

## WEEK 4

### TEACHING GUIDE

ON THE  
FLIP  
SIDE

### BIG IDEA

God flips our definition of justice.

### BIBLE

Psalm 99:1-9; Zechariah 7:9;  
Romans 5:6-11, 12:19-21

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Flip, Land, Read & Count Relay

- Welcome to our final week of *On the Flip Side*, where we've been talking about the many ways God flips our lives, understandings, and perspectives completely upside down. We have one more big flip to talk about today – but first, let's see those flipping skills one more time!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need all the supplies from the previous weeks' opening activities: a variety of bottles of water in different sizes, ranging from [8 ounces](#) to [one gallon](#), or even [2.5 gallons](#), [poster board](#), a list of words for students to read, chairs or a table students can lay on, [plastic traffic cones](#), and prizes. Before your teaching time, create at least two identical relay race courses, using the instructions from Weeks 1-3. To play, split your students into teams and have them race to complete the course, one station (and one student) at a time. Give the teams prizes according to their placement in the race. Create as many stations as you'd like, depending on the size of your group and difficulty you'd prefer, but you'll want at least three:*
  - **LAND:** *At least one teammate must successfully flip and land one water bottle.*
  - **READ:** *At least one teammate must lay upside down on a table or set of chairs and read at least one word upside down.*
  - **COUNT:** *At least one teammate must flip and land a plastic cone at least once.*

#### QUESTION | What if someone broke the rules?

- Anytime we watch or play in a competition, we expect things to be fair. In every game, there are rules that help us understand who wins or loses. And if the rules are broken, we expect there to be consequences.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond to the following questions.*
  - What are some ways the rules of the game could have been broken?
  - How would you have reacted if any of those things had happened?
  - If the rules had been broken, what consequences would you have wanted to see?

- In most competitions, the rules are clear — and so are the consequences for breaking those rules. We could lose points, our opponents could get an extra advantage, or we could be disqualified.
  - Having clear rules keeps the game fair and fun. The rules allow us to easily say what's "wrong" and "right."
  - Having a clear punishment allows us to quickly and easily resolve a conflict. If someone breaks a rule, they're penalized, and the game continues. No hard feelings! (Usually.)
- But outside of the games we watch or play, real life is a little more complicated. There are plenty of times people do things that are wrong, hurtful, or annoying, but . . .
  - They never really get punished for it.
  - Or if they do get punished, it doesn't really solve the problem.
- When we've been wronged, and it feels like justice hasn't been served, it's understandable if we get a little angry about it.

### OBJECT LESSON | The Flip Board (Part 1)

- Has anyone ever made you so angry you thought, "Ugh, I hope they get what they deserve — I hope they hit their elbow super hard, their pet hamster runs away, their social media accounts get hacked, and they spill a slushy all over themselves, all in the same day"?
- **What's one ridiculous punishment you wish would happen to someone who's made you angry?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, prepare a large [two-sided white board that can be flipped](#). On one side, write, draw, or use the Big Idea images provided in your Graphics & Video folder to display this week's Big Idea. When you're ready to teach, keep that side of the board hidden. On the blank side, write students' responses to the above question.
- For the last few weeks, we've been talking some of the things God has the power to flip upside down in our lives. As we wrap up our series today, we're going to talk about situations where someone has done something "wrong" — and what it means to make things "right" again.

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
  - **Have you ever been punished for something that didn't seem fair? What happened?**
  - **\* Can you think of any wrongs that can be made right by someone getting punished? Can you think of any that can't?**

### STORY | Talk about a time you hurt someone you cared about (Part 1).

- When we're the ones who've been "wronged," we often convince ourselves punishing the person who hurt us will make things "right again." But when we're the ones who've messed up, it's funny how our perspective changes.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Begin to tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time you hurt someone you cared about in a way that required time and effort to repair. Share what happened and how the relationship was damaged. How did you wrong them? Did you face any punishment for what you did? Whether you did or not, why would a punishment not have been enough to make things right? Don't share if or how the relationship was restored yet. You'll finish telling this story later.

