
 - **FOCUS ON THE TRUTH.** You can hold onto hope by meditating on what's true. Try closing your eyes, sitting still, and reminding yourself what God says is true. Use Bible verses to focus your mind on important truths like, "I was made perfectly and with love by the God of the universe. I was made by the same God that made the stars in the sky and the waters in the sea. I am a unique masterpiece." Try an app like [Abide](#) if you need a little extra help!
 - **TALK IT OUT.** You can hold onto hope by asking a close friend, parent, counselor, or mentor to help you see yourself as God sees you. Sometimes those we're closest with can best help us see the things about us that makes us amazing. You may even want to consider finding a professional you can talk to. Plenty of people have counselors, therapists, and pastors they go to when they need help processing big challenges or emotions. There are even online platforms you can use without needing to leave your house. If you think this would be beneficial for you, talk to your family or ask an adult here to help you.
 - **ASK FOR HELP.** If you are being bullied or abused please tell a trusted adult today. You sometimes need to ask for help from others to find a safe place.
 - **BE CAREFUL WITH SOCIAL MEDIA.** When you're struggling to hold onto hope and struggling with the cruelty of others, the constant exposure to fake "perfection" on social media can affect your self-worth. If you tend to rely too heavily on the approval of others through likes and comments, think about taking a break or creating some new boundaries to help you stay hopeful.

MUSIC | “You Say” (Lauren Daigle)

- Sometimes haters will try to get in your head and strip you of your value, worth, and dreams. Sometimes those haters will be strangers, sometimes they’ll be fake friends, and sometimes they could even be our own family members. When that happens, remember . . .
 - Focus on the truth that God is with you and can be trusted. That’s where you can find hope, no matter what your circumstances are.
 - Focus on the truth of who God says you are. Things like your clothes, your grades, or your current situation don’t define you. What God says about you is the only thing that ultimately matters.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song “You Say” (Lauren Daigle), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*
- When I say “hold onto hope,” that’s not a cliché suggestion to “just look on the bright side.” It’s an invitation to make Jesus and His truth the foundation of your life.
 - For both Joseph and David, hoping in God wasn’t them just being optimistic. It was a choice to hold on tight to what God says is true, even when it was difficult.
 - So the next time you’re struggling to hold up the weight of other people’s cruelty, look at the God who will never leave you and remember, **when there’s injustice, hold on to hope.**

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

When there is injustice,
hold on to hope.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8;
Romans 8:36-39

- **What's your best quality? It's okay to brag!**
- **Be honest — are you someone who tends to brag? Besides bragging, what are some other things pride makes people do?**
- **What are some reasons a person might attract "haters"?**
- **When is it easy for you to brush off someone who's being cruel? When is it not easy?**
- **Between Joseph and his brothers, do you think there are any clear heroes or villains in this story? Why or why not?**
- **What are some of the ways you've seen people be cruel to each other?**
- **Why do you think people treat each other cruelly?**
- **Have you treated anyone cruelly recently? Have you been treated cruelly recently? Talk about it, if you want.**
- **Read Romans 8:38-39. How does Jesus' love help us remain hopeful when we're experiencing cruelty from others? How might Jesus' love motivate us to stop treating each other cruelly?**
- **This week, which do you need to do: stop treating someone cruelly or hold onto hope because of someone else's cruelty? How will you do that?**

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

When there is injustice,
hold on to hope.

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Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8;
Romans 8:36-39

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- **Why do you think people treat each other cruelly?**
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- **This week, which do you need to do: stop treating someone cruelly or hold onto hope because of someone else's cruelty? How will you do that?**

WEEK 2 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

When there is injustice,
hold on to hope.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:17-28; Psalm 138:7-8;
Romans 8:36-39

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Agree or Disagree?

- Welcome back to *Justice for All*, where we're talking about what justice is (and what it isn't). We've got a great conversation ahead of us today, but to start us off, let's talk about who you are (and who you're not).
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Designate one side of the room as the "Agree" side, and the other side of the room as "Disagree." After reading each of the following statements, have students run (or skip, walk, or roll) to the side of the room they think is true of themselves. After each statement, give a few students a chance to share why they chose the side they did.
- I'll read a few statements and you can decide: agree or disagree?
 - **You have an interesting life.** Maybe you're just lucky or maybe you work to make your life interesting!
 - **You are bold.** You're fierce! You're strong! You take risks!
 - **You attract attention.** People seem to like you and want to be around you!
 - **You've paid your dues.** You've worked hard for all the things you've achieved!
 - **You think outside the box.** You don't think like everyone else does! You're comfortable being a little different.
 - **You stand for something.** You know who you are and what matters to you!
- No matter how you responded, these qualities and traits are all great to have, but let's be honest — if you are any of these things, you probably have some haters. Having these qualities can sometimes make others feel . . .

- Jealous.
- Uncomfortable.
- Intimidated.
- Annoyed.
- Threatened.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **What's your best quality? It's okay to brag!**
 - **Be honest – are you someone who tends to brag? Besides bragging, what are some other things pride makes people do?**

STORY | Talk about a time someone was “ruthless” to you.

- We all get into conflict with others once in a while. But sometimes our “haters” can be ruthless.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when someone was ruthless to you. You can keep this story lighthearted by talking about a friendly prank war or some goodnatured teasing between friends, or you can be more vulnerable by talking about a time you really struggled because of someone else's cruelty.
- In both small and big ways, humans can be ruthless to one another.
 - Bullies can be ruthless. Fake friends can be ruthless. Internet trolls can be ruthless. But nothing hurts more than when your own flesh and blood – your family – attacks you.
 - Ruthless behavior isn't something that just happens now in the 21st century. People have been cruel toward one another for a long time. For as long as there have been humans, there has been jealousy and fights for power.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **What are some reasons a person might attract “haters”?**
 - ★ **When is it easy for you to brush off someone who's being cruel? When is it not easy?**

OBJECT LESSON | Tower of Hope

- Have you ever experienced someone's ruthlessness? Have you ever felt like someone (or everyone) was completely against you?

- Maybe you've been hurt by someone in your family. Maybe you've been devastated by something that's been done to you.
- How do you hold on to hope when you've been a victim of ruthless injustice? How do you get past bitterness when everything within you hurts?
- When it feels like people are out to get us, we need a firm foundation to help us withstand the weight and pressure of those challenges.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring a few students or volunteers to the front of the room to construct towers out of [index cards](#) while you teach and the rest of the room watches. Split the students into two teams and give both teams a roll of tape, three cans of canned goods, and some index cards – but here's the trick: give Team #1 75 index cards and give Team #2 only 35 index cards. Let your teams know they'll be competing to build the strongest tower they can in the time you've allotted. If you need a visual of what a strong tower might look like when it's finished, [check this out](#). Let your teams know that when time runs out, their towers must . . .*
 - *Be able to support three canned goods.*
 - *Be at least four feet high.*
 - *Be able to withstand a hairdryer blown from three feet away.*

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

OBJECT LESSON | A Coat of Many Colors

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring back that coat or robe from last week. When you talk about it, put it on or show it off. When the coat is taken from Joseph, take it off or throw it on the ground.*

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:12-24

- Last week, we were introduced to a guy named Joseph. We're going to continue that story today. In case you missed it or forgot, here's what's happened so far:
 - Joseph has eleven brothers, and most of them hate him.
 - That's because their father, Jacob, loves Joseph more than the rest of them, and it's really obvious – Jacob even gives Joseph a special coat and tells him to spy on his brothers for him.
 - But that's not the only reason. God speaks to Joseph in a dream. In the dream, Joseph sees he will one day be in a position of authority, ruling over his brothers. So Joseph brags about it.
 - When Joseph tells his brothers he's going to be in charge of them, they are not happy. Their hatred for him grows and grows, until – well, let's see what happens next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 37:17-24.*
- As Joseph was arriving to where his brothers were working, they saw him coming from a distance. Remember, Joseph's father had given him a bright designer coat that his brothers were jealous of. Everyone in the neighborhood could probably see Joseph coming from a mile away!

- When Joseph's brothers saw him coming their way and remembered how he thought he was so much better than them, they were filled with jealousy and anger.
- In their anger, they made a decision. They didn't just want to kill his dreams. They wanted to kill *him*.
- But luckily for Joseph, Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben, intervened.
 - He said, "We're not going to *kill* Joseph. No murder. But yeah, he needs to go, so let's just throw him in this well out here in the wilderness and leave him there."
 - Reuben secretly planned to go back later, get Joseph out, and take him back to their father. But he couldn't tell his brothers that because otherwise they might not agree to go along with the plan.
- Joseph's coat was torn from his body to send a message: "You're no better than us! You're just an arrogant little boy with dreams!"

