



Welcome to *Current*!

Current: Seeking Justice Together is a digital curriculum designed for the whole congregation to explore justice for 13 weeks. The Bible outline for *Current* (page 5) begins with Jesus' call for justice in Luke 4 and then is divided into two sections. Section 1 (sessions 2–7) is titled “Caring for the Vulnerable.” Section 2 (sessions 8–13) is titled “Setting Things Right.” Both sections include stories about individuals and systems, the personal and corporate, “common people” and those in the highest positions of power. Both sections call for change in the church and in the civic arena. These stories offer examples of individuals who bravely and persistently sought to “do justice” in their families and communities. The movement from “Caring for the Vulnerable” to “Setting Things Right” reflects the reality that loving, caring, and speaking up for others is not the finish line. Doing justice requires radical rethinking and action to change systems and practices that harm some and benefit others.

The Youth folder for *Current: Seeking Justice Together* includes the following items for leading a faith formation class for youth in grades 6–12:

- Weekly Session Plans
- Student Pages
- Readers Theaters
- Resource Pack with posters and story pictures

Music used in *Current* is sold separately. Purchase the double album *Everybody Sing* in MP3 or CD format from www.ShineCurriculum.com/product-category/product-type/music/. Song motions are available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras.

Permission

Permission is granted to churches or organizations who purchase the Youth folder to print and/or use the images and documents in online or in-person teaching sessions and emails or social media posted to private groups or websites for use within the church's or organization's circle of ministry.

These resources may also be printed and distributed or emailed to teachers or families within the church's or organization's circle of ministry.



Theme Introduction

In Luke 4:14–30, Jesus reads the words of Isaiah as he boldly proclaims that he has been sent to preach good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. As followers of Jesus, we do this work as well. Often Christians talk about being Christ’s hands and feet. There is truth in this statement, yet God’s justice is not only our work in the world, but God’s work in us. As we are transformed and become aligned with the heart of God in Christ, we are better able to reflect God’s justice and peace through our lives to the world.

What does the Bible say about God’s justice? In the Old Testament, justice (*mishpat* in Hebrew) is not just about fair punishment for wrongdoing; it’s about *restorative* justice, which involves caring for the vulnerable and changing systems so that injustice does not happen in the first place. To fully understand biblical justice, it is also essential to consider righteousness. *Tzadeqah*, the Hebrew word for righteousness, refers to right relationships, where people are treated with dignity and respect because they bear the image of God. Justice and righteousness are sometimes used interchangeably in the Bible and are frequently used to describe the character of God. Taken together, these concepts offer guidance for living faithfully in a broken world.

Living with justice and righteousness looks different from person to person, church to church, and community to community. Yet, in all contexts, it is essential that there is both inner and outer work. Prayer, reflection, truth-telling, and repentance lead to inner transformation (*righteousness*). This transformation provides the necessary wisdom and discernment to know what actions to take in the church, community, and world (*justice*). This outward-focused action then leads back to the inner work, challenging us to look at the actions we took and how they impacted us and the world. This is a lifelong journey toward loving kindness, courage, justice, peace, and reconciling love in relationship with God, other people, self, and the earth.

Session Plan

At-a-Glance Chart

This chart includes the supplies, Shine materials, and preparation tasks for the session.

Connect

Begin the session with a get-to-know-you activity and a spiritual practice. Teaching tips are provided.

Media Connections

Incorporate the suggested books, art, songs, and videos wherever it works best in your session. Preview items to be sure they will work well for your group.

Explore

Choose from three options to help youth explore the Bible story and justice theme. Options include Do Justice, Link, Wrestle, Collaborate, and Respond.

Week 1

Jesus Calls for Justice

Luke 4:14-30

Story Summary
Jesus returned to Galilee and taught everyone who heard him. In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah. The scripture proclaimed good news for the poor and the year of the Lord's favor. Jesus told them that the scripture had come true. Jesus taught that his words would be accepted in his hometown, comparing the people to the Israelites in English and Hebrew time. The crowd turned against him, but Jesus stepped away.

Faith Link
We can care for "outsiders."

Prepare

Jesus Calls for Justice

Luke 4:14-30

by Carrie Martens

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." These words from the prophet Isaiah are often read during Advent. Some receive them with fond nostalgia, while others experience deep longing. They are familiar words about a hoped-for future. And when read from Isaiah, they are full of hope and promise.

This text from Luke invites a much more immediate hearing. Here, Jesus, fresh from his encounter with the devil in the wilderness, the waters of his baptism have dried, but his baptism of the Spirit is ongoing. Word of his teaching has begun to spread through the countryside. Now he has arrived in his hometown of Nazareth to preach his inaugural sermon. When he speaks these prophetic words from Isaiah, there is not only the opportunity to witness his bold proclamation that he is the fulfillment of the promise, but also the crowd's reaction—the first and the second.