- So what do we do when a relationship has gone wrong?
  - When we're the ones who've wronged someone else, it's not always clear how to make things right again.
  - And when we're the ones who've been wronged, we might want the person who hurt us to be punished in some way. That's "justice," after all . . . right?

### **SCRIPTURE** | Psalm 99:4-9

- Throughout the Bible, you'll find a lot of talk about "justice." Scripture says God is a God of justice, invites us to act justly, and tells us Jesus came to rule the world with justice.
  - But what does "justice" mean? That's a pretty important question because we humans have a history of getting this wrong.
  - Over and over again, God has invited us to think about "justice" differently. Scripture gives us a vision of justice that isn't just about punishing people for what they've done wrong. It's about something so much more.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 99:4-9.*
- According to the author of this psalm, God:
  - Loves justice.
  - Is just.
  - Is right.
  - Is holy.
  - Punishes misdeeds.
  - *And* is forgiving.
- We don't need to know everything about Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel to understand this passage, but we do need to know a few things.
  - In this psalm, the author is inviting God's people to think back on their long history of trying (and often failing) to follow God.
  - When they got things wrong, God often intervened to help set things right. But through it all, God didn't abandon them. God chose to forgive and restore their relationship instead.

### **SCRIPTURE** | Zechariah 7:9

- There are so many passages in Scripture where God invites us to see "justice" not simply as "punishment" for doing something wrong, but as an invitation to make a relationship right again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Zechariah 7:9.*
- When God was wronged by us, God didn't simply try to punish us. Instead, God chose to do something more difficult: find a way to restore our relationship. That's God's definition of "justice."
- In the same way, God invites us to show the same kind of justice to each other — not to simply punish each other when we hurt each other, but to find a way to restore our relationships through mercy and compassion.

### **SCRIPTURE** | Romans 5:6-11

- When people wrong us, it's human nature to want to see them pay — to want justice.
  - Some people think God works like that too. They think God is just waiting for a chance to punish us for every horrible thing we've done.
  - But 2,000 years ago, God decided to flip that idea upside down by coming to earth as Jesus.

- Rather than eagerly looking for ways to punish humanity for our wrongs, Jesus actually gave his life in order to heal and restore our relationship with God forever.
- Take a look at what the apostle Paul had to say about this in his letter to the Romans.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Romans 5:6-11.*
- The good news of Jesus is this: we've all messed up and damaged our relationship with God, but Jesus came to make our wrongs right.
  - That doesn't mean Jesus showed up, excited to punish all of us in anger. That's not how God's justice works. In fact, in John 3:17, Jesus said he didn't come to condemn us, but to save and rescue us!
  - Jesus came to restore our broken relationship with God through his forgiveness, mercy, and compassion.
- Paul says we were all once sinful, powerless, and even "enemies" of God. But God didn't treat us like enemies. God wasn't determined to punish us. Instead, God came to Earth and Jesus . . .
  - Got close to us.
  - Loved us.
  - Gave everything he had for us.
  - Did his part in restoring our relationship with God.
- Through Jesus, our relationship with God can be restored and reconciled. That's because God's definition of "justice" has always been about making wrong things right.

### OBJECT LESSON | The Flip Board (Part 2)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Using the same two-sided white board you used earlier, flip it so the Big Idea is made visible.*
- God's definition of "justice" has always been different from ours. While we've focused on rules and punishments, God has been inviting us to see something better.
  - God's justice doesn't just punish in anger, but seeks to restore what's broken out of love.
  - God's justice isn't content to let broken things stay broken or wrong things stay wrong. God's justice is always looking to restore what's broken and right what's gone wrong.
  - When we wronged God, Jesus made our relationship right again. And now he invites us to do the same for each other. That's how **God flips our definition of justice.**

## *NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?*

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **\* How is God's definition of justice often different from ours?**
  - **\* Why is it good news that God's definition of "justice" is more than just punishment?**
  - Instead of punishing us, how would you explain what Jesus did to restore our relationship with God?
  - What are some reasons why our relationships with another person might need to be restored? Which of those situations have you personally experienced?