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37:24-36

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 37:24-36.*
- Joseph's brothers decided not to kill him. But they didn't think leaving him in a hole was a good idea either. So they took their plan a step further and sold him as a slave, without Reuben's knowledge.
 - They wanted to make sure they didn't have to cover up a death, but in reality selling a human into slavery is also a violent, hateful act.
 - With this sinful and unjust transaction, Joseph's brothers took the situation from bad to worse.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 138:7-8

- We'll learn more about what happened to Joseph next time, but for now I want to introduce you to someone else who experienced cruel and unjust treatment — David.
 - David was once a young shepherd boy who God chose to lead the nation of Israel. The only problem was Israel already had a king named Saul.
 - Nobody hated David more than Saul. He was jealous of David's talent and leadership skills and constantly bullied, threatened, attacked, and even tried to kill David.
- Like Joseph, David's hater wanted to see him destroyed. But here's what David said about it . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 138:7-8.*
- David trusted God would protect him, even when people were out to get him. He faced incredible injustice from someone who wanted to do him harm, but he knew God was with him.

QUESTION | Tower of Hope Debrief

- No one ever wants to experience cruelty at the hands of other people. But when we do face those things, we get to see just how strong our foundation really is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *When the teams' towers are complete, carefully stack the canned goods on top of them. If they're still standing, turn on a [blow dryer](#) and try to knock them over from a distance of three feet. After your tower activity is complete, debrief with your players by asking the following questions.*

- **Did you have what you needed to get the job done?**
- **Team #2, how hopeful did you feel when you realized you'd been given 35 cards instead of 75?**
- **Team #1, how did you feel when you received 75 cards versus 35?**
- **Team #2, how did you maintain hope to try when you were given less to work with?**
- We can't avoid the weight and pressure of people's ruthlessness and injustice forever. But when our foundation is made of hope in the goodness of God, we can stay strong when the pressure mounts.
- So the next time you feel like Joseph or David, being crushed by the weight of other people's cruelty, remember what David wrote about. **When there is injustice, you can hold on to hope.**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - ☆ **Between Joseph and his brothers, do you think there are any clear heroes or villains in this story? Why or why not?**
 - ☆ **What are some of the ways you've seen people be cruel to each other?**
 - **Why do you think people treat each other cruelly?**

VIDEO | A Clip from "Sticks and Stones" (Jon Jorgenson)

- We've all heard the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But if you've ever been hurt by someone's words, you know that's not quite true.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short [clip](#) (0:28-1:28) from Jon Jorgenson's poem about bullying called "Sticks and Stones." For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- **In this spoken word poem, the artist explains how the words others have hurt him and invites those who bully to wonder about their own hurt and pain. I wonder . . .**
 - Has anyone ever treated you cruelly or unjustly?
 - Have you ever treated anyone else that way?
 - Why do you think bullies do what they do?
 - Have you ever felt like you needed someone to remind you that you're loved? That there's hope?
- Toward the end of this poem, the art says, "Even though there's still a trace of the pain you caused, those scars are hard as armor and so faint that sometimes I can't see them anymore." How is that possible? As an answer, he points to Jesus, who . . .

- Also experienced the cruelty of people who hated Him.
- Speaks love and truth when others speak hatred and lies.
- Has our future in His hands even when we feel hopeless.

HOW TO HOLD ONTO HOPE

- “Holding onto hope” might sound like a good idea, but when you’re feeling crushed under the weight of everything that’s wrong with the world and with other people, this isn’t so easy to do. If holding onto hope is a challenge, here are some things you can do.
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MUSIC | “You Say” (Lauren Daigle)

- Sometimes haters will try to get in your head and strip you of your value, worth, and dreams. Sometimes those haters will be strangers, sometimes they’ll be fake friends, and sometimes they could even be our own family members. When that happens, remember . . .
 - Focus on the truth that God is with you and can be trusted. That’s where you can find hope, no matter what your circumstances are.
 - Focus on the truth of who God says you are. Things like your clothes, your grades, or your current situation don’t define you. What God says about you is the only thing that ultimately matters.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song “You Say” (Lauren Daigle), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*

- When I say “hold onto hope,” that’s not a cliché suggestion to “just look on the bright side.” It’s an invitation to make Jesus and His truth the foundation of your life.
 - For both Joseph and David, hoping in God wasn’t them just being optimistic. It was a choice to hold on tight to what God says is true, even when it was difficult.
 - So the next time you’re struggling to hold up the weight of other people’s cruelty, look at the God who will never leave you and remember, **when there’s injustice, hold on to hope.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.*
 - ☆ **Have you treated anyone cruelly recently? Have you been treated cruelly recently? Talk about it, if you want.**
 - **Read Romans 8:38-39. How does Jesus’ love help us remain hopeful when we’re experiencing cruelty from others? How might Jesus’ love motivate us to stop treating each other cruelly?**
 - **This week, which do you need to do: stop treating someone cruelly or hold onto hope because of someone else’s cruelty? How will you do that?**

WEEK 3 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Integrity can withstand injustice.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Two Truths and a Lie

- Welcome back to *Justice for All*, where we're talking about doing what's right when everything is going wrong. Let's kick things off by seeing how good you are at distinguishing between what's right and wrong – or true and false.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Call a few students to the front for an upfront game or divide everyone into small groups. One by one, have each person in the circle say three statements about themselves – two of these statements must be true and one must be a lie. Have the other members of the circle try to guess which statement is the lie. After everyone has had a turn, ask these questions:*
 - **What were some of the facts you shared that no one believed?**
 - **What were some of the most outrageous lies you convinced people to believe?**
 - **Was it hard or easy coming up with your lie?**
 - **When you told your lie, did you feel good, bad, or indifferent?**
 - **Those who got away with your lie, what was the key to your success?**

QUESTION | "Is it ever okay to lie?"

- There's a question that has been debated by humans for . . . well, for as long as there have been humans, probably. **Is it ever okay to lie?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond. Encourage some friendly debate!*

POLL | Have You Ever . . .

- This question is easier to debate when it's not personal, so let's get a little personal and see what happens.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to respond to each of the following questions by raising their hands. If you'd like, stop and ask students to share stories or examples after each question.
- **Have you ever . . .**
 - Told a lie to be nice?
 - Told a lie to be mean?
 - Told a lie to get out of trouble?
 - Gotten away with something because you lied about it?
 - Been accused of lying when you were telling the truth?

STORY | Talk about a time you were unfairly accused of something.

- Whether you raised your hand or not, let's face it — we're all guilty of lying to cover our tracks sometimes.
 - When we lie and get away with it, we usually feel pretty good about ourselves. Or, at least, we feel relieved. But just because we got away with it doesn't mean what we did was right or just.
 - Have you ever been accused of something you definitely didn't do?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were unfairly accused of something you didn't do. This could be a lighthearted story or it could be more vulnerable. Either way, share what happened and then focus on how it felt to be unjustly accused.
- When we're accused of something we didn't do, it's really frustrating.
 - Whether it was a major accusation or something small and not at all important, you might feel angry, or powerless, or afraid, or all of the above.
 - When you're innocent, false accusations are always going to feel unjust — because they are.
- Last week, we talked about how, when we're facing unjust or cruel treatment from other people, it can be hard to keep your head and heart straight.
 - How do you stay positive in tough situations?
 - How do you keep moving forward?
 - How do you set the record straight?
 - And how do you get justice?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

QUESTION | "What is integrity?"

- When we're accused of things we know we didn't do, our integrity is called into question. But **what is integrity?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

OBJECT LESSON | The Rock of Integrity

- Integrity is something you either have or you don't. When you have it, you're like a rock. When you don't, you're kind of like this rotten piece of fruit.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, get a rotten piece of fruit and a rock about the same size. You'll probably also want a tarp. Ask the following questions to get students guessing about where you're going with this. When you talk about dropping the rock and the fruit on the ground, do it! Just make sure you drop them on the tarp.*
 - **How is a rock like a person with integrity?**
 - **How is this fruit like a person without integrity?**
 - **What do you think will happen to the rock if I throw it on the ground?**
 - **What do you think will happen to the fruit?**
 - **Now let's try those first couple of questions again: how is this rock like a person with integrity and how is this fruit like a person without integrity?**
- If you are a person of integrity, it means . . .
 - You're dependable – unchanging and trustworthy no matter the circumstances.
 - You don't fall apart when tough circumstances throw you around. You're not indestructible or anything, but when it comes to your character, it takes a lot to make you crack.
 - You choose what's right and true, no matter who you're with or who's looking.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:1-6

- With that in mind, let's head back to the story of Joseph. So far, here's what's happened . . .
 - Joseph's dad Jacob caused a ton of issues in his family by playing favorites with Joseph.
 - Because of Jacob's favoritism (and the fact that Joseph had a tendency to brag) Joseph's brothers hated him.
 - Eventually, their hatred led them to plot Joseph's murder.
 - Fortunately, they didn't kill him. But they did something just as hateful – they sold him into slavery.
- Let's pick up the story there.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 39:1-6a.*
- Once in Africa, Joseph was sold again to an Egyptian slave master named Potiphar, but God was with Joseph and helped him find success in everything he did.
 - It seems like the arrogance Joseph had when living as the favorite child had been toned down. Difficulty can shake you out of your arrogance pretty quickly.
 - While working as a slave, Joseph held onto hope and kept trusting the promise God once made to him in a dream – that one day Joseph would have a position of power and authority.
- Potiphar saw the favor Joseph had with God and he wanted it, so he made Joseph the business manager of his entire estate. It worked! Potiphar's business grew and things were going great for him. Joseph was holding it down! Until . . .

