



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

One Step / Week 3

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## 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.

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## SCRIPTURE

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

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## NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

### THINK ABOUT THIS

This conversation asks middle schoolers to apply some abstract thinking to look for a God at work whom they can't physically see. This kind of thinking is still developing in this phase, so concepts like this can be challenging. In addition, your discussion will ask middle schoolers to join in the work of justice themselves. This might be hard for students on a number of levels. Some may feel too young, too powerless, too ill-equipped, or too unsure to choose to respond to injustice right now. Others may already be working with God for justice, so they recognize the need to honor those who have come before them as well as continue the work today. Some may be experiencing injustice themselves, so asking them to join in to do the work may feel impossible (or inappropriate) as they're needing someone to step up on their behalf. They may even struggle to see how God is at work when the injustice they're experiencing is still very real. No matter where your students come from here, lead the conversation in a way that helps your group see two things more clearly: how God is doing good work for justice and how they can choose to be part of it.

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## INTERACTIVE 1: IT'S DEBATABLE

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, students will get in pairs to select and debate a silly, difficult-to-answer question from a displayed list.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A digital slide with at least 5 different difficult-to-answer questions (We've provided a list to get you started!)
- All of your middle schoolers
- A way to display the slide for everyone

## PREP

- Select the questions you'd like to use for this Interactive.
- Create a digital slide with the questions.

## QUESTION IDEAS

- Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?
- Can you have a daydream at night time?
- Can a fish get seasick?
- Why is a pizza box square when a pizza is round?
- Are animals that don't live in houses homeless?
- If a tomato is a fruit, why is ketchup not called a smoothie?
- If a tree falls and no one hears it, does it make a sound?
- Can you cry underwater?
- Why are bread slices square and sandwich meat round?
- Which orange came first: the fruit or the color?
- Does a staircase go up or down?

# INTERACTIVE 2: IT TAKES A TEAM

## OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show a video clip and have students link arms to illustrate that God's plan for justice relies on people coming together to make a difference.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- An inspiring video clip of a people coming together to rescue an animal in a dangerous situation. We found that searching the words "people working together to rescue dog" resulted in a variety of clips that can work for this Interactive. Be sure to avoid any videos that depict an animal suffering or with graphic injuries. And remember to watch the clip in its entirety to ensure that it's appropriate for your students.
- A computer and screen large enough to show the clip to your students
- All of your middle schoolers

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

*Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:35-37 NLT).*

*"For I, the Lord, love justice" (Isaiah 61:8a NLT).*

## INTRODUCTION

- In this series, we're talking about how we can move toward a better tomorrow by joining in God's work for justice.
- Justice means something is right, fair, or equal, and fighting for justice is when we fight for things to be better for everyone.
- Have you ever had a question you couldn't answer?
- *[Interactive: It's Debatable – Students will get in pairs and select and debate a silly, difficult-to-answer question from a displayed list.]*
- Some questions in life don't seem to have answers.
- Some of these questions aren't life's biggest mysteries, but others are big and serious questions caused by injustices in the world.

## TENSION

- Maybe you've seen or experienced something that was wrong, unfair, or hurtful, and that left you with more questions than answers.
- Maybe you've wondered . . .
  - Why there's a need for justice.
  - Why you were or weren't the one to experience injustice.
  - How people felt going through injustice and how it impacted their lives.
  - If anything is being done to make things right.
- A lot of questions about the hard, painful, and difficult things in the world seem to come back to this: What is God doing?
- It's okay to ask this question; God can handle our questions and isn't afraid of them.
- Asking questions is a way to discover more about who God is.
- There are no easy answers when it comes to justice, but if we ask the right questions, we can learn more about who God is and how God feels about justice.

## TRUTH

- Jesus is the best way to understand God because He is God.
- During Jesus' ministry, He told people about God and what God cares about, including justice.
- Jesus didn't just talk about justice; He did a lot of things to move toward it for those around Him.
- *Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-36 NLT).*
- Jesus didn't fight for justice because He had to. He was motivated by the compassion for those around Him.
- Jesus' compassion and action in the face of injustice shows us God's heart for justice.
- God loves justice.
- God said through the prophet Isaiah: *"For I, the Lord, love justice" (Isaiah 61:8a NLT).*
- We know God loves justice because of Jesus' life and example and because God said it.
- *He [Jesus] said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37 NLT).*
- When Jesus talked about planting and harvesting, He was talking about the work that needs to be done toward justice.
- Acting against injustice is a big job, and there are few workers because the work isn't easy and quick.
- Jesus reminded us that there's a plan of action for justice: It's us, the workers.
  - The people who have been doing the work of justice before us.
  - The people working for justice today.
  - The people who have the potential to join in the movement toward justice.
- *[Interactive: It Takes a Team – Show a video clip and have students link arms to illustrate that God's plan for justice relies on people coming together to make a difference.]*
- God wants people to unite and act on what's unjust.
- We are working on behalf of Jesus for things He cares about.

