



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

And It Was Good / Week 1

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

A 4-week series about justice.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

The role you can play in God's story of humankind.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Justice says good enough isn't good enough.

WEEK 2: God is working with you when you choose to do good work.

WEEK 3: Because God is always good, God is always pursuing justice.

WEEK 4: Because good enough is never good enough, justice never stops.

SCRIPTURE

"For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'"

"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me' (Matthew 25:42-45 NIV)."

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

In a conversation about justice, it's incredibly important to be mindful of the different perspectives and experiences represented in your group. You know your students best, so you likely know what injustices they may know about, have witnessed, or even are experiencing right now. Keeping in mind the context in which your students live is so important for this conversation. Try to create a space that allows every student in the room to express what they've experienced or how they feel about both justice and injustice. However, be quick to shut down unhealthy comments or unhelpful debates that may arise. We don't want students to unnecessarily argue or offend, but rather, to open their eyes to see the need for justice around them in potentially new ways.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

A great measure for our faith is how we treat the most vulnerable. It's one way a teenager sees justice and injustice and helps them measure their own faith journey. This series will help high schoolers see injustice and seek goodness in their respective world and encourage them to treat the most vulnerable with the goodness of God in mind.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Communicator Note: Tell a story about a time when you experienced something good (your favorite song live, an incredible flavor of ice cream you'd never had before, etc.).*
- There are well-known signs for when something is really good (*thumbs up, rankings on streaming services or music, etc.*)
- God was able to look around at the world and notice that the various details in creation were good.
- When things aren't good, we can tell that things are off balance—that something isn't quite right. That's exactly what it's like to notice injustice.

TENSION

- Let's start with definitions:
 - Justice simply means something is right, fair, or equal.
 - Injustice is the opposite of that. So when we talk about injustice, we're talking about the things in our world that are unfair, unequal, or not right.
- For most of us, something probably came to mind the minute you heard the word, "injustice." (*Give examples of injustices your students may know about, like someone being wrongly accused or convicted, racism and sexism, oppressive dictatorships, etc.*)
- The real question we all face when we notice things that aren't good is: "Why doesn't somebody do something about this?"
- A conversation like this can be tricky because so many of us see and experience injustice in different ways.
 - For some of you, this feels so heavy. You have been thinking about injustice for a long time, because you've experienced it yourself.
 - On the flip side, some of you haven't experienced the hurt of injustice. Instead, maybe you feel surprised by it.
 - *Communicator Note: If there are specific injustice issues facing your community, feel free to talk about them here.*
- I think **sometimes we don't do anything about injustice because we don't get close enough to notice what's really happening and to ask the hard questions.**

TRUTH

- Jesus made a habit of pointing out a lot of things people hadn't noticed or seen before.
- Jesus often used stories with real-life examples to reveal bigger truths. In this case, He used a story of sheep and goats to explain the differences between the righteous and the unrighteous—those on the right side and those on the wrong side.
- In this story, the sheep were on the righteous side of bringing good into the world and the goats were not (*Matthew 25:41-46 NIV*).
- Jesus distinguished between the righteous and the unrighteous—those who bring good and those who bring bad—by how they respond to the needs of people who are strangers, hungry, sick, and imprisoned.
- Think about the level of shock that the "goats" expressed in their response to the King. It's as if they said, "Not me. I'd NEVER do that."

- Jesus wanted to make a point—not only did they **not** do something about the injustices around them, but **they didn't even notice them!**
- When you don't notice those who need your help, you're not just missing out on noticing injustice, you're missing out on part of what it means to follow Jesus Himself!
- **When you don't take the time to notice injustice, you basically say that things in the world are, "good enough," even when some people are suffering.**
- Jesus' people are those who notice and act when it comes to injustice.
- If you get to know Him, you'll see that Jesus always cares about injustice, always speaks up for others, and always fights for what's right. Jesus always tries to do good and not just settle.
- If you follow Jesus, you'll become more like Him in that way. You'll begin to care about the things He cares about. And because of Jesus' example, you may begin to see injustice differently than you ever have before.
- Before you do something about injustice, you have to see it.
- **BOTTOM LINE: Justice says good enough isn't good enough.**

APPLICATION

- We need to be able to look around and see what's happening. We need to be able to notice the injustices in our daily, ordinary world.
 - **Get close enough to notice.**
 - **Be curious and listen.**
 - **Be courageous enough to name it.**

LANDING

- You can be the generation to do some good in areas where it has seemed impossible. The first step is noticing injustice and helping others to notice it as well.
- That's why we have small groups! There we can talk about real, difficult things and help each other notice more of the not-so-good things we haven't noticed before.
- As you head out, I want you to think about this quote from Maya Angelou, a famous writer who wrote about injustice often: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

And It Was Good / Week 1

BOTTOM LINE

JUSTICE SAYS GOOD ENOUGH ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

Tell a Personal Story. . .