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:6b-20a

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 39:6b-20a.*
- The Bible apparently wants us to know Joseph had some swag. He was so good-looking that Potiphar's wife caught feelings for him and — well, you heard what happened.
 - Joseph could have been selfish at this moment and taken advantage of the situation.
 - He could've taken vengeance on his slave master Potiphar by disrespecting him and messing with his wife.
 - But Joseph was a man of God and committed to keeping his integrity, so he refused.
- Potiphar's wife lost it when Joseph said no. She was so angry, she tore off Joseph's coat and called for the guards. She told her husband that this "Hebrew slave" — in other words, "this dirty, less-than-human" — had tried to rape her.
- Because her ego was bruised by Joseph's rejection . . .
 - She lied.
 - Joseph was sentenced to prison without a trial.
 - But . . .

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:20b-23

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 39:20b-23.*
- Once again, Joseph was the victim of great injustice. But instead of seeking vengeance or turning away from God, Joseph held onto hope and to his integrity. As a result . . .
 - God was with him.
 - Even the prison guard grew to trust him.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 1:1-3

- This is what it looks like to be a person of integrity. It doesn't mean you'll never encounter difficulty. But when you do, you'll be able to withstand it — and so will your character.
- There's a passage in the book of Psalms that captures the kind of integrity Joseph had and that we should seek to develop too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 1:1-3.*
- Sounds a lot like Joseph, right? He was accused of something he never did and was even punished for it. But through it all, here's what Joseph did . . .
 - He held on to his integrity — his character.
 - He trusted God would let truth win in the end, even if it took time.
 - Instead of focusing on the people who hurt him, he focused on building and maintaining a character that honored God.
- So the next time you're accused of something you didn't do, remember Joseph's example and hold on to your character. Because **integrity can withstand injustice.**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

VIDEO | A Clip of an Interview with Bryan Stevenson

- Being wrongly accused of a crime is flat-out wrong, but it still happens today.
 - Did you know, according to the Equal Justice Initiative led by Bryan Stevenson, one [out of every nine people currently on death row in America are actually innocent?](#) Injustice can happen anywhere – even within our justice systems.
 - Because of this huge injustice, Bryan Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative in order to provide legal aid to people who had been wrongfully convicted.
 - One of the cases Bryan talks about often is the case of Walter McMillion, whose story sounds a lot like Joseph's. He was sentenced to death for the murder of a woman he did not kill. His trial was a sham, his alibi was ignored, and the legal system overlooked the fact that Walter was a man of character and integrity.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:45-2:55) of Bryan Stevenson discussing the resolution of the case against Walter McMillian. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#) As you continue teaching, be aware of the context of your group. It's possible some students or their family members have faced the possibility of criminal charges or know someone who was falsely accused. For others students, their experience with false accusations could be relatively simple in comparison. Keep this dynamic in mind as you continue and focus on the areas you find most appropriate.*
- I don't know who you connect with most in this story.
 - Maybe it's Walter because you know what it's like to be falsely accused.
 - Maybe it's Bryan because you're inspired to stick up for others when they've been treated unjustly.
 - Or maybe it's even one of the people falsely accused Walter because you've been in a situation where you treated someone cruelly or unfairly.
- No matter who you can relate to, this truth applies to all of us: our integrity matters, especially in the face of injustice.

HOW TO DEVELOP INTEGRITY

- Maybe you feel like you're already a person of integrity (most of the time) or maybe you know you're definitely not. Either way, here's how to develop character now so you can withstand injustice later.
 - **CHOOSE JUSTICE PRIVATELY.** Like we said before, "justice" is about choosing what is right and just. You don't have to wait for injustice to happen to choose justice. You can choose to do what's right in the small moments of your everyday life, when no one is looking.
 - **CHOOSE JUSTICE PUBLICLY.** If "justice is love in action," start choosing justice

with your public actions. Find a need or injustice you care about and get to work. Research the history and then write some new history. God is a God of justice and created you to be a person of justice too.

- **PURSUE GOD’S JUSTICE.** When you find an injustice you care about, keep learning and asking questions. And don’t forget to pray for strength along the way because justice doesn’t come easy. But the good news is God’s power is perfected in our weak spots, in the moments we feel like giving up. Ask God to help you stay in the work you’ve decided to dedicate time and energy to.
- **PURSUE GOD’S MERCY:** Sometimes we think mercy is the opposite of justice, but in God’s Kingdom, mercy and justice coexist. When you encounter injustice, try not to see the perpetrators as your enemies. See them as humans who are loved by God. Ask for help seeing them as God sees them. Pray for them and watch how it changes you.
- **STICK WITH IT.** Being a person of integrity in the midst of injustice is a hard and long road, but it’s necessary and so worth it.

MUSIC | “Even When It Hurts” (Hillsong)

- The things we’ve talked about today are big subjects and may feel overwhelming. But don’t worry, that’s normal! When we feel like we’ve hit our limit because we’ve been hurt or experienced injustice, God is right there with us, just like God was right there with Joseph. Through God’s strength, we can face it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song “Even When It Hurts” (Hillsong), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use. While you play the song, give each student a small rock and a permanent marker. Invite them to write something on the rock that will help them remember to focus on their integrity in the face of injustice, and to carry the rock in their pocket throughout the week as a reminder. As they sing or reflect, encourage them to . . .*
 - *Commit to being people of integrity.*
 - *Identify an area of their life where they have not had integrity in the past.*
 - *Ask for strength to trust God in the midst of injustice.*
- Remember, false accusations are always going to feel unjust – because they are.
 - When those moments of injustice happen, we have the opportunity to be good examples to the world by how we choose to respond to injustice.
 - And before they happen, we can become people of integrity with God’s help, knowing and trusting that **integrity can withstand injustice.**

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Integrity can withstand injustice.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17

- **What's the dumbest lie you've ever told?**
- **What do you think – is it ever okay to lie? Defend your position!**
- **Have you ever been accused of lying when you were telling the truth? What was that like?**
- **In your own words, what is "integrity"?**
- **Who is someone you think has integrity? Why do you think so?**
- **Why do you think Joseph refused to give in to temptation? What are some temptations you encounter sometimes?**
- **Share two examples from your life: once when you practiced integrity and once when you didn't.**
- **Read I Peter 3:15-17. What does this passage teach us about integrity?**
- **How does someone develop more integrity?**
- **What's one area of your life where you need to develop more integrity? This week, how will you do that?**

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Integrity can withstand injustice.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17

- **What's the dumbest lie you've ever told?**
- **Have you ever been accused of lying when you were telling the truth? What was that like?**
- **In your own words, what is "integrity"?**
- **Share two examples from your life: once when you practiced integrity and once when you didn't.**
- **Read I Peter 3:15-17. What does this passage teach us about integrity?**
- **What's one area of your life where you need to develop more integrity? This week, how will you do that?**

WEEK 3 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Integrity can withstand injustice.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 1:1-3; I Peter 3:15-17

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Two Truths and a Lie

- Welcome back to *Justice for All*, where we're talking about doing what's right when everything is going wrong. Let's kick things off by seeing how good you are at distinguishing between what's right and wrong – or true and false.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Call a few students to the front for an upfront game or divide everyone into small groups. One by one, have each person in the circle say three statements about themselves – two of these statements must be true and one must be a lie. Have the other members of the circle try to guess which statement is the lie. After everyone has had a turn, ask these questions:*
 - **What were some of the facts you shared that no one believed?**
 - **What were some of the most outrageous lies you convinced people to believe?**
 - **Was it hard or easy coming up with your lie?**
 - **When you told your lie, did you feel good, bad, or indifferent?**
 - **Those who got away with your lie, what was the key to your success?**

QUESTION | "Is it ever okay to lie?"

- There's a question that has been debated by humans for . . . well, for as long as there have been humans, probably. **Is it ever okay to lie?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond. Encourage some friendly debate!*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **What's the dumbest lie you've ever told?**
 - ★ **What do you think – is it ever okay to lie? Defend your position!**
 - **Have you ever been accused of lying when you were telling the truth? What was that like?**

POLL | Have You Ever . . .

- This question is easier to debate when it's not personal, so let's get a little personal and see what happens.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to respond to each of the following questions by raising their hands. If you'd like, stop and ask students to share stories or examples after each question.
- **Have you ever . . .**
 - **Told a lie to be nice?**
 - **Told a lie to be mean?**
 - **Told a lie to get out of trouble?**
 - **Gotten away with something because you lied about it?**
 - **Been accused of lying when you were telling the truth?**

STORY | Talk about a time you were unfairly accused of something.