After Jesus reads from the scripture and declares that he is the anointed one, Luke says that all were amazed. Those who knew Jesus when he was just a little boy are delighted. They speak well of him, and they wonder, "Is not this Joseph's son?" This is their first reaction.

And then Jesus turns the tables, not the last time he will do so. He sees through their admiration. He knows they want him to perform wonders for them—his people—so he has done for others, but Jesus knows what they really need is difficult truth. The truth that release, healing, and freedom are for everyone, not just for them. Chalk.

Jesus reminds them of the years of drought in which Isaiah is sent, not to an outsider, but to an insider from Nazareth. And among all the hopes Isaiah could have had, God sends him to Nazareth, the town.

Jesus' proclamation is both good news and difficult truth. And this leads to the crowd's second reaction—anger. They realize that Jesus is criticizing them for their exclusivity and proclamation with purity, and they are filled with rage. They drive him out of town as they can attempt to drive him off a cliff.

In Luke, Jesus' prophecy is not an image of distant future, but an immediate call. Jesus calls the people to bring release, healing, and freedom for all people, as God has been doing throughout their history. And there is also the reminder that what is good news for one can be difficult truth for another.

Read the words that Jesus speaks from the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:18-19. What might these words look like in your own community? How are Jesus' words good news for you? How are they difficult truth?

God, remind me daily that you are for all people. Help me to receive your gift of healing even as I work to bring about your healing for others, Jesus.

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<p>Prepare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the scripture passage and the Bible story on the Prepare page. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible
<p>Connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Media Connections. Hang up the Amos 5 Poster (PDF) on a blank wall that has a large supply of sticky notes can be placed under it. Refer to the diagram on page 11 in this guide to see how the "Justice and Righteousness" Display will look. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amos 5 Poster (PDF) "Justice and Righteousness" Display (p. 10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large pillar candle Small candles, one per person Lighter or matches Markers Unopened unsharpened pencils Blue sticky notes (3-4 per person) They or pencils 	
<p>Show the Story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1: Read Readers Theater (p. 16) for each youth. Option 2: Laminated half sheets of paper with various numbers at the top: 14-15, 16-17, 18-20-21, 22-24, 25-27, 28-29, and 30. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers Theater (p. 16) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible Papers with verse Markers Drawing supplies
<p>Response Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose which Epiphany options you will offer and gather needed supplies. Print the Student Page for each youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Supplies lists on Explore page. Student Page 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Supplies lists on Explore page.
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Connect

to Each Other

Welcome youth. Introduce yourself by saying your name, your heritage or current hometown, the name of at least one family member, and the name of a friend. For instance, "My name is Leo. My hometown is Parkland. I am the son of Garcia. I am the cousin of Emma. I am the friend of Sam." Have youth introduce themselves in the same way.

Media Connections

Art: Show of the Hat near Heaven by James Turrell. Internet search for "YouTube" or by Anne Hooper.

Video: "Justice" by Billie Eilish. "The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me" by The Magicians (YouTube).

Song: "Twenty Twenty" by The Roots. "Justice" by Dave Matthews (YouTube).

Teaching Tips

Some youth may be very aware of issues of justice and equity, while others may not pay much attention to equity outside their home or school. The "Justice" video by Billie Eilish is a very helpful introduction to biblical justice, which calls righteousness with justice. Biblical justice is not about punishment for wrongdoing but about restoring justice, which involves caring for the vulnerable and changing systems so that justice does not happen in the first place. Biblical righteousness refers to right relationships, where people are treated with dignity and respect because they bear the image of God.

The "Justice and Righteousness" Display described on page 10 in this guide will be built each week to show youth's growing understanding of these concepts.

Encounter

The Bible Story

Choose one of these storytelling options:

- Assign the parts of Nazareth, Jesus, Crowd Member 1, and Crowd Member 2. Have youth read the Readers Theater on page 16.
- Distribute half sheets of paper that have been labeled with verse numbers at the top: 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-24, 25-27, 28-29, and 30. Work an individual or in pairs to create a group center strip. Each youth or pair should read the verses from Luke 4:14 that are listed on their paper and draw what happened in the verses. For example, if they get the verses labeled 14-15, they might draw Jesus approving the synagogue. Put the papers together to form one center strip and read Luke 4:14-30 as youth look at the pictures.

Dig In

Ask several questions to help youth explore the Bible story in greater depth.

- Read Luke 4:18-23. What might be good news for people who are poor? What do you think Jesus meant when he said "Is not this Joseph's son?"
- Jesus said, "No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." Why might people who had known Jesus since he was a child treat his teaching, release, and mercy of God?
- Who are the "outsiders" and "insiders" in this story from the perspective of the crowd? Based on the story, do you think God sent people to this spot? Why or why not?
- For some, anger is a challenging emotion. If you could only use one of these pictures to tell the story, which ones would you choose and why? What is most important?

