ICE BREAKER

Leader: In this icebreaker, students get a lighthearted glimpse of injustice as one unfortunate team will find the odds unfairly stacked against them.

You will need two sets of building materials (one set for each team) and enough blindfolds to cover one team of participants. Building materials could be anything from a Lego set to scissors, cardboard, and duct tape.

Divide students into two teams (freshman vs. seniors, boys vs. girls, etc.) and select four students from each team to participate as representatives in the icebreaker. Give each team a set of building materials and tell them what they will be building: a washing machine, a rocket, or a boat that can float...get creative! You will be amazed by your students' ingenuity. The team that builds the best version of your challenge wins.

But here is the twist: after a few minutes, place the blindfolds on each member of one of the teams. This small injustice will set you up for the lesson. If you have time, you can have each team build a second thing. This time swap which team is blindfolded to make the experience feel fairer.

Once the competition is completed, have participants clean up and return to their seats so you can begin the session.

Would you say the competition was fair or unfair? Explain your answer.

Life is not fair. Sometimes, stuff happens in life that's so unfair and so unjust that we may

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wonder if God is ok with the injustice in the world. But as we'll learn in this session, God's heart is just and he calls us to seek justice in our spheres of influence.

VIEW

Watch Session 5: *God's Heart Is Just* (8 minutes).

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REVIEW

Francis opened by saying he thinks "one of the most misunderstood attributes of God is his fairness," or his justness. **How would you define what it means to be fair or just?**

Many people take issue with the concept of God being fair because of the way the Bible speaks of him punishing people for sin. What's your reaction to God punishing people for sin? Is God unfair or unjust because he punishes for sin? Why, or why not?

There are a couple of common misconceptions regarding the idea of God's fairness: either God is loving and therefore doesn't punish sin, or God punishes sin and therefore isn't loving. But both mistakenly pit God's love against his justice and assume that the two can't co-exist. **Have you ever been in a situation when you witnessed a wrong or injustice that went unpunished? How did that experience make you feel?**

Why is it unfair or unjust to let sin and injustice go unpunished?

When we look at Jesus on the cross, we see a clear picture of God's love and justice. God loves us, but our sins have to be paid for, so Jesus went to the cross (love) and endured the punishment for sin himself (justice). When did it first occur to you that Jesus's death on the cross paid for the sins you've committed?

The Bible calls God our judge. Francis took us to the book of Revelation where we encounter God's judgment. **When you think about God as a judge—and about him judging sin—what thoughts and emotions do you experience?**

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What questions or concerns do you have about God's judgment?

When we trust in Jesus for our salvation, we are justified by God or made right with him. God judges Jesus in our place, freeing us from the punishment we deserve. **Do you ever find the gospel difficult to believe? If so, for what reasons?**

What's one thing you could do to remind yourself of God's love when you feel far from him?

When we talk about our salvation, we shouldn't just talk about what we are freed from (punishment of our sins) but also what we are free to do. One day, we will stand before God and give an account of our lives—we will have to answer for the way we spent our time, gifts, and opportunities. What unique gifts has God given you to serve him? What opportunities has God given you to use those gifts?

BIBLE JOURNEY

The only way into eternal life with God is through faith in Christ, the one who has been judged for sin in our place. His life, death, and resurrection prove that God is both loving and just. But if we are saved, and free from sin, why do we still talk about justice, punishment, and judgment? Read Romans 3:23–24.

The Bible is clear that each of us is guilty of breaking God's law. We're guilty of what the Bible calls sin. What's your reaction to the idea that everyone is guilty of sin? In what ways do we prove that we are all sinful?

If we're all guilty of sin, then we're also deserving of God's judgment. But God has made a way for us to avoid his judgment. Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live and died the death we all deserve so that we could live. **Do you remember the first time you encountered Jesus in the Bible? What were your first impressions?**

Believing the good news that Jesus has been judged in our place isn't complicated. It's pretty simple, actually. We simply trust that he died in our place and commit ourselves to obeying his teachings. But if we're not careful, as we grow more familiar with Christianity, we can develop a numbness to his sacrifice. It can become so familiar that it just seems normal—but the gospel is anything but normal! **How can we keep from growing numb to the good news that Jesus has been judged in our place?**

We are all sinners. There is also a way for all of us to be saved from the punishment of sin. But after we are saved, we still mess up. So, how RightNow Media

does God respond to rule-breakers like us? Matthew 11:28–30.

In this passage, Jesus offers an invitation to all who are weary, which includes many (if not all) of us. We can be weary from our battle with sin or the sin of others or the injustice we see in the world. **Are you weary? If so, what is wearing you down?**

We can go to Jesus for relief. He is inviting us to come and rest. Jesus has done the work and now just asks us to trust his work instead of thinking we have to do more to get God to notice us. The work is done—we now get to live in peace with God because of what Jesus has done. What's your reaction to Jesus's invitation? Do you have any hesitations about coming to Jesus for rest? If so, why? What could you do to press past your hesitations?

Jesus gives us the rest we truly need—rest from trying to be someone we're not, rest from trying to meet others' expectations of us, and rest from trying to justify ourselves. What extra work do you feel you must do for God? What would change if you believed Jesus already finished that work?

The ultimate source of our weariness and burden, of course, is sin. And Jesus has taken that burden upon himself for us. We no longer have to carry the burden of our sin—it has been dealt with on the cross. What would it look like for you to give your weariness and burden to Jesus every day? How could we as a group help carry each other's burdens?

LAST WORD

God's heart is just—it's a statement that is both true and if we're honest, frightening. If God's heart is just, he's bound to punish all sin including the sins we have committed.

But, God's heart is not *only* just—it's also loving. God loves us so deeply that he made a way for us to be justified, and made right with him, without having to suffer the punishment we deserve. All we have to do, as he promises, is come to him in faith.