- Whether you raised your hand or not, let's face it – we're all guilty of lying to cover our tracks sometimes.
 - When we lie and get away with it, we usually feel pretty good about ourselves. Or, at least, we feel relieved. But just because we got away with it doesn't mean what we did was right or just.
 - Have you ever been accused of something you definitely didn't do?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were unfairly accused of something you didn't do. This could be a lighthearted story or it could be more vulnerable. Either way, share what happened and then focus on how it felt to be unjustly accused.
- When we're accused of something we didn't do, it's really frustrating.
 - Whether it was a major accusation or something small and not at all important, you might feel angry, or powerless, or afraid, or all of the above.
 - When you're innocent, false accusations are always going to feel unjust – because they are.
- Last week, we talked about how, when we're facing unjust or cruel treatment from other people, it can be hard to keep your head and heart straight.

- How do you stay positive in tough situations?
- How do you keep moving forward?
- How do you set the record straight?
- And how do you get justice?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

QUESTION | “What is integrity?”

- When we’re accused of things we know we didn’t do, our integrity is called into question. But **what is integrity?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

OBJECT LESSON | The Rock of Integrity

- Integrity is something you either have or you don’t. When you have it, you’re like a rock. When you don’t, you’re kind of like this rotten piece of fruit.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, get a rotten piece of fruit and a rock about the same size. You’ll probably also want a [tarp](#). Ask the following questions to get students guessing about where you’re going with this. When you talk about dropping the rock and the fruit on the ground, do it! Just make sure you drop them on the tarp.
 - **How is a rock like a person with integrity?**
 - **How is this fruit like a person without integrity?**
 - **What do you think will happen to the rock if I throw it on the ground?**
 - **What do you think will happen to the fruit?**
 - **Now let’s try those first couple of questions again: how is this rock like a person with integrity and how is this fruit like a person without integrity?**
- If you are a person of integrity, it means . . .
 - You’re dependable – unchanging and trustworthy no matter the circumstances.
 - You don’t fall apart when tough circumstances throw you around. You’re not indestructible or anything, but when it comes to your character, it takes a lot to make you crack.
 - You choose what’s right and true, no matter who you’re with or who’s looking.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:1-6

- With that in mind, let’s head back to the story of Joseph. So far, here’s what’s happened . . .
 - Joseph’s dad Jacob caused a ton of issues in his family by playing favorites with Joseph.
 - Because of Jacob’s favoritism (and the fact that Joseph had a tendency to brag) Joseph’s brothers hated him.
 - Eventually, their hatred led them to plot Joseph’s murder.
 - Fortunately, they didn’t kill him. But they did something just as hateful – they sold him into slavery.

- Let's pick up the story there.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 39:1-6a.*
- Once in Africa, Joseph was sold again to an Egyptian slave master named Potiphar, but God was with Joseph and helped him find success in everything he did.
 - It seems like the arrogance Joseph had when living as the favorite child had been toned down. Difficulty can shake you out of your arrogance pretty quickly.
 - While working as a slave, Joseph held onto hope and kept trusting the promise God once made to him in a dream – that one day Joseph would have a position of power and authority.
- Potiphar saw the favor Joseph had with God and he wanted it, so he made Joseph the business manager of his entire estate. It worked! Potiphar's business grew and things were going great for him. Joseph was holding it down! Until . . .

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:6b-20a

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 39:6b-20a.*
- The Bible apparently wants us to know Joseph had some swag. He was so good-looking that Potiphar's wife caught feelings for him and – well, you heard what happened.
 - Joseph could have been selfish at this moment and taken advantage of the situation.
 - He could've taken vengeance on his slave master Potiphar by disrespecting him and messing with his wife.
 - But Joseph was a man of God and committed to keeping his integrity, so he refused.
- Potiphar's wife lost it when Joseph said no. She was so angry, she tore off Joseph's coat and called for the guards. She told her husband that this "Hebrew slave" – in other words, "this dirty, less-than-human" – had tried to rape her.
- Because her ego was bruised by Joseph's rejection . . .
 - She lied.
 - Joseph was sentenced to prison without a trial.
 - But . . .

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:20b-23

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 39:20b-23.*
- Once again, Joseph was the victim of great injustice. But instead of seeking vengeance or turning away from God, Joseph held onto hope and to his integrity. As a result . . .
 - God was with him.
 - Even the prison guard grew to trust him.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 1:1-3

- This is what it looks like to be a person of integrity. It doesn't mean you'll never encounter difficulty. But when you do, you'll be able to withstand it – and so will your character.
- There's a passage in the book of Psalms that captures the kind of integrity Joseph had and that we should seek to develop too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 1:1-3.*

- Sounds a lot like Joseph, right? He was accused of something he never did and was even punished for it. But through it all, here's what Joseph did . . .
 - He held on to his integrity – his character.
 - He trusted God would let truth win in the end, even if it took time.
 - Instead of focusing on the people who hurt him, he focused on building and maintaining a character that honored God.
- So the next time you're accused of something you didn't do, remember Joseph's example and hold on to your character. Because **integrity can withstand injustice**.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - ☆ **Who is someone you think has integrity? Why do you think so?**
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- Being wrongly accused of a crime is flat-out wrong, but it still happens today.
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- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:45-2:55) of Bryan Stevenson discussing the resolution of the case against Walter McMillian. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#) As you continue teaching, be aware of the context of your group. It's possible some students or their family members have faced the possibility of criminal charges or know someone who was falsely accused. For others students, their experience with false accusations could be relatively simple in comparison. Keep this dynamic in mind as you continue and focus on the areas you find most appropriate.
- I don't know who you connect with most in this story.

- Maybe it's Walter because you know what it's like to be falsely accused.
- Maybe it's Bryan because you're inspired to stick up for others when they've been treated unjustly.
- Or maybe it's even one of the people falsely accused Walter because you've been in a situation where you treated someone cruelly or unfairly.
- No matter who you can relate to, this truth applies to all of us: our integrity matters, especially in the face of injustice.

HOW TO DEVELOP INTEGRITY

- Maybe you feel like you're already a person of integrity (most of the time) or maybe you know you're definitely not. Either way, here's how to develop character now so you can withstand injustice later.
 - **CHOOSE JUSTICE PRIVATELY.** Like we said before, "justice" is about choosing what is right and just. You don't have to wait for injustice to happen to choose justice. You can choose to do what's right in the small moments of your everyday life, when no one is looking.
 - **CHOOSE JUSTICE PUBLICLY.** If "justice is love in action," start choosing justice with your public actions. Find a need or injustice you care about and get to work. Research the history and then write some new history. God is a God of justice and created you to be a person of justice too.
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 - **STICK WITH IT.** Being a person of integrity in the midst of injustice is a hard and long road, but it's necessary and so worth it.

MUSIC | "Even When It Hurts" (Hillsong)

- The things we've talked about today are big subjects and may feel overwhelming. But don't worry, that's normal! When we feel like we've hit our limit because we've been hurt or experienced injustice, God is right there with us, just like God was right there with Joseph. Through God's strength, we can face it.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song “Even When It Hurts” (Hillsong), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use. While you play the song, give each student a small rock and a permanent marker. Invite them to write something on the rock that will help them remember to focus on their integrity in the face of injustice, and to carry the rock in their pocket throughout the week as a reminder. As they sing or reflect, encourage them to . . .
 - Commit to being people of integrity.
 - Identify an area of their life where they have not had integrity in the past.
 - Ask for strength to trust God in the midst of injustice.
- Remember, false accusations are always going to feel unjust – because they are.
 - When those moments of injustice happen, we have the opportunity to be good examples to the world by how we choose to respond to injustice.
 - And before they happen, we can become people of integrity with God’s help, knowing and trusting that **integrity can withstand injustice.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.
 - **Read I Peter 3:15-17. What does this passage teach us about integrity?**
 - ☆ **How does someone develop more integrity?**
 - **What’s one area of your life where you need to develop more integrity? This week, how will you do that?**

WEEK 4 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

God's justice restores what is broken.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 45:1-8, 50:15-20; Luke 6:27-38;
Romans 12:17-21

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Forgiveness Balloons

- Welcome to our final week of *Justice for All*, where we've been talking about doing what's right, even when other people don't.
- We've got some big things to talk about today, but before we get there, let's keep it simple: when you do something wrong, you should probably say, "I'm sorry." And when someone tells you they're sorry, you should probably say . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need [balloons](#) in two different colors and maybe some permanent markers. Divide your group into two roughly equal teams. Give every person one balloon and split the colors up evenly by team. Have everyone inflate their balloons. If you'd like, you can also have them write something on their balloons they might have to ask forgiveness for. (Just keep your eyes open for inappropriate content.) When all the balloons are inflated, pass out one thumbtack to each person and have them toss their balloons into the center of the room. The goal is to pop all of the other team's balloons by sitting or stepping on them. Each time someone pops a balloon, they must yell, "I forgive you!" The first team to forgive all their opponent's grievances by popping all their balloons wins.*
- Of course, forgiveness isn't as simple as popping a balloon, but there are some similarities.
 - Just like it took some time to pop all of those balloons, forgiveness is a process too. It's a choice you have to make over and over, every day, until every balloon is gone and you're free of hurt.

- The journey of forgiveness isn't always an orderly process. Sometimes you end up running around screaming. Sometimes you think you're done, but then you realize there are still more balloons to pop that you hadn't seen before.
- But when do manage to forgiveness, forgiveness is the thing that finally lets all the air out of your anger and hurt.