- God works through us to see wrongs made right in the world.
- When it comes to what God is doing about injustice, we're God's plan.
- God loves justice and is giving us the chance to help bring it to the world.

## APPLICATION

- We can take action toward justice by:
  - Small Step: Asking new questions. Instead of asking what God is doing, we can ask questions that help us figure out where there are needs and how we can help.
  - Next Step: Looking at and learning more about what has been done in the past and what is currently being done today to fight for justice.
  - Big Step: Being brave enough to act. Take a step toward joining others in the work God is doing to move toward a better tomorrow.

## LANDING

- Talk with your small group about what choosing to join in God's work for justice might look like.
- God loves justice, and you can be part of that work in the world.
- Think about this: Where have you seen God working for justice?

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## TEACHING SLIDES

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

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# TEACHING SCRIPT

One Step / Week 3

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## BOTTOM LINE

GOD LOVES JUSTICE.

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## INTRODUCTION

4 MINUTES

Hi everyone! We're in the middle of a series called *One Step*. It's all about how we can move toward a better tomorrow. The steps we can take to join God's work for justice in this 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**, which is **when things are unfair, unequal, or not right in the world**.

Now, before we get into all that today, I want to ask you something: Have you ever had a question you couldn't answer?

### INTERACTIVE: It's Debatable

*This is where students will get in pairs and select and debate a silly, difficult-to-answer question from a displayed list.*

There are tons of questions that don't seem to have obvious answers. Here are just a few! *[Display the slide of questions.]* For the next few minutes, I want you to find a partner, pick a question, and debate the answer with each other! Ready? Go! *[Give students a minute or two to debate with each other.]*

You see what I mean? There are just some questions that are difficult to answer! And while these questions aren't life's biggest mysteries, there's so much other stuff happening in the world that can cause us to ask really big, serious questions.

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## TENSION

2 MINUTES

You know what I mean, right? You've probably seen or experienced something that was wrong, unfair, or hurtful, and that left you with a lot more questions than answers.

Maybe you've wondered why there's a need for justice in the world.  
Maybe you've wondered why you *were* or why you *weren't* the one to experience injustice.  
Maybe you've wondered how people felt going through injustice or how it impacted their lives.  
Or maybe you've questioned if anything is being done to make things right.

I've asked a lot of those questions myself! But honestly, most of my questions about the difficult, painful things I've seen or experienced in the world seem to come back to one big idea:

### **What is God doing?**

Maybe you're asking the same question! How can things like racism, poverty, animal abuse, hunger, crime, and discrimination exist in a world God has power over? If God can do *anything*, why isn't God doing *something* about all the wrong in the world?

If you're new to all this faith stuff, you might not be sure what you really think. For some of you, the injustices you've seen or experienced may be the reason that you aren't sure about God. And I get that!

When we ask what God is doing about injustice, here's one thing I want you to be sure of: **It's okay to ask.** God can handle your questions. God isn't afraid of them. And honestly, I think God wants us to ask them. Because asking questions is one step we can take to discover more about who God really is.

The truth is, there are just no easy answers when it comes to injustice. We're not the first people to wonder what God is thinking or doing to help bring justice to the world, and we won't be the last! While we may never get the full answer, I think there's more we can learn about who God is and how God feels about justice if we ask the right questions.

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## TRUTH

7 MINUTES

Thankfully, we don't have to guess where God stands on all of this. We can look at God's Son, Jesus, as the best way to understand what God is really like because . . . well, He is God!

Several people who knew Jesus personally and hung out with Him wrote down what they saw and heard. And now, people like you and me, who didn't get to see it with our own eyes, can know what happened. Today, we're going to take a look at the eyewitness account of **Matthew**, one of Jesus' closest followers.

During His ministry on Earth, Jesus spent a lot of time traveling to tell people about God and share what God cares about. He talked about things like people being rescued from captivity, the hungry being fed, the poor being served, and children being cared for. In all this, **Jesus was talking about justice.**

Of course, Jesus didn't stop at just talking about justice. He also did a lot of things to help move toward it for those around Him. Take a look:

***Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-36 NLT).***

Jesus didn't just see the people who needed help around Him and move on. He actually did things to help them. He did things to make it right. It's important to note that Jesus didn't just bring justice because He had to. He did it because He cared. He had compassion for the people around Him. **Compassion is deep care and concern for the needs of someone else.** And it was compassion that motivated Jesus to act.

