

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

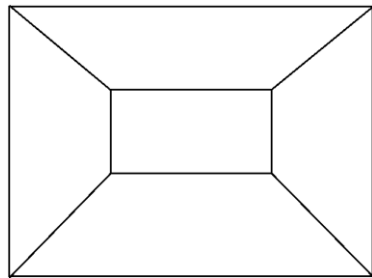
Lesson 2: Acting Justly

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to Micah 6:8 as the framework for the next 3 lessons
- Students will learn that justice is a foundational value of God's Kingdom
- Students will identify opportunities to act justly in their everyday lives

Materials Needed

- ☐ 1 pen per student
- ☐ 1 blank place mat template per group of 3-4 students
 - You may also use the template below as an example and have students draw the shape on blank paper or chart paper

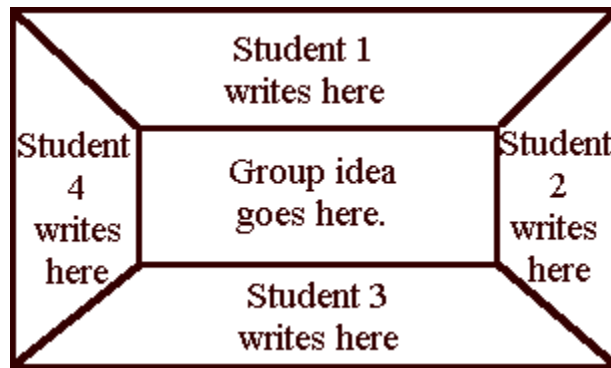


- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 per student
- ☐ Pencil crayons or markers (min. 2 per student)
- ☐ 1 piece of chart paper
- ☐ 2-4 pieces of blank paper

Minds On

Have students form groups of 4. Distribute pens/markers to all the students and a copy of the place mat template per group.

Each student will write their ideas in one outer section of the place mat (see diagram below). After one minute, the group will rotate the paper to read what the person beside them wrote. They can add any ideas or thoughts they have. Have the group rotate the mat every minute until everyone has read each person's section. Then, as a group, they can discuss and boil down the main point/best idea and write it in the center rectangle on the page.



Have the students write their answer to the question: What does God want from us? (Leader's note: You may consider writing this question on a white board or piece of chart paper to help students remember the question and stay focused.)

Gather the groups together and have each group share what they wrote in the center of their page.

Action

Ask students if they found the activity easy or challenging? Are they generally confident in what God wants, or does pleasing God feel more like a guessing game?

Prompt: The Israelites had God's law, but they still struggled to please God. The book of Micah has a message calling God's people out of disobedience and apathy, and one verse in particular spells out what he wants from the people. (Have a volunteer read Micah 6:8.) We are going to focus on this verse for the next few weeks and break it down piece by piece to grow as a group in pleasing God. The first piece is "act justly" or "do what is right." (translations vary)

Distribute a copy of Appendix 1 to each student and instruct them to choose two different coloured pencil crayons or markers. Ask your students to read the whole passage, then underline or circle the sentences that demonstrate justice with one colour, and to mark the sentences that show injustice with the other. If you have time, students can pair up and compare what they've coloured before you begin the group discussion.

Ask your students to suggest examples of what justice looks like and record their answers on a piece of chart paper. There are a number of ideas in the Matthew 25 passage, and some of the answers from the opening activity might also be appropriate.

Questions for Discussion:

- Who are the people being judged in this passage? ["All the nations" – all people]
- What is the basis for the judgment? [How people treated others/good deeds that they did]
- What do the righteous and unrighteous people have in common in this passage? [They do not realize they will be judged for their actions/treatment of others]
- Does this mean that we have to do good works for our salvation? [There is room for discussion here – we do not **earn** our salvation by doing good works, but James 2:17 does say that faith without works is dead]

The key concept for students to understand from this lesson is that **The foundation of justice is that all people have equal worth and value in God's eyes.** Jesus says we

should treat others not just how we want to be treated, but how we would treat him if he appeared in front of us!

Prompt: Jesus is using this story as a teaching example for how people should live, and not to explain how the final judgment will literally happen (so no, it does not mean that we earn our salvation by acting justly). The point he is making is that many people who please God the most don't consider their actions to be special, it is just what happens when they treat all people fairly and with dignity. Other people may think that they are really pleasing God because they do good works and obey God's commandments, but if they are driven by selfishness or pride then they are missing the point.

Turning back to the chart paper with brainstormed ideas for justice, ask your students to think of who in their lives they can serve in these ways. Remind your students that they have individual spheres of influence with their friends and family, but as a group they can combine their efforts to expand that sphere of influence in the greater community.

Depending on your context, some suggestions are

- help your group organize a food drive
- write encouragement cards to members of the congregation
- research the corporate responsibility policies of businesses your students support.

Invite your group to investigate how their favourite clothing company or coffee shop treats its employees and whether their goods are produced fairly (if not, can they find an alternative business to support?). Tom's shoes is one brand that emphasizes corporate responsibility (www.toms.com). If you take this route, it would be appropriate to follow up and allow students to present their findings to each other or even the broader congregation.

Consolidate/Debrief

To close the lesson, have students return to the groups they were in for the place mat activity. In light of the lesson and discussion, allow your students to adapt the center statements if they wish. Ask each group to share their main ideas.

When the groups have finished, gather everyone together to close in prayer, and ask God to reveal any areas of injustice where students can make a change.

Appendix 1

Matthew 25:31-46 (NLT)

³¹ “But when the Son of Man ^[a] comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations ^[b] will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, ^[c] you were doing it to me!’

⁴¹ “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. ^[d] ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’

⁴⁵ “And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”