STORY | Talk about a time someone forgave you.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were in the wrong. This could be a funny story or a vulnerable one. If you're sharing a more vulnerable story, talk about why their forgiveness mattered to you.*
- Can you think of anyone you're holding a grudge against right now? Or maybe someone you don't talk to anymore because a disagreement or hurt ruined the relationship? Look, sometimes it is the right call to part ways with someone when your relationship just isn't healthy. But if we ended relationships every time someone hurt us . . . well, we'd eventually end up all alone.
- But forgiveness is tricky. Everyone says you need to forgive, but no one tells you how to forgive or why you should.
 - So why should we forgive people when they've hurt us?
 - Why can't we take revenge instead?
 - What about when they've *really* hurt us?
 - And when we choose not to forgive, what might we be missing out on?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 45:1-2

- For the last few weeks, we've been covering the story of Joseph. Most of the story so far has been pretty fast-paced. In Scripture, a lot happens in not-a-lot of chapters. But as we pick up Joseph's story for the last time, we've got a lot of ground to cover.
- Here's what's happened so far.
 - Joseph's dad Jacob caused a ton of issues in his family by playing favorites with Joseph.
 - Because of Jacob's favoritism (and the fact that Joseph had a tendency to brag) Joseph's brothers hated him.
 - One of the things Joseph bragged about was a dream he had. In the dream, God spoke to him through a vision and said Joseph would one day find himself in a position of authority, with everyone (including his own family members) bowing down to him.
 - This vision was the last straw for Joseph's brothers. They didn't kill him, but they did something just as hateful — they sold him into slavery.
 - While in slavery, Joseph hung onto his hope and his integrity and God blessed him for it.

- Then Joseph was falsely accused of a crime and thrown into prison. But even in prison, Joseph's character and trust in God won him the trust of his prison guard.
- Let's pick up the story from there.
 - Joseph spent twelve whole years in jail. During that time, Pharaoh (ruler of Egypt) took notice of Joseph, released him from prison, and gave him a position of power in the nation.
 - A lot happened in that time that's really interesting, so read it sometime. But the point is Joseph went from being a slave to being second in command over all of Egypt.
 - Joseph is now thirty years old, and has not seen or heard from his family in thirteen years — not since his brothers sold him into slavery.
 - Joseph doesn't know it, but his brothers and father are still living nearby in a nearby country, and because of a famine, are starving to death. Their long-lost brother Joseph is not on their minds at all. As far as they know, he's dead.
 - Joseph's brothers hear there's grain in Egypt, so they set out on a journey to go get some. But here's what they don't know: because Joseph is now the Governor of Egypt, he's in charge of handing out the food. If you're starving to death, the last person you want in charge of your food supply is someone you once tried to murder.
- When the brothers arrive to buy food, they stand before Joseph and don't even recognize him — but Joseph definitely recognizes them. As Joseph flashes back to the trauma his brothers once caused him, let's try to get a sense of how Joseph dealt with his past suddenly resurfacing.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 45:1-2.*
- Joseph was in pain — deep, deep pain. It makes sense, right? He sustained so much trauma at the hands of his brothers. He was hated, jumped, nearly murdered, abandoned, and then sold into slavery.
 - This kind of pain is not the kind of thing that suddenly goes away. It can't be "popped" with a simple "I forgive you." When you've been hurt as deeply as Joseph had been, it will always take time for healing to come.
 - This story will have a happy ending, but to really understand how miraculous that ending is going to be, you must understand how deep and traumatic Joseph's pain was.
- Joseph couldn't stand the pain any longer. He broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians outside could hear him and word of this breakdown quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 45:3-8

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 45:3-8.*
- As Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, we see him do something remarkable. After all the hurt and trauma he sustained . . .
 - Joseph reaches out in love to his family.
 - He forgives when he has every reason not to forgive. Rather than hanging onto bitterness, Joseph lets his pain resolve.

- He sees God was working in and through him all along. He says, “It was God who brought me here, not you!” Because God had given him favor with the rulers of Egypt, Joseph was now in a position to help not just Egypt, but his own family too.
- Rather than seeking vengeance, he vows to make sure his family is safe and well-fed. He even invites them to move to Egypt to be near him.
- Then Joseph gives his brothers a chance to redeem themselves. When he asks his brothers to go home and come back with his baby brother and dad, Joseph knows they may not take him up on that offer – but he’s letting them know he trusts them enough to let them go.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 50:15-18

- Joseph’s brothers honor Joseph’s request and get his whole family to Egypt without a fight. The whole family live safely in Egypt for seventeen long years. But when their father Jacob dies, Joseph’s brothers become terrified Joseph is going to come after them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 50:15-18.*
- Did Jacob *really* give his sons that message for Joseph before he died, or were they just making up a story to protect themselves? Scripture doesn’t say, but it doesn’t really matter if they were still lying or not.
 - Joseph didn’t forgive his brothers because they deserved it. He forgave them because he was tired of the brokenness.
 - Joseph wanted to see restoration, peace, and wholeness, so he decided to help create it through forgiveness.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 50:19–20

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 50:19-20*
- Joseph closes this painful story by declaring he wasn’t anyone’s judge and that God would ultimately balance the scales of justice.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 6:27-38

- Long after Joseph lived, Jesus arrived on the scene with a vision of God’s justice that would have been familiar to Joseph.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 6:27-38.*
- Jesus’ answer to being wronged is the reminder to love your enemies. Instead of hating them, pray for them. Instead of taking revenge, pray they turn from their wicked ways and receive God’s forgiveness.
- Joseph spent a long time separated from his family because of the pain they caused him.
 - When they finally met again after lots of years (and lots of pain), he had a choice – to take revenge or give forgiveness.
 - Joseph knew forgiving his brothers wouldn’t erase what they had done to him, but it would begin the healing process for him and his family too.

- Joseph's story is a beautiful example of God's justice. It's the kind of justice Jesus preached and modeled too. It's not justice punishes out of revenge. It's justice that seeks to **restore what was broken**.

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

VIDEO | A Clip from the TED Talk, "The Real Risk of Forgiveness" (Sarah Montana)

- A young woman named Sarah Montana recently gave a TED Talk sharing a very difficult story. Her brother and mother were murdered by a boy their family was trying to help.
 - In her talk, Sarah shares how one of the ways she initially coped with her anger at her family's killer was to stop seeing him as a human and to see him only as an enemy instead.
 - But Sarah eventually realized her bitterness wasn't accomplishing anything useful. Instead, it was only causing her more hurt.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (12:34-13:28) from the TED Talk, "[The Real Risk of Forgiveness – and Why It's Worth It](#)," where Sarah Montana explains forgiving her family's killer. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

- When we first began this series, we talked about what justice is (and isn't). We said God's justice is not . . .
 - **PUNISHMENT:** It isn't just the thing that happens to people when they're caught doing something wrong.
 - **REVENGE:** It's not the same thing as getting revenge against someone who hurt us.
 - **A TREND:** It's not a term we can throw around only when it's convenient or interesting or trendy.
- God's justice is much more beautiful (and much more difficult) than the world's definition of justice. God's justice restores. It's about . . .
 - **REPENTANCE:** Justice calls the people who have done harm to change their ways, but it also gives them an opportunity to do so – just like Joseph did for his brothers.
 - **RECONCILIATION:** Because justice is about making wrong things right, our hope should always be for our relationships with each other to be healed and made whole. Joseph and his family reconciled, but that's not always possible. When we've hurt someone, we can't force them to want to be in a relationship with us again. And when someone refuses to stop hurting us, we can't continue to put ourselves in harm's way. It's okay if reconciliation isn't always possible.

- **RESTORATION:** Even when a relationship can't be reconciled justice always seeks to see people healed. Joseph and his brothers had a lot of healing to do, but Joseph seemed to understand that restoration (like forgiveness) is sometimes a long process. God's vision of justice isn't about quickly moving on or ignoring the harm people cause. God's justice doesn't ignore the things that are broken. It works to heal them instead.
- If you need a more perfect picture of restorative justice than what Joseph's family can give us, look to Jesus. The gospel of Jesus is justice in action because . . .
 - **God invites us to repentance.** We've done harm to ourselves, others, and God, but we're invited to change.
 - **Jesus reconciles us to God.** We're so loved by our Creator that, instead of holding a grudge against us, Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could enter into a loving, eternal, unbroken relationship with God.
 - **God gives us restoration.** The wages of sin is death, but Jesus offers us new life – not just in eternity, but here and now. Jesus came to restore everything that was broken.
- We can't take God out of the equation of justice. It's only through God that we can have a perspective that allows us to move past outrage and pain and into love and forgiveness.

