



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

One Step / Week 2

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

A 4-week series about God's heart for justice.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

Moving toward a better tomorrow.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Where can you move toward justice?

WEEK 2: You don't have to face injustice alone.

WEEK 3: God loves justice.

WEEK 4: Keep moving toward justice.

SCRIPTURE

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

Most middle schoolers see the world through a polarizing lens. For them, most things fall into two categories: fair and unfair. That can make a conversation about experiencing injustice tricky in this phase. Some may consider not being allowed to date, not having a phone, or being punished by a parent or adult to be very real injustices simply because they feel unfair. Though you want to redirect the conversation toward more pervasive and bigger injustices, be careful not to shut down what feels very real to your students. Be prepared to have students open up about difficult injustices they've experienced already, like racism, poverty, abuse, and more. If your middle schoolers do share, choose your response carefully. Be quick to thank them for sharing and acknowledge the courage it took to open up. Affirm that what they're experiencing isn't right, and consider how you can support them through it. Create a safe space for your group by handling the emotions and experiences shared in a healthy, safe way. Remember that if something is shared that brings to light a dangerous or harmful situation, take it to your Ministry Leader for further help and action as soon as possible.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

This week's large group talk focuses on students who have or are currently experiencing injustice in their lives. Pay extra attention and be sensitive to these students in your ministry. Do any conversations need to be had ahead of time to prepare a student for this topic? Do you need to support anyone since this topic can be so personal? Do you need to approach certain examples or content in your talk in a different way? Consider the experiences of all of your students and take steps to make this a safe and comfortable conversation for everyone in the room.

INTERACTIVE 1: IT'S PERSONAL

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll talk about injustices your students may know about or have experienced to help demonstrate that real injustices are happening all around us.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A list of injustices your students may know about in your community or context
- A list of feelings students shared they've experienced as a result of facing injustice
- 3-4 feelings from the students' lists selected ahead of time

PREP

- Come up with a list of 3-4 injustices that your students may know about in your community or context.
- During small group for Week 1 of this series, students will anonymously write down what it feels like to face injustice.
- Before your talk this week, go through what your students shared in the previous week and pick 3-4 feelings they wrote down that you will share during your talk.

TIP: If students don't share their answers in the previous week during small group, you can ask them to write down their feelings on paper as they arrive this week. You'll just need to review what they shared quickly so that you can prepare the examples for your message.

TEACHING OUTLINE

But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

"Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke! (Daniel 3:24-27 NLT)

INTRODUCTION

- In this series, we're talking about the steps we can take toward a better tomorrow by moving toward justice in our world.
- Justice is when something is right, fair, or equal.
- Justice is about moving against injustice—things that are unfair, unequal, and not right—and toward a world that's better for everyone.
- Some of us know about injustice because . . .
 - We've heard about it.
 - We've seen it firsthand.
 - We've experienced it ourselves.

TENSION

- Some of us need someone else to step in and move toward good on our behalf because we are experiencing injustice ourselves.
- *[Interactive: It's Personal – Talk about injustices your students may know about or have experienced to help demonstrate that real injustices are happening all around us.]*
- Injustice is happening to people right now in our world, in our community, in our school, and even in our church. *[Give 3-4 examples.]*
- No matter the injustice, if you've experienced it, you know how unfair and painful it is. *[Give 3-4 examples your students shared about how it feels to experience injustice.]*
- When you're going through an injustice, you may wonder how you can fight for justice when the injustice is happening to you.

TRUTH

- If you've experienced injustice, you don't deserve it. You were made in God's image, have value, and should be treated with respect.
- We're going to look at some people who needed justice back in ancient times.
- We read in the book of Daniel about Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful king who ordered everyone to worship a giant statue. Those who didn't would be punished by being thrown into a fire.
- Three men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worshipped God and refused to worship the statue.
- When Nebuchadnezzar found out, he ordered the men be captured and gave them one last chance to worship the statue.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were thrown into the fire.
- These men faced an unjust, unfair situation that they didn't deserve.
- This is what happened next: *But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied. "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke! (Daniel 3:24-27 NLT).*
- We don't know for sure who was in the fire with the men, but we do know that God didn't allow the three to be alone in their situation. God didn't let them experience the injustice by themselves.
- The same is true for us: We don't have to face injustice alone.
- Jesus came to Earth and experienced all kinds of things, including injustice. He understands how it feels to be treated unfairly, and He stands with us.
- While knowing Jesus is with us doesn't magically make injustice go away or easier to take, it does remind us that we aren't alone.
- You don't have to face injustice alone.

