



WEEK 3

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

BACK TO THE FUTURE

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus calls us to do justice.

THE BIBLE

Luke 11:37-46; Amos 5:1-24; Acts 2:42

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | Which everyday object would you like to turn into a time machine?

- Welcome back to *Back to the Future*, where we're talking about how traveling between the past and the present can help change the future.
- Humanity hasn't yet figured out how to build a time machine, but if we could, **which everyday object would you like to turn into a time machine?** (The more ridiculous, the better.)
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

VIDEO | A Clip from Back To The Future

- In one time travel movie from the past, Marty McFly's mind is blown when his scientist friend turns something pretty unlikely into a time machine.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [a portion of this clip](#), but only from 4:43-5:06 to avoid inappropriate language.
- If I told you to imagine a time-traveling car, you'd probably picture something like a Tesla. But Doc built his time machine out of a DeLorean — a car that looked cool but was actually pretty terrible.
 - The DeLorean was only manufactured for two years, but there were years of anticipation before its release. People thought it was going to have tons of power and cool features.
 - When the car was finally available, people jumped at the chance to buy it. A lot of people even paid way more than it was worth. But it didn't take long for people to realize the DeLorean was not what they expected it to be.
 - Today, the DeLorean is considered to be one of the worst cars of all time. After two years, the company that manufactured them filed for bankruptcy.

STORY | Talk about a time you were surprisingly bad at something.

- I hate to admit it, but I can relate to the DeLorean!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when someone expected you to be good at something, but you weren't. Maybe you surprised your class with your awful singing voice, or looked athletic but were actually uncoordinated, or shocked your friends by not knowing something they all knew.*
- I'm sure we can all think of times when our reality didn't meet someone's expectations. Sometimes we assume people are one thing, only to be surprised when we find out they're actually not!
- You've probably figured this out by now, but sometimes we all need the reminder that looks can be deceiving.
 - The DeLorean may have looked cool (for the 80s), but it was one of the worst cars ever.
 - The people we might consider to be the least impressive are sometimes the ones who surprise us with their talent.
 - And sometimes the people who seem the most impressive aren't everything we think they are.

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

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.*
 - **If you had a time machine, how would you use it to impress people?**
 - ☆ **When you feel insecure, which are you more likely to do, and why: pretend to be something you're not? Show off? Put someone down?**

STORY | Talk about a time you pretended to be something you weren't.

- There are a lot of reasons outward impressions can be deceiving, but here's one: most of the time, we're all just trying to impress each other.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you pretended to be something you weren't in order to impress someone or make people like you. This can be as simple as pretending to know something you didn't know, laughing at a joke you didn't understand, or changing your style or preferences to be more like someone else's.*
- We all want to be liked, feel important, and be accepted. But when we don't feel liked, important, or accepted, we sometimes . . .
 - Act or pretend.
 - Show off or brag.
 - Put others down to make ourselves feel better.

POLL | Rule-Followers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to respond to the following questions with a show of hands.
 - **Do you know anyone who always follows the rules?**
 - **Are you someone who always follows the rules?**
- There are rules of behavior in every culture — even your school or group of friends has its own culture. Sometimes these rules are learned only through observation, but other times, these rules are written into laws or official codes of conduct.
- In Jesus' time, there were plenty of rules (both written and unwritten) that shaped the community and culture in which Jesus lived.
 - Think about your school or group of friends. Have you ever noticed how what's cool or acceptable is often determined by the most popular or influential people?
 - The same was true in Jesus' day. In their culture, some of the most influential people were the religious leaders. Those religious leaders really loved rules, but for all the wrong reasons.
- These leaders were experts in the law and knew every religious custom inside and out.
 - They had created a culture where following their rules wasn't just "cool" — it was right. And because they were the best at following their own rules, these leaders believed themselves to be the best and most right out of anyone.
 - So when Jesus sometimes ignored their rules and customs, these religious leaders didn't like it.