- *Tell a story about a time when you experienced something that you immediately knew was good, like a band playing your favorite song live, your favorite food, a friend showing up right when you needed it, etc.*
- *Here's an example story . . .*

There are well-known signs for when something is really good. Like for anyone who enjoys soft drinks, when you chug your favorite one and then your body automatically does that, "ahhh" sound. Or when live music sounds really good and you make a face that looks like you got a whiff of something super smelly, but in reality, that face means the music is just so good. Or when someone asks you if the sound on a video chat is good and people give a thumbs up if they can hear well. Or when a movie is good, it usually gets a good score on Rotten Tomatoes. When a song is good, it gets a high number of streams or becomes a popular sound on Tik Tok. We can all generally recognize when something is good.

When God created the Earth, God knew that things like light, the sky, water, birds, plants, and especially humans, were all good things. We see it in Genesis 1:31: *"Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!"*

God was able to look around at the world and notice that the various details in Creation were good.

We do the same thing. When we consider the world, we're able to notice when things are good and when things are not good.

Usually, when we notice things that aren't good, we wish someone could or would do something about them.

When things aren't good, we can tell that they're off balance; that things aren't quite right. That's exactly what it's like to notice injustice.

TENSION

5 MINUTES

When I say that word, "injustice," what comes to mind?

We should probably start with some definitions.

Justice simply means something is right, fair, or equal. You know, it's when things are good! Injustice is just the opposite of that. It's when things are not good, not fair, and not equal at all. So when we talk about injustice, we're talking about the things in our world that are unfair, unequal, and not right.

But you didn't actually need me to define injustice, did you? No, for most of us, something came to mind the minute we heard the word. Maybe you've witnessed someone experiencing prejudice. Maybe you've seen people purposely choosing not to care how their actions might impact the environment around them. Maybe there's something local that feels so unfair and it's right around the corner. Maybe you're experiencing injustice personally and you know the pain all too deeply. Or maybe you've made it to a side of TikTok that, over time, has helped you notice an injustice you've never experienced.

What I'm getting at is that when we hear the word, "injustice," *something* comes to mind for all of us. In fact, that's one of the things I love and really admire about your generation. You all, maybe more than any generation in history, are aware of injustices happening all over the world.

The real question we all face is not, "Does injustice exist?" The question is, **"Why doesn't somebody actually do something about all of these not good things in the world?"** And that's the question we're going to wrestle with for the rest of this series. What does it look like, and whose job is it, to do something about injustice? To help turn things from bad to good?

Now, as we get started, I have to admit that a conversation like this can be tricky because so many of us see and experience injustice in different ways. For some of you, this feels so heavy. You have been thinking about injustice for a long time, because you've experienced it yourself. You've seen how it has affected your family and your friends. This topic *hurts*. If that's you, let me stop right here and say this: *I'm sorry*. What you're walking through isn't okay. And if you take anything away from this message today, let it be that here in our student ministry, we do not ignore things that hurt each other. We want this to be a safe place where you can not only talk about your real-life experiences, but where you can find real friends who love and support you through them.

On the flip side, some of you have never experienced the hurt of injustice. Instead, maybe you feel surprised by it. Maybe when you were younger, you never thought about things like access to education, or racism, or food insecurity. And maybe, as you're getting older and starting to see some things on social media, you keep discovering things you never knew about the world around you. Maybe you've even found yourself asking the question, "Why doesn't somebody *do something* about that?" You might be starting to ask some questions you've never asked before like . . .

- **Why are there some students who never get in trouble when they should, while other students always get in trouble even if they're not doing anything wrong?**
- **Why do people still act like it's okay to make jokes that are racist, sexist, or ableist?**
- **Why does that kid continue to get bullied and no one seems to care enough to help put a stop to it?**
- **Why does one person in our friend group go home to a house that feels unsafe, while others don't have to worry about it?**
- **Why are there so many little kids in our community who don't get to eat on days when there's no school? Why are three meals a day not normal for everyone?**

[Communicator Note: If there are specific injustice issues facing your community, feel free to add them here.]

My point is this: When we see injustice through our own experience or someone else's, it should make us ask some hard questions. It should make us wonder how others don't see it or how we didn't see it before.

It's not that we don't care about injustice. I think sometimes we don't do anything about injustice because we don't always get close enough to see what's really happening and to ask the hard questions.

TRUTH

6.5 MINUTES

We aren't the first people to have this problem. In fact, Jesus made a habit of pointing out a lot of things people hadn't noticed before. One of the questions people asked Jesus a lot was, "So, who's doing good, and who definitely is **not**?" Okay, maybe they didn't say it *exactly* like that, but they asked Jesus this kind of question in a lot of different ways. And like Jesus did in many conversations, He answered with a story.

So again, the question presented to Jesus was, "Who's doing good? Who is doing what's right in Your eyes? And who is doing wrong?"

Listen to what Jesus said to differentiate between good and not good . . .

"For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'"

"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me' (Matthew 25:42-45 NIV).

In this story, Jesus distinguished between justice and injustice—those who choose to do good and those who are missing it—by how they responded to the needs of the least of these. Those people whom Jesus defined as the prisoners, the hungry, the sick, and strangers. In other words, people who need the most help, feel the most pain, or get the worst treatment. Now that may seem a little bit extreme.