APPLICATION

- If you've experienced or are experiencing injustice, think through a step you can take to help you feel not alone:
 - a. Small Step: Remember God is with you, you are made in God's image, you have value, and you deserve justice.
 - b. Next Step: Talk about the injustice you're experiencing with a trusted person if/when you feel comfortable and ready.
 - c. Big Step: Look for the people God sent to show up and stand up for us when we face injustice.

- Some of us have participated in the unfair treatment of others. Maybe we've caused it, or maybe we did nothing when we saw it happen.
- If that's you, you can change and take a first step by no longer contributing to injustice. You can own it, apologize for it, and ask for forgiveness.

LANDING

- You don't have to face injustice alone.
- The people in your small group are for you, want to learn from you, and want to stand with you.
- If you've experienced injustice, think about how you can share with your group how you need support if/when you're ready to talk about it.
- If you haven't experienced injustice, think about how you can care for and support someone in your group who has.
- Injustice is in our world, but we can be the kind of people who move toward justice one step at a time.
- Think about this: What's one injustice that you or someone you know has experienced?

TEACHING SLIDES

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



TEACHING SCRIPT

One Step / Week 2

BOTTOM LINE

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FACE INJUSTICE ALONE.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Hi everybody! I'm _____, and I'm so glad you're here. Last week, we started a new series called *One Step*, and it's all about the steps we can take to move toward a better tomorrow. It's about moving toward justice in our world.

Remember, **justice means something is right, fair, or equal**. When we talk about justice, it's about moving toward a world where things are better for everyone. We're talking about working against **injustice—when things are unfair, unequal, or not right**.

Some of us know there's wrong in the world because we've heard about it. Some of us know it because we've seen it firsthand. And others of us? Well, we know about injustice because we've experienced it for ourselves.

TENSION

2 MINUTES

For some of us in this room, justice means that we need someone else to step in. We need somebody to support or help us because we're experiencing injustice ourselves.

INTERACTIVE: It's Personal

This is where you'll talk about injustices your students may know about or have experienced to help demonstrate that real injustices are happening all around us.

I want you to think about our community for a second. Many of the people in it have experienced or are still experiencing some very real, very wrong, and very painful injustices. Things like *[give at least 3-4 injustice examples your students may have seen or experienced in your community]*.

These are all things that your friends, your small group members, and others in our youth ministry are facing. Injustice is happening to the people in this room right now. It's happening to people in our world, in our community, in our school, and in our church.

And no matter what the injustice is, if you've experienced it, you know how unfair it is. You know just how painful it feels. In this very room, some of you have felt *[give 3-4 examples your students shared about how it feels to experience injustice]* as a direct result of facing injustice in your lives.

And it probably has you wondering, ***How can I move toward justice when injustice is happening to me?***

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Before we go on, I want to say this: You don't deserve the unfair, hurtful injustices you've experienced. You have value simply by being made in the image of God. You were created to be treated with respect because of that fact. It's not your fault that you were born into a complicated world with messed-up rules, traditions, and ideas about people. Those painful things you've experienced? They say a lot more about the hurt in the people causing the injustice than they do about you!

That being said, let's look at some people who needed justice in their personal circumstances.

In ancient times, there was a powerful king named **Nebuchadnezzar** who was used to getting his way. He led his kingdom, Babylon, to take control of most of the surrounding kingdoms and villages, including the Israelite community. He had brought the brightest and strongest of the Israelite people to live in Babylon and helped create an incredible culture and city.

Three of the guys brought to Babylon were named **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**. These guys worshipped God. So, when Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a giant, golden statue and ordered everyone to bow down and worship it whenever they heard music playing . . . Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused. Good for them, right? Well, the people who were loyal to Nebuchadnezzar didn't agree. They basically snitched on them to the king.

In a furious rage, the king ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be captured. He gave them one more chance to bow down and worship the statue. They knew anyone who refused to bow would be thrown into a blazing fire. Yet, these three guys wouldn't worship anyone or anything other than God. So, just like that, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the fire.

Can we all agree that this situation is totally and completely unfair? What happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego wasn't good, it wasn't right, and it certainly wasn't something they deserved.