RESPONSE | A Dream for Justice

- Remember that dream Joseph once had? The one he used to make his brothers jealous? Well, it turns out that dream come true, but not like Joseph expected it to.
 - God never gave Joseph that dream to make him feel superior to his brothers. God gave him his position of authority so he could rescue them.
 - God's dream for Joseph wasn't one of power and control, but one of love and justice.
- So what dream do you think God might be giving you? How can you join God in restoring what is broken?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you've been using the backdrop recommended in the Room Design suggestion for this series, it's time to use it! Invite students to the front to write a prayer for restoration on the board. Let them know they can pray for justice in their own lives, on behalf of a friend, or for a big injustice happening in the world.*
- Whether you see yourself as someone who needs to forgive or someone who needs to be forgiven, know you are loved and that justice is available to you – not justice that seeks revenge or punishment, but justice that restores.
 - God loved Joseph and God loved Joseph's brothers. God even loved Potiphar, Potiphar's wife, and everyone else who caused Joseph harm.
 - When we think justice is all about revenge, loving people we want to hate might not seem like justice at all. But God's justice isn't like the world's justice.
 - God's just justice is available for all of us, no matter how awful the situation, because **God's justice restores what is broken** – and that's us. Jesus came to bring justice for all.

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

God's justice restores what is broken.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 45:1-8, 50:15-20; Luke 6:27-38;
Romans 12:17-21

- **What's the weirdest reason you've ever had to ask someone for forgiveness?**
- **Who is the most forgiving person you know? Why do you say that?**
- **How would you define "forgiveness?"**
- **When is it most difficult for you to forgive someone?**
- **Do you think forgiveness is always necessary? Why or why not?**
- **If you were in Joseph's shoes, how would you have responded to your family?**
- **How is God's version of justice different from revenge?**
- **Read Romans 12:17-21. Which part of this passage is most difficult for you to follow? Why?**
- **Is there a situation in your life right now that feels broken and needs to be restored? Tell us about it.**
- **This week, which do you need to do: ask someone for forgiveness or take a step toward forgiving someone? How will you do that?**

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone that you desperately wanted revenge? When we're treated cruelly or unfairly, it's natural to want justice. But what does "justice" really mean? Is it only about handing out consequences and punishment to the people who have wronged us? Or could it be about something more? How do we balance forgiveness and grace with truth and consequences? There's someone in the Old Testament of the Bible whose life has a lot to teach us about justice. In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that **justice is love in action** and that, when we're wronged by others, we can **hold on to hope**, trust that **integrity can withstand injustice**, and learn to practice justice that **restores what's broken**.

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- **What's the weirdest reason you've ever had to ask someone for forgiveness?**
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- **Read Romans 12:17-21. Which part of this passage is most difficult for you to follow? Why?**
- **This week, which do you need to do: ask someone for forgiveness or take a step toward forgiving someone? How will you do that?**

WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

God's justice restores what is broken.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 45:1-8, 50:15-20; Luke 6:27-38;
Romans 12:17-21

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Forgiveness Balloons

- Welcome to our final week of *Justice for All*, where we've been talking about doing what's right, even when other people don't.
- We've got some big things to talk about today, but before we get there, let's keep it simple: when you do something wrong, you should probably say, "I'm sorry." And when someone tells you they're sorry, you should probably say . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need [balloons](#) in two different colors and maybe some permanent markers. Divide your group into two roughly equal teams. Give every person one balloon and split the colors up evenly by team. Have everyone inflate their balloons. If you'd like, you can also have them write something on their balloons they might have to ask forgiveness for. (Just keep your eyes open for inappropriate content.) When all the balloons are inflated, pass out one thumbtack to each person and have them toss their balloons into the center of the room. The goal is to pop all of the other team's balloons by sitting or stepping on them. Each time someone pops a balloon, they must yell, "I forgive you!" The first team to forgive all their opponent's grievances by popping all their balloons wins.*
- Of course, forgiveness isn't as simple as popping a balloon, but there are some similarities.
 - Just like it took some time to pop all of those balloons, forgiveness is a process too. It's a choice you have to make over and over, every day, until every balloon is gone and you're free of hurt.

- The journey of forgiveness isn't always an orderly process. Sometimes you end up running around screaming. Sometimes you think you're done, but then you realize there are still more balloons to pop that you hadn't seen before.
- But when you do manage to find forgiveness, forgiveness is the thing that finally lets all the air out of your anger and hurt.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **What's the weirdest reason you've ever had to ask someone for forgiveness?**
 - ☆ **Who is the most forgiving person you know? Why do you say that?**
 - **How would you define "forgiveness?"**

STORY | Talk about a time someone forgave you.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were in the wrong. This could be a funny story or a vulnerable one. If you're sharing a more vulnerable story, talk about why their forgiveness mattered to you.
- Can you think of anyone you're holding a grudge against right now? Or maybe someone you don't talk to anymore because a disagreement or hurt ruined the relationship? Look, sometimes it is the right call to part ways with someone when your relationship just isn't healthy. But if we ended relationships every time someone hurt us . . . well, we'd eventually end up all alone.
- But forgiveness is tricky. Everyone says you need to forgive, but no one tells you how to forgive or why you should.
 - So why should we forgive people when they've hurt us?
 - Why can't we take revenge instead?
 - What about when they've *really* hurt us?
 - And when we choose not to forgive, what might we be missing out on?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 45:1-2

- For the last few weeks, we've been covering the story of Joseph. Most of the story so far has been pretty fast-paced. In Scripture, a lot happens in not-a-lot of chapters. But as we pick up Joseph's story for the last time, we've got a lot of ground to cover.
- Here's what's happened so far.
 - Joseph's dad Jacob caused a ton of issues in his family by playing favorites with Joseph.
 - Because of Jacob's favoritism (and the fact that Joseph had a tendency to brag) Joseph's brothers hated him.

- One of the things Joseph bragged about was a dream he had. In the dream, God spoke to him through a vision and said Joseph would one day find himself in a position of authority, with everyone (including his own family members) bowing down to him.
- This vision was the last straw for Joseph's brothers. They didn't kill him, but they did something just as hateful – they sold him into slavery.
- While in slavery, Joseph hung onto his hope and his integrity and God blessed him for it.
- Then Joseph was falsely accused of a crime and thrown into prison. But even in prison, Joseph's character and trust in God won him the trust of his prison guard.
- Let's pick up the story from there.
 - Joseph spent twelve whole years in jail. During that time, Pharaoh (ruler of Egypt) took notice of Joseph, released him from prison, and gave him a position of power in the nation.
 - A lot happened in that time that's really interesting, so read it sometime. But the point is Joseph went from being a slave to being second in command over all of Egypt.
 - Joseph is now thirty years old, and has not seen or heard from his family in thirteen years – not since his brothers sold him into slavery.
 - Joseph doesn't know it, but his brothers and father are still living nearby in a nearby country, and because of a famine, are starving to death. Their long-lost brother Joseph is not on their minds at all. As far as they know, he's dead.
 - Joseph's brothers hear there's grain in Egypt, so they set out on a journey to go get some. But here's what they don't know: because Joseph is now the Governor of Egypt, he's in charge of handing out the food. If you're starving to death, the last person you want in charge of your food supply is someone you once tried to murder.
- When the brothers arrive to buy food, they stand before Joseph and don't even recognize him – but Joseph definitely recognizes them. As Joseph flashes back to the trauma his brothers once caused him, let's try to get a sense of how Joseph dealt with his past suddenly resurfacing.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Genesis 45:1-2.
- Joseph was in pain – deep, deep pain. It makes sense, right? He sustained so much trauma at the hands of his brothers. He was hated, jumped, nearly murdered, abandoned, and then sold into slavery.
 - This kind of pain is not the kind of thing that suddenly goes away. It can't be "popped" with a simple "I forgive you." When you've been hurt as deeply as Joseph had been, it will always take time for healing to come.
 - This story will have a happy ending, but to really understand how miraculous that ending is going to be, you must understand how deep and traumatic Joseph's pain was.
- Joseph couldn't stand the pain any longer. He broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians outside could hear him and word of this breakdown quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 45:3-8

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 45:3-8.*
- As Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, we see him do something remarkable. After all the hurt and trauma he sustained . . .
 - Joseph reaches out in love to his family.
 - He forgives when he has every reason not to forgive. Rather than hanging onto bitterness, Joseph lets his pain resolve.
 - He sees God was working in and through him all along. He says, “It was God who brought me here, not you!” Because God had given him favor with the rulers of Egypt, Joseph was now in a position to help not just Egypt, but his own family too.
 - Rather than seeking vengeance, he vows to make sure his family is safe and well-fed. He even invites them to move to Egypt to be near him.
 - Then Joseph gives his brothers a chance to redeem themselves. When he asks his brothers to go home and come back with his baby brother and dad, Joseph knows they may not take him up on that offer – but he’s letting them know he trusts them enough to let them go.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 50:15-18

- Joseph’s brothers honor Joseph’s request and get his whole family to Egypt without a fight. The whole family live safely in Egypt for seventeen long years. But when their father Jacob dies, Joseph’s brothers become terrified Joseph is going to come after them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 50:15-18.*
- Did Jacob *really* give his sons that message for Joseph before he died, or were they just making up a story to protect themselves? Scripture doesn’t say, but it doesn’t really matter if they were still lying or not.
 - Joseph didn’t forgive his brothers because they deserved it. He forgave them because he was tired of the brokenness.
 - Joseph wanted to see restoration, peace, and wholeness, so he decided to help create it through forgiveness.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 50:19–20

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 50:19-20*
- Joseph closes this painful story by declaring he wasn’t anyone’s judge and that God would ultimately balance the scales of justice.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 6:27-38

- Long after Joseph lived, Jesus arrived on the scene with a vision of God’s justice that would have been familiar to Joseph.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 6:27-38.*
- Jesus’ answer to being wronged is the reminder to love your enemies. Instead of hating them, pray for them. Instead of taking revenge, pray they turn from their wicked ways and receive God’s forgiveness.