This is where I think we find our answer to that big question about what God's doing to fight for justice. Since Jesus is God, Jesus showed us what God is like. And we can trust that Jesus' compassion and action in the face of injustice shows us God's heart for justice, too! So, if you've ever wondered, God is very much *for* justice.

## God loves justice.

In fact, hundreds of years earlier, God said so through the prophet Isaiah:

***“For I, the Lord, love justice” (Isaiah 61:8a NLT).***

See what I mean? **God loves justice.** We know not just because of Jesus' life and example but because God said it, too!

Now, can I address the tension we all may be feeling right now? It's great to know **God loves justice**, but that still doesn't totally answer our question, does it? I mean, if God cares so much about justice, why isn't God stopping injustice? If nothing changes about the injustice in the world, how can we trust that God really does care? It kind of seems like God is saying one thing and doing another, right?

Well, I think our answer is actually in what came right after the verse we just read in Matthew. Look at what Jesus said to His followers:

***He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37 NLT).***

Maybe you don't talk about the harvest a lot in your day-to-day lives, but back then, it made a lot of sense. Jesus lived in a community that depended on farming for food, so when He talked about planting and harvesting, it was a way to talk about the work that needed to be done. When He said that the "harvest is great," He meant that the work to make the world more like God intended is big. There's a lot to do! And the people to do that work? Well, there are a few of them because the work isn't easy or quick.

The work to help those who are hurting, struggling, and facing injustice? It's big, it's heavy, it's something we need help with. But here, Jesus reminded us there's a plan to see that work done, and the plan is God's people.

The people who have been doing the work of justice years and years before us.

The people are still doing it today.

The people who have the potential to join in, like you and me!

### **INTERACTIVE: It Takes a Team**

*This is where you'll show a video clip and have your students link arms to illustrate that God's plan for justice relies on people coming together to make a difference.*

Let me show you a really cool example that illustrates God's plan for justice in action. *[Play the video clip and comment on it after it ends.]*

Listen, we know there are big injustices in the world. But we also know that God wants people to unite and act on what's unfair and not right. God loves justice and wants us to take action for it together.

You know what? Everyone stand up and link arms with the person next to you. *[Give students time to do this.]*

Together, we have so much power to be part of the action.

Say it with me: *[Lead students in saying these two sentences aloud.] We can make a difference. We can take one step toward justice together.*

What if we're the plan? What if we're actually the answer to all our questions about what God is doing for justice? What if it's us working with Jesus to take care of the things He cares about? When it comes to what God is doing about injustice, I think we're the answer. It's the people who have worked for justice before

us, the people still doing it today, and the people who have the potential to join in. God is working through us to see wrongs made right in the world.

God has a plan for justice in this world, and I think that plan is us. Rather than wondering what God is doing for justice, we can choose to be part of the answer. We can let God use us to see the wrongs made right in the world. Because **God loves justice**, God is offering us the choice to help join in and bring it to the world.

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## APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

Just imagine if we all said, “Yes!” to joining in God’s work for justice in this world together.

**Small Step:** For some of us, the best way to step into the work is to change the way we see it. It’s to **ask new questions**. Instead of asking, “What is God doing?” we can ask things like:

- “What does God think about this person or this situation?”
- “What are God’s people doing to right this wrong?”
- “How can I learn more about this injustice?”
- “What would God have me do to help?”
- “How can I let God use me?”

**Next Step:** For others of us, maybe the best next step is to **keep looking around to see the work God has already done and is currently doing**. Who are the people God has used to work toward justice in the past? Read about their work, learn about what they experienced, and be inspired to continue the moves they made toward justice. Then, consider the people you see joining in God’s work for justice today. Who are they? What are they working toward? How can you follow along or join in what they’re doing now?

**Big Step:** Remember, God loves justice, and we’re part of God’s plan for justice in this world. So, as you ask new questions and learn about others who you can join in the work, **be brave enough to act**. Take just one step toward joining others in the work God is doing to fight for justice. The good news is you’re not doing it alone! You’re in it with all sorts of people taking steps, both big and small, toward a better tomorrow.

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## LANDING

1 MINUTE

I want to encourage you to talk with your small group today about what choosing to join God’s work for justice might look like. We created small group to be a safe space for you to talk about what’s happening in your life and encourage each other to grow in your faith. So today, talk about the fact that **God loves justice**. And remember that God created you to be part of that work in the world!

Now, when you go to small group, I want you to think about this question: **Where have you seen God working for justice?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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