### STORY | Talk about a time you hurt someone you cared about (Part 2).

- When someone hurts or angers us, we tend to ask questions like . . .

- Which rule was broken?
- Who broke it?
- What's their punishment?
- But God's justice (the kind that restores) asks different questions, like . . .
  - Who was harmed?
  - What relationship was damaged?
  - How can we work together to make it right?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Return to your earlier story about a time you hurt someone you cared about, in a way that required time and effort to repair. This time, share how the relationship was restored. What steps did you both take toward restoration? What did you learn or observe in the process?*
- God's definition of "justice" makes love and restoration the goal – not punishment or revenge. Through Jesus, we can see our relationship with God restored. And through Jesus, we can also learn how to work toward restoration in our relationships with each other too.

### REFLECTION | Restorative Justice: Practice Round

- "Restorative justice" is an idea we find all over Scripture, but that's not the only place we can find it! The kind of justice Jesus modeled for us is actively being used to right wrongs in the world around us right now! This kind of justice flips some of our ideas about justice upside down.
  - It flips our focus: from punishment to healing.
  - It flips our attention: from the person who caused harm to the people who were harmed.
  - And for the person who caused the harm, it flips their next step: from being punished to taking responsibility.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the double-sided handouts provided in your Week 4 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. While you teach, guide your students through the following reflection, where they will reflect on a time they were hurt, then flip the page and reflect on a time they hurt someone else.*
- To help us imagine what it could look like to experience justice that heals and restores (instead of just punish), let's reflect on some real situations that have actually happened to us. Then let's imagine new ways forward.
  - **THINK OF A TIME YOU WERE HURT.** This should be a situation you remember well, but it shouldn't be one of the most hurtful things that has ever happened to you.
    - What happened?
    - How do you feel about what happened?
    - What did you think at the time?
    - What have you thought about since?
    - What has been the most difficult part?
    - What would you need to feel better?
    - What could they do to make it right?
  - **THINK OF A TIME YOU CAUSED HURT.** This will probably be difficult, but it's so important to be honest with ourselves. We've all caused hurt, both to God and to others. But with Jesus, there is a way to right those wrongs!
    - What happened?
    - Who was there when it happened?
    - What were you thinking at the time?
    - Who was hurt by your actions?
    - How do you think they've been affected?

- What could you do to make things right?
- What could you do to make sure it doesn't happen again?

## RESPONSE | Justice in Action

- God's justice isn't content to let broken things stay broken or wrong things stay wrong. So this week, what would it look like for you to "flip" your own definition of "justice" so it looks more like God's? How can you work toward restoring something that has been broken or gone wrong . . .
  - **IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE ELSE?** A moment ago, we imagined some ways to restore a relationship that has gone wrong, but how could you turn those ideas into action? How could you work toward God's definition of justice in those situations?
  - **IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?** Jesus came to restore your relationship with God, but how have you responded to him? Do you need to take another step toward him today like he took a step toward you? Remember, Jesus didn't come to Earth because he wanted to punish you for all the times you failed him, but to rescue, heal, and restore you. So how do you need Jesus to make your relationship with God right now?
- With God, "justice" is about something so much more beautiful than "punishment." It's about healing. That's how **God flips our definition of justice**. Today, what do you need God's help to heal and restore?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - Read Romans 12:19-21. What stands out to you in this passage and why? What questions do you have about it?
  - Do you have any damaged relationships you'd like to see restored? What would it take to restore them?
  - \* Do you have any damaged relationships you don't want to see restored? What are some valid reasons to not rebuild a relationship that was broken?
  - This week, what's one relationship (either with God or another person) you want to see restored? How can we support you?