- Joseph spent a long time separated from his family because of the pain they caused him.
 - When they finally met again after lots of years (and lots of pain), he had a choice — to take revenge or give forgiveness.
 - Joseph knew forgiving his brothers wouldn't erase what they had done to him, but it would begin the healing process for him and his family too.
- Joseph's story is a beautiful example of God's justice. It's the kind of justice Jesus preached and modeled too. It's not justice punishes out of revenge. It's justice that seeks to **restore what was broken**.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - ★ **When is it most difficult for you to forgive someone?**
 - ★ **Do you think forgiveness is always necessary? Why or why not?**
 - **If you were in Joseph's shoes, how would you have responded to your family?**
 - **How is God's version of justice different from revenge?**

VIDEO | A Clip from the TED Talk, "The Real Risk of Forgiveness" (Sarah Montana)

- A young woman named Sarah Montana recently gave a TED Talk sharing a very difficult story. Her brother and mother were murdered by a boy their family was trying to help.
 - In her talk, Sarah shares how one of the ways she initially coped with her anger at her family's killer was to stop seeing him as a human and to see him only as an enemy instead.
 - But Sarah eventually realized her bitterness wasn't accomplishing anything useful. Instead, it was only causing her more hurt.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip (12:34-13:28) from the TED Talk, "[The Real Risk of Forgiveness – and Why It's Worth It](#)," where Sarah Montana explains forgiving her family's killer. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

- When we first began this series, we talked about what justice is (and isn't). We said God's justice is not . . .
 - **PUNISHMENT:** It isn't just the thing that happens to people when they're caught doing something wrong.
 - **REVENGE:** It's not the same thing as getting revenge against someone who hurt us.
 - **A TREND:** It's not a term we can throw around only when it's convenient or interesting or trendy.

- God’s justice is much more beautiful (and much more difficult) than the world’s definition of justice. God’s justice restores. It’s about . . .
 - **REPENTANCE:** Justice calls the people who have done harm to change their ways, but it also gives them an opportunity to do so — just like Joseph did for his brothers.
 - **RECONCILIATION:** Because justice is about making wrong things right, our hope should always be for our relationships with each other to be healed and made whole. Joseph and his family reconciled, but that’s not always possible. When we’ve hurt someone, we can’t force them to want to be in a relationship with us again. And when someone refuses to stop hurting us, we can’t continue to put ourselves in harm’s way. It’s okay if reconciliation isn’t always possible.
 - **RESTORATION:** Even when a relationship can’t be reconciled justice always seeks to see people healed. Joseph and his brothers had a lot of healing to do, but Joseph seemed to understand that restoration (like forgiveness) is sometimes a long process. God’s vision of justice isn’t about quickly moving on or ignoring the harm people cause. God’s justice doesn’t ignore the things that are broken. It works to heal them instead.
- If you need a more perfect picture of restorative justice than what Joseph’s family can give us, look to Jesus. The gospel of Jesus is justice in action because . . .
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- We can’t take God out of the equation of justice. It’s only through God that we can have a perspective that allows us to move past outrage and pain and into love and forgiveness.

RESPONSE | A Dream for Justice

- Remember that dream Joseph once had? The one he used to make his brothers jealous? Well, it turns out that dream come true, but not like Joseph expected it to.
 - God never gave Joseph that dream to make him feel superior to his brothers. God gave him his position of authority so he could rescue them.
 - God’s dream for Joseph wasn’t one of power and control, but one of love and justice.
- So what dream do you think God might be giving you? How can you join God in restoring what is broken?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you’ve been using the backdrop recommended in the Room Design suggestion for this series, it’s time to use it! Invite students to the front to write a prayer for restoration on the board. Let them know they can pray for justice in their own lives, on behalf of a friend, or for a big injustice happening in the world.*

- Whether you see yourself as someone who needs to forgive or someone who needs to be forgiven, know you are loved and that justice is available to you – not justice that seeks revenge or punishment, but justice that restores.
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 - When we think justice is all about revenge, loving people we want to hate might not seem like justice at all. But God’s justice isn’t like the world’s justice.
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DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **Read Romans 12:17-21. Which part of this passage is most difficult for you to follow? Why?**
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 - **This week, which do you need to do: ask someone for forgiveness or take a step toward forgiving someone? How will you do that?**



ONE-MINUTE SERMONS

After you teach each week, we recommend **filming a video of yourself re-teaching your message in one minute or less**. Then post it on social media! We've written the beginnings of a script for you each week, and we've also filmed complete [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) for you too, in partnership with [Rescue a Generation](#). Make your own or post ours — whatever you want!

WEEK 1

Have you ever wanted to get even with someone who hurt *you*? I mean, they hurt you, so it's only fair if they experience some pain in return, right? I've get it. I've been there. But there's this saying, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." It's a reminder that, when we're all trying to get revenge, the cycle of pain never ends. But what's the alternative? How do we balance forgiving others with standing up for ourselves? And is it possible that "getting justice" is about more than just punishing people who've hurt us? There's a guy named Joseph, who you can read about in the Old Testament of the Bible. Like all of us, I'm sure, Joseph once had to deal with some pretty major hurt inflicted by his own family. Check out his story, because it reveals something important, and it's this: justice isn't just about revenge. **Justice is love in action.**

WEEK 2

Have you ever met someone who was way too cheerful? Like, annoyingly optimistic? The kind of person who, no matter what is going on, will tell you to "look on the bright side," or "hope for the best," or "turn that frown upside down"? Ugh. I mean, sure, sometimes we all need an attitude adjustment, but when life gets really hard, a happy little cliché isn't going to fix things. Whether it's a crisis or tragedy in your life, a friend's life, or in the world, there are plenty of reasons for us to feel hopeless sometimes. There's a guy named Joseph in the Bible who felt this too. His brothers betrayed him, left him for dead, and sold into slavery — a pretty unjust and hopeless situation. But in that moment, Joseph didn't just "look on the bright side." He put his hope in the God he trusted would never leave him. And like Joseph, when there's injustice, we too can **hold on to hope.**

WEEK 3

Have you ever been accused of something you definitely didn't do? Whether it was a major accusation or something small and not at all important, it's frustrating, right? You might feel angry, or powerless, or afraid, or all of the above. When you're innocent, false accusations are always going to feel unjust — because they are. In the Bible, we can find the story of a guy named Joseph, who faced a similar challenge. He was accused of something he never did and was even punished for it. But through it all, here's what Joseph did: he held on to his integrity — his character. He trusted God would let truth win in the end, even if it took time. So the next time you're accused of something you didn't do, remember Joseph's example. Instead of focusing on the people who've hurt you, focus on building and maintaining a character that honors God. Because **integrity can withstand injustice.**

WEEK 4

Can you think of anyone you're holding a grudge against right now? Or maybe someone you don't talk to anymore because a disagreement or hurt ruined the relationship? Look, sometimes it is the right call to part ways with someone when your relationship just isn't healthy. But if we ended relationships every time someone hurt us . . . well, we'd eventually end up all alone. There's a guy in the Bible named Joseph who spent a long time separated from his family because of some major conflict. When Joseph finally crossed paths with his brothers after lots of years (and lots of pain), he had a choice — to take revenge or give forgiveness. Joseph knew forgiving his brothers wouldn't erase what they had done to him, but it would begin the healing process for him and his family too. Guess what he chose. Joseph's story is a beautiful example of God's justice — justice that doesn't just punish, but seeks to **restore what is broken.**



BEFORE THE SERIES

✓ TO DO

	Print your Series Promo Poster and Series Promo Cards and display them where families and volunteers can see them.
	Customize your Volunteer Hub and Parent Hub web pages for this series.
	Customize and send the Parent Email for this series.
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 1 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.
	Review the suggested Social Media Posts and Captions for this series.
	Post the Bumper Video on social media with this caption: Justice means different things to different people, but what really matters is what justice means to God. In Justice for All, we'll find out!

AFTER WEEK 1

✓ TO DO

	Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 1 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, in Week 1 of Justice for All we saw that justice is love in action. Here's a recap.
	Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 1 on social media and/or send with this caption: Remember to ask yourself this week, "How can my actions demonstrate more of God's love?"
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 2 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.

