

JUSTICE FOR ALL

WEEK 3 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

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

Bible

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

WHAT?

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?

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?

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?**
 - * **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.**

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.**

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?**