OBJECT LESSON | The Past and Future Timeline

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Continue to use the arrow you built during Week 1. As you teach, continuously reference where you are on the timeline, with left symbolizing the Old Testament passage, center symbolizing the time of Jesus, and right symbolizing present day.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 11:37-41

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Luke 11:37-41.
- Imagine this playing out. A religious leader invites Jesus to brunch. (Seriously — the word "dine" in this section of Scripture implies a morning or noon-time meal.)
 - The religious leader assumes Jesus would show up fully washed because that was the religious custom. Not a simple hand-wash, though — he wants Jesus to take a full-immersion ceremonial bath to meet his standard of purity.
 - When Jesus doesn't comply, the religious leader wants to know why Jesus isn't following his very important religious rules.
 - Jesus shocks him by saying those rules aren't that important to God. Other things, Jesus says, are more important, like committing yourself to love and justice.
- Jesus isn't afraid to be direct. He's not interested in being polite. He tells the truth.
 - Jesus says a cup can *look* clean on the outside while being filthy inside. Like that cool-looking DeLorean that turned out to be one of the worst cars ever made, Jesus says you might do a lot of good things, but your heart can still be full of greed and wickedness.

- Maybe you're thinking, "What an awkward brunch! Jesus was so rude!" But sometimes the most loving thing we can do is to tell someone the truth — especially when they're harming others. Keep that in mind as we continue reading what Jesus had to say.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 11:42-46

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 11:42-46.*
- Jesus is frustrated and mourning the mistreatment of people He loves and created — especially because the people causing them harm are people who claim to be spiritual leaders!
- Jesus warns these leaders that following the rules won't help them win God's approval if they don't share God's heart of love and justice for others. Worrying about our own rightness doesn't matter if we're not also worrying about the well-being of others.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
 - **How did the religious people in Jesus' time use religion to make themselves feel important? Do you think this is still a problem today? Why or why not?**
 - **Explain Jesus' metaphor about the cup. Even when we seem to be following God's rules, what are some things our hearts can be secretly filled with?**

SCRIPTURE | Amos 5:1-15, 5:21-24

- Jesus wasn't just wildly ranting about the Pharisees in this passage. Jesus' words were carefully crafted to make a point from the past.
 - Centuries before Jesus walked on earth, God sent prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and many more to deliver messages from God to God's people.
 - Often, the prophets were sent in order to tell God's people how they had strayed from God's righteousness and justice and how they could make things right again.
 - So when Jesus called out the Pharisees' sin, and called them back toward God's love and justice, Jesus was pointing back in time to the book of Amos.
- Amos was a prophet who had a lot to say to God's people, like . . .
 - Performing certain rituals or following certain rules doesn't make you righteous in God's eyes.
 - God doesn't care about all the good you do if you're oppressing people who are poor and in need.
 - Right living isn't just about you — it's about doing justice for the sake of others.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Amos 5:1-24 (or focus on verses 1, 7, 18, and 21-24).*
- Did you notice any phrases used by both Jesus and Amos? "Woe to you"!
 - Jesus knew the words of Amos and He knew the Pharisees knew them too. That's why He reached into the past and pulled Amos' warning into the present.
 - Jesus and Amos both cared enough for the leaders they were speaking to that they told them the truth: "You're doing a lot right, but you've missed the things that matter most."

- The Pharisees knew everything there was to know about rules and religious customs, but they had forgotten the most important things.
 - They forgot the words of Amos.
 - They forgot God wasn't impressed by them.
 - After they received God's love for themselves, they forgot to share it with others.
 - They forgot other people mattered.
 - They forgot God's heart for justice.
- What did Jesus hope they did instead? He hoped they would . . .
 - Remember the words of the past.
 - Humble themselves.
 - Lament the ways they contributed to injustice.
 - Commit themselves to the work of justice instead.
- And Jesus does the same for us. Because Jesus' mission was to set people free and rebuild what was destroyed, He invites us to . . .
 - Grieve the ways we've harmed others.
 - Consider how we can commit ourselves to freeing and rebuilding alongside Jesus.
 - Love God and others more than ourselves or our religion.
- Jesus is grieved when we commit injustices against each other — especially when we disguise our lack of compassion in religiosity. That's not how Jesus calls us to follow Him. **Jesus calls us to do justice.**

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

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.
 - ☆ **Have you ever felt like a cup that was clean on the outside but dirty on the inside? How do you think God is inviting you to change that?**
 - ☆ **Why do you think it's so important for us to recognize and lament the ways we've contributed to injustice?**

REFLECTION | Am I Doing (In)justice?