AFTER WEEK 2

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, in Week 2 of Justice for All, we were encouraged to hold onto hope when there is injustice. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, when things start to feel heavy because other people are cruel, look to the God who will never, ever leave you.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 3 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 3

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, in Week 3 of Justice for All we saw that integrity can withstand injustice. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, even when we're treated unfairly, we still have the opportunity to be examples of godly character by how we choose to respond.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 4 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 4

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, in Week 4 of Justice for All we saw that God's justice restores what is broken. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, God's just justice is available for all of us, no matter how awful the situation we're experiencing.</p>
	<p>Get ready for the next series!</p>

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS



Need some help deciding what to post on social media before and during this series? Here's our suggestion: each week, share the media we've provided in your Graphics and Videos folder using the captions below.

BEFORE THE SERIES



BUMPER VIDEO

Justice means different things to different people, but what really matters is what justice means to God. In Justice for All, we'll find out!

AFTER WEEK 1



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 1)

In case you missed it, in Week 1 of Justice for All we saw that justice is love in action. Here's a recap.

AFTER WEEK 2



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 2)

In case you missed it, in Week 2 of Justice for All, we were encouraged to hold onto hope when there is injustice. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 1)

Remember to ask yourself this week, "How can my actions demonstrate more of God's love?"



BIG IDEA (WEEK 2)

Remember, when things start to feel heavy because other people are cruel, look to the God who will never, ever leave you.

AFTER WEEK 3



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 3)

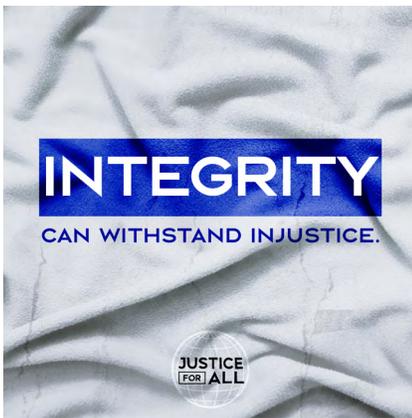
In case you missed it, in Week 3 of Justice for All we saw that integrity can withstand injustice. Here's a recap.

AFTER WEEK 4



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 4)

In case you missed it, in Week 4 of Justice for All we saw that God's justice restores what is broken. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 3)

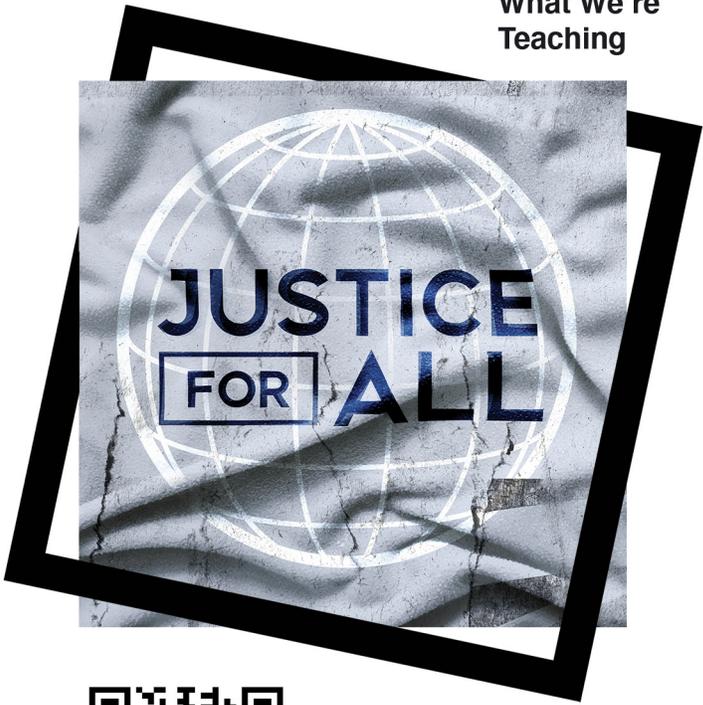
Remember, even when we're treated unfairly, we still have the opportunity to be examples of godly character by how we choose to respond.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 4)

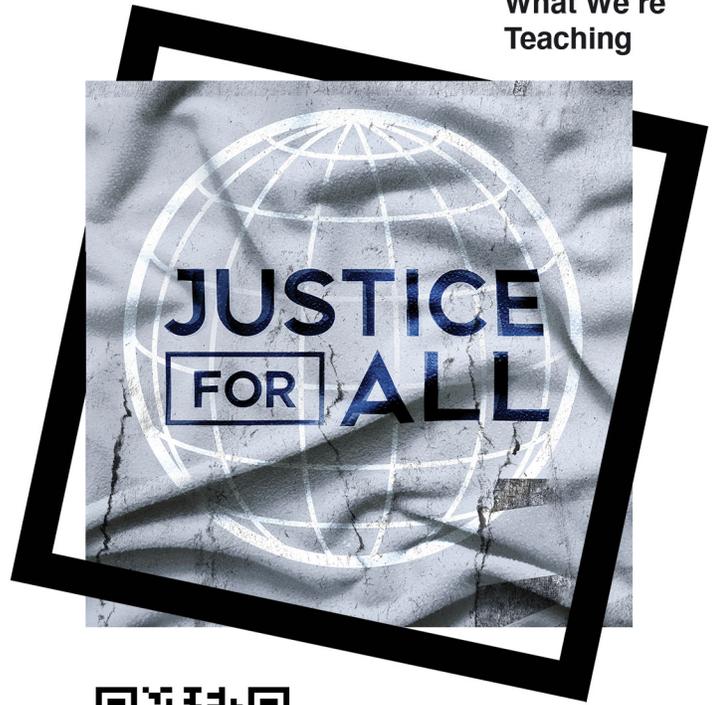
Remember, God's just justice is available for all of us, no matter how awful the situation we're experiencing.

What We're Teaching



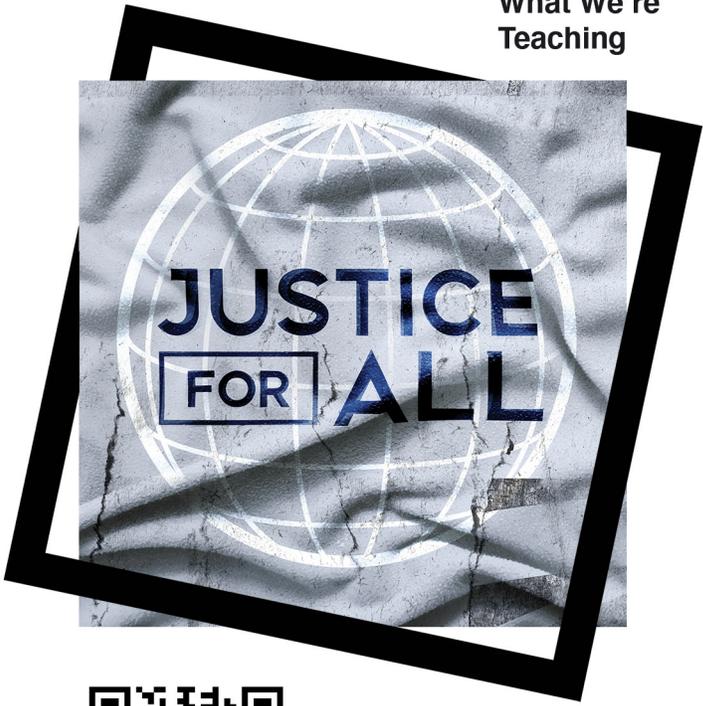
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What We're Teaching



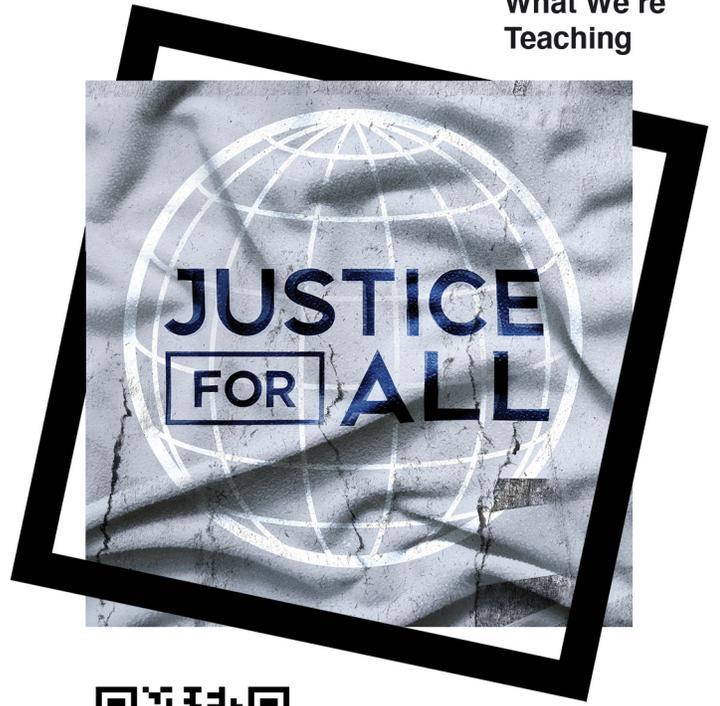
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What We're Teaching



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE

What We're Teaching



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