Live It

Ask several questions to help youth connect the Bible story to their own experiences.

- It was a hard message for Jesus' listeners. Imagine Jesus coming to your church and saying, "There were many people sick with COVID-19 in your church, but God only helped the people in (another church, city, country)? How would you feel? What might your response be?"
- Who is viewed and treated as an "outsider" in your church, school, or community? Why is that? When have you experienced being an "outsider"?
- What is the invitation in this story? In what ways might Jesus have wanted his listeners to think or live differently?

Teaching Tip

It is not necessary to ask all of the Dig In and Live It questions. Choose questions that you think will connect best with your group or ask questions that come out of your own study of this week's scripture. Youth may even find that some questions are worth asking. The goal is to discuss both the text and the ways that it connects to youth's personal experience and modern-day life. Some of these questions could also be incorporated into conversation during Epiphany.

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Explore

Do Justice

Remember the stories that Jesus referred to in Luke 4. The story of Elijah and the widow in Israel is 1 Kings 17:1-16. The story of Elisha and Naaman is in 2 Kings 5:1-14. What do you think Jesus was trying to communicate to his listeners by telling the stories of Elijah and Elisha in this way? (That he means that God didn't care about the widows in Israel or the people who were sick in Israel? Or that God cared about the foreigners more than the people of Israel?)

Supplies

- Bible

Explore

Link

The widow that Elisha helped and the man that Elisha healed would have been seen as outsiders by the people of Israel. Both were from other countries and neither were Jews. Read about "outsider art" on Student Page 24. Then watch the video "Outsider Art" by Made in the Magic City (YouTube). Use approach in "see what you're up to." What reactions do youth have that they could use for good in the world? They might not be artists, but perhaps they have other talents, interests, and skills that could make a more peaceful, just world.

Supplies

- Student Page
- Laptop or tablet with internet connection

Explore

Respond

Distribute copies of the Comparison Chart on page 11 in this guide. Have youth sign up or work in small groups to compare Isaiah's original prophecy with the words that Luke records Jesus reading in Luke 4:18-19. Provide colored pencils or highlighters so youth can mark up the chart as they consider the following questions: What does Jesus have over? (Highlight concepts or sentences in Isaiah's prophecy that are not included in your reading.) What does Jesus change or add? (Use a different color to mark things that are unique to Jesus' reading.) Why do you think he does that? Jesus said that he had fulfilled that prophecy in their hearing that day. What do you think he meant by that?

Supplies

- Comparison Chart (p. 11)
- Colored pencils or highlighters

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Empower

Read Amos 5:21-24 together from the Amos 5 Poster in the Resource Pack. Have someone color all the spaces marked with a 2 on the poster. Challenge youth to watch for examples of justice and injustice in their world, both small and large. What creative ideas do they have about addressing these situations?

Pray:

God, you desire a world where all people are in right relationship with each other and with you. You desire a world in which no one is in need, excluded, rejected, or treated unfairly. You invite us to join you in creating such a world. Show us what part we can play, Amen.

Empower

Send youth into the world with a challenge and prayer.



General Preparation

1. *Current* does not have pre-determined dates.
 - Fill in the Bible outline on the next page with the dates you plan to use the materials.
 - Distribute the outline to all leaders.
2. The materials for each week are compiled into one file.
 - Email or print and distribute the weekly files to the chosen leaders.
 - Email or print and distribute the Youth Overview document so leaders have information about the theme and structure of the unit.
3. The Resource Pack includes pieces for this age group.
 - Print the Resource Pack posters and game.
 - Optional:* Print a set of verse posters for each youth to take home or email the Resource Pack contents to each family.
4. Each week, also print:
 - Readers Theater, one for each character in the script
 - Student Page, one per youth
5. A “Justice and Righteousness” display will be used throughout the quarter.
 - Refer to the diagram on page 1.8 in week 1 to set it up.



Seeking Justice Together

Bible Outline

Fill in the dates and distribute to leaders.

Week	Date	Session Title	Scripture Text
1		Jesus Calls for Justice	Luke 4:14-30
CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE			
2		Welcoming Everyone	James 1:27-2:8, 14-17
3		Caring for Those in Need	Matthew 25:31-46
4		Enough for All	Acts 4:32-37
5		Sisters Ask for Land	Numbers 27:1-11
6		Nathan Confronts a King	2 Samuel 12:1-15
7		Esther Saves Her People	Esther 2-8
SETTING THINGS RIGHT			
8		Proclaim Jubilee	Leviticus 25
9		A Son Returns Home	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
10		Zacchaeus Makes Amends	Luke 19:1-10
11		Jesus Turns the Tables	Mark 11:15-18
12		A Widow Insists on Justice	Luke 18:1-8
13		Nehemiah Sets an Example	Nehemiah 5