- So what about you? How are you doing justice? How have you contributed to injustice? How are you neglecting the work of justice right now?
- If you're not sure, that's okay! You're not a religious leader from 2,000 years ago, so maybe you're struggling to understand how Jesus' words and woes apply to you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, print the handouts provided in your Week 3 folder. Cut and place one under each seat, along with a pen. First, you'll ask students to write down questions for reflection. Then you'll ask them to write a prayer of lament.
- I'd like us to ask ourselves some challenging questions. You can write down every question or just write down the questions that you know you need to think about later.

- Have I taken something that wasn't mine?
- Have I taken advantage of someone else?
- Have I participated in something that hurt someone else?
- Have I missed a chance to share empathy with someone who is without a dad or mom?
- Have I shown kindness to children?
- Have I cared well for elderly folks?
- Have I allowed cruel or discriminatory words to live in my mind or conversations?
- Have I created safe spaces for people with disabilities or different abilities than my own?
- Have I ever fought for someone whose voice has been silenced?
- Am I willing to be an advocate for the needs of others?
- I hope you've identified a place in your life where you can learn to be a better doer of justice for others. But before we jump into action, let's do what Amos and Jesus invite us to do. Let's lament the ways we've failed to act justly in the past.
- We can grieve the ways we've contributed to injustice by offering a prayer to God that looks like this:
 - **CRY OUT:** Address Jesus. Let Him know you're coming to Him in prayer.
 - **LAMENT:** Talk about the problem. Describe why you're coming to God in prayer.
 - **CONFESS:** Say how you've either added to the problem with your actions or ignored the problem with your inaction.
 - **ASK:** Ask for God's help and guidance.
 - **PRAISE:** Say thank you for God's help, support, kindness, and love.

RESPONSE | Say Justice, Do Justice

- Now we know how to lament injustice like Jesus and the prophets did, but how do we actually do the work of justice? When you discover an injustice, you can:
 - Do something.
 - Say something.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, look again at students' responses on the Rebuilding Board from Week 2. Choose a few of their ideas, research how they can be an advocate in that area, and include those steps in this section. Your advocacy steps should be to 1) do something and 2) say something. We've included an example, but feel free to replace it with any injustice you'd like.
- Did you know there are 790 million people in the world who still lack access to safe drinking water? What can we do about this kind of injustice?
 - **DO SOMETHING:** For a week, we could limit our beverages to only water. We could even take the money we would have spent on coffee, sodas, energy drinks, and smoothies, and give it to an organization who works to help solve this problem, like [Charity: Water](#).
 - **SAY SOMETHING:** When someone asks, "why aren't you drinking anything but water?" you can say something like, "I drink water to recognize that many do not have it — it's to raise awareness for something important."
- Sometimes it's difficult to know where to begin on your justice journey. There are a lot of problems out there and most of them can feel bigger than you and me. But God didn't tell us to quit caring when we encountered big problems.

- Jesus and the prophets speak to us from the past, inviting us to join God in changing the future. There's so much that can be done when we decide **to do justice**.

OBJECT LESSON | Justice Takes All of Us

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Continue your jigsaw puzzle before or after your teaching time, reminding students know it will take some time to put it together, but you hope to have it finished by the end of this series. Continue keeping one of the central pieces of the puzzle hidden until the project is complete. During Week 4, when the project is nearly complete, you'll complete this object lesson.

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 one way you've contributed to injustice recently? If you lamented that today, what was that experience like?**
 - **Read Acts 2:42. How is this an example of Jesus' followers doing justice? What could we learn from their example?**
 - ☆ **What are some challenges we might face when pursuing justice? How can we prepare for each of those challenges?**
 - **What are some ways you'd like to grow on your journey to do justice? How can we grow together?**