

JUSTICE FOR ALL

WEEK 2 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

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

Bible

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

WHAT?

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?

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?

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?**

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)*
- 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?**