Let's see how it turned out:

But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

"Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!"

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hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke! (Daniel 3:24-27 NLT).

We're not entirely sure who was in the fire with the men. Was it God? Was it Jesus? Was it an angel? I'm not one hundred percent sure, but one thing is clear: God did not allow them to be in it alone. God didn't let them suffer or experience the injustice by themselves. And that's a big deal! Because it shows us that the same is true for us.

You don't have to face injustice alone.

In fact, by sending Jesus to the world, God made sure we'd never be alone when we face injustice. He could have come as a conquering king or a powerful person, but instead, He came to this world as a baby. He came as a person who would experience all the things we experience, including injustice. Some of the authors of Scripture tell us that Jesus understands how we feel when we're treated unfairly, and He stands with us in it. He goes into the fires of injustice right beside us so we don't have to do it alone.

Does knowing Jesus is with us just magically make the injustice easier to take? Unfortunately, that's not how it works. Jesus' presence with us doesn't change what we're experiencing, but it can change how we experience it. It can remind us of the fact that we're not alone in it. We never have been, and we never will be. And that can give us the faith we need to stand strong in the fire until something changes.

Because **you don't have to face injustice alone.**

APPLICATION

3 MINUTES

Maybe you relate to these three guys who were in the fire. You've experienced the suffering that goes along with painful, unfair treatment, and you're trying to keep faith as you're standing in the flames.

Let me give you some ideas of some steps you can take.

Small Step: A good first step you can take toward a better tomorrow for yourself is to **simply remember God is with you.** You are made in God's image, and that means no matter what injustice you're experiencing, you have value and worth. You deserve to be honored and respected. You deserve justice. And God doesn't want you to fight for it or walk through what you're experiencing alone. So, find strength and faith in the fact that God not only sees your struggle but is standing with you in it.

Next Step: If you're experiencing injustice right now or are dealing with an injustice that's happened to you in the past, maybe your next step is to **talk about it.** If you feel comfortable, speak up and share it with the people in your life who care about you and want to help move toward justice with you. We want this to be a safe space for you to do just that! So today, if you feel ready, I encourage you to begin by sharing what you've experienced. Maybe that means sharing it with God in prayer or opening up to a close friend or a trusted adult, like a parent, guardian, or your small group leader.

Big Step: When we experience injustice, it can be easy to feel like God has left us or forgotten us. Remember those three guys we just read about? It may not have been what or how they expected, but God sent someone in the flames so they wouldn't have to be alone. I think one big step we can take is to **look for the people God sent to show up for us.** Who are the people standing in the furnace with you? Who are the ones God has sent to stand in the fire beside you? Maybe that's a best friend who listens and cares about your pain, or an activist you follow on TikTok working to move toward justice you need, or the small group leader or parent willing to stand up and be a voice for you. Those people? They're all people God put in your life so that you wouldn't have to face injustice alone.

Finally, there is one other person in this story I think we need to look at: King Nebuchadnezzar. Of course, none of you are throwing people into a raging fire because they won't worship your statue! But I think there have been times when, if we're honest, we could admit that we've participated in the harsh or unfair treatment of others. Maybe we caused it ourselves, or maybe we're more like the people in the crowd. We've stood by and watched as an injustice happened to someone else.

If that's you, I want you to know this: Just because you've been that person before doesn't mean you have to stay that person now. You can change. Maybe the best step you can take toward justice right now is to choose to no longer contribute to injustice. To own it, apologize, and ask for forgiveness from God and even the other person. To choose to take one step toward justice, maybe for the first time!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **you don't have to face injustice alone.**

That's actually one of the reasons we have small groups. Your small group is for you, will pray with you, and wants to learn from you. They're people who will very likely get into the fire right beside you, and that's a big deal! So, if you've experienced injustice and are comfortable sharing, consider talking to your group about how they can support you. And if you haven't experienced injustice, how can you listen and care for someone in your group who has?

The truth is, in this world, injustice is going to continue. People are always going to want more power, be threatened by those who are different, or look for ways to control or hurt others. But I truly believe that if we all commit to being the kind of people who move toward justice one step at a time, we'll see steps we can take toward a better tomorrow every day.

Now, when you head to small group, I want you to think about this question: **What's one injustice you or someone you know has experienced?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