Remember the level of shock expressed in their response to Jesus: **WHEN** did we not see You? **WHEN** did we not clothe You, or feed You, or give You water? It's as if they were saying, "**Not me. I'd NEVER do that.**"

Jesus wasn't referring to Himself specifically, but He wanted to make a point; That not only did they not do something about the injustice, but they didn't even **SEE** it. When you don't see those who need your help, you're not just missing out on seeing injustice. When we don't see it, it's as if we don't understand what it means to follow Jesus! We're missing out on part of what it means to follow Jesus Himself!

Remember, this is a story about justice and injustice. And Jesus was VERY clear about the answer: **God's people are those who notice and act when it comes to injustice.** God's people notice injustice and working toward restoring situations to "good."

Now, I'm not saying that good deeds are what it takes to start a relationship with Jesus, but I am saying as you get to know God, you'll see that Jesus always cares about injustice, always speaks up for others, and always fights for what's right. And if you follow Him, you'll become more like God in that way. You'll begin to care about the things God cares about. And because of Jesus' example, you may begin to see injustice differently than you ever have before. You may be compelled to **DO** something more than ever before. Don't worry, we'll talk more about how exactly to do some good over the next few weeks.

But for now, let's start with the one thing we all have to realize before we work on turning things from bad to good: **Justice says good enough isn't good enough.**

APPLICATION

4 MINUTES

That realization is where we need to start. We need to be able to make a conscious choice that when it comes to working against injustice, we can't just **settle**. We need to notice the injustices in our daily, ordinary world and decide that these instances deserve our full effort and attention. We all have room to grow in this. Sometimes settling is just easier, and sometimes just doing good enough seems like it should count as a good try. But when it comes to how people are valued and treated, we've got to do better than just good enough.

So, here are three simple things we can do together:

1. **Get close enough to notice.** How do we do this? Well, there are a few things we can do. For starters, we can pray that God would help us see things in the way God sees them. Then, spend some time with people who are different from you. This doesn't come naturally to any of us. We naturally gravitate toward people who are like us. In order to notice what's going on in the world, you have to get to know people in the world, not just people *in* your circle.

So, get close enough to notice. Start a conversation with someone in your class. Sit next to someone in the cafeteria who's different from you. Get a job that will help you meet people outside your school. Volunteer somewhere. Put yourself on the path to interact with different people. These are all ways to get close enough to other people to see the world from someone else's eyes.

In addition to that, you can also make an effort to learn about other's experiences on your own. Watch a movie about injustice. Do some research on organizations that are working to help. Start discovering what's happening in the world and in your community.

2. **Be curious and listen.** The quickest way to notice and understand injustice is to **LISTEN** to people who are experiencing it. When someone tells you about experiencing injustice, **LISTEN**. And don't just listen, but try to **LEARN**. Imagine yourself in their shoes. Think about what they're saying.

And here's a heads-up: It will make you uncomfortable, especially if it's an injustice you've never experienced or worse, the kind you didn't realize you might have participated in. This is when the conversation gets REAL, and it may be tempting to bail. As a survival instinct, we're wired to avoid being uncomfortable. I mean, some of you act like you're going to die if you have to actually talk to someone on a phone instead of texting. Why? Because it's uncomfortable and we dislike being uncomfortable. But in this case, discomfort isn't necessarily BAD. It's actually a good sign when we are learning from others and their experiences with injustices, because those are bad things. **And bad things, unfair things, and unequal things should make you uncomfortable, because you know what good looks like.** It means you're beginning to notice things that God wouldn't consider to be good. So, keep listening, try to learn, and when you hear about injustice, be curious even if it's a little bit uncomfortable.

Be curious about your own experience, too. You might realize you've experienced an injustice, but you've brushed it off because you don't want to draw attention to it or everybody around you keeps saying it's no big deal. Or maybe you'll notice you've participated in injustice without realizing it. You can't know what you'll discover until you get curious. Be open to what God may be showing you.

3. **Be courageous enough to name it.** That means if it's wrong, say it's wrong. If it's unfair, call it that. When you notice injustice around you or even IN you, be courageous enough to call it what it is. Identifying injustice takes away some of its power because we can't change what we don't notice, acknowledge, or talk about. This may be the hardest part for you. It's risky, it's awkward, and it's uncomfortable. But it's important, because once we name injustice, we feel ownership and the responsibility to do something about it.
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LANDING

1 MINUTE

Listen, so much of following Jesus is learning to see, think, and live in a way that doesn't come naturally to us. One of the things I love about this generation is that so many of you actually see and care about injustice more than previous generations.

Here's what I'm getting at: You can be the generation to do something—something more than just making situations “good enough.” You can actually make them GOOD. You can bring good to areas where it has seemed impossible. But the first step toward doing good is noticing when things aren't good, and helping others notice them, too. That's why we have small groups. There, we can talk about real and difficult topics and help each other notice things we haven't before. In fact, your small group leader is a great person to talk to as you're processing and discovering new ways to notice where you can help turn things from bad to good in the world.

As you head out, I want you to think about this quote from Maya Angelou, a famous writer who wrote about injustice often: ***“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”***

That's what this series is about. Learning more, so we can know better, and ultimately do more good.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
