



God Calls for Justice

Goal: To explore simple and positive ways to challenge unfairness.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Amos 1:1; 5:6-8, 10-15, 21-24

The prophet Amos often spoke blistering words to the people of Israel. He warned the people about the consequences of neglecting justice and practicing injustice against the weak (5:11). God calls the people to justice and to “seek the LORD and live” (1:6). If they do not, fire and doom await (vv. 6-9). God’s judgment is sure.

Injustice against the weak occurs when heavy taxes are levied and the rich live luxuriously by “afflicting the righteous, taking money on the side, turning away the poor who seek help” (5:12, CEB). Injustice corrupts worship, which is rejected by God (vv. 21-23).

Amos’s word is to “seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of heavenly forces, will be with you just as you have said. Hate evil, love good, and establish justice at the city gate” (vv. 14-15, CEB). Then perhaps God will be gracious (v. 15). Amos proclaims: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (v. 24).

As those who have experienced God’s grace—Israel in the covenant, we in Jesus Christ—God’s people are to live justice, to care justly for the weak and needy. This is our response of gratitude.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children have a good sense of fairness. Cutting one slice of cake to make it exactly even for two siblings to share is something they may have experience with. The story of the prophet Amos’s message to God’s people will invite them to go a bit deeper as they consider fairness on a larger scale.

Younger and older children will be able to share examples from their experiences of what is fair and what is not. As you discuss this story with them, you will be able to help them see how God’s hope for us is that we learn how to live together so that all have equal access to what they need to live.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The story for today also offers children a chance to consider what it means to be a good person. It will be really interesting to begin by asking them to think about their response to this statement: “A good person is someone who . . .” This will be a great introduction to telling them the story of the prophet Amos, who looked around and was saddened by how he saw people treating each other.

After telling the story and engaging children with the learning activities, you could return to the statement and see what else the children would like to add.

O God, inspire me to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 12, 14, 23, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

cloth

candle

copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1** on card stock

Responding

Celebrating

copies of **GN 2**, plastic sheet protectors or gallon-sized zip-closure bags, food coloring, cup of water, toothpicks

Praying

footprints

Offering

variety of empty containers such as tissue boxes, potato chip cans, butter tubs, and so forth

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace “ and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG A B M MS

Play “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” as the children arrive.

Welcome each child by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite the children to place a cloth and candle on the worship table.

Ask a volunteer to open the Bible to the book of Amos and place it on the worship table.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

Give each child a copy of **GN 1** on card stock. Ask the children to cut out the two feet and tape them to the floor in a random pattern. Pairs do not need to stay together, and they do not need to form a walking pattern.

Singing

Hand out rhythm instruments. Invite the children to sing and play along with “All Creation God Made”—**SCM 14**.

Praying

Turn on the candle to remind us of God’s presence. Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond accordingly to each share with “Praise God!” or “Hear our prayer, gracious God.” Then end by saying:

God of all creation, thank you for the strong oak trees, the fast-flowing waters in rivers and lakes, and the quiet footsteps of deer in the forests. Thank you for the food we eat each day, and the earth that supports all of us. Amen.

T *When lining up, consider setting an order each time. For example, one time have children wearing blue line up first, another time have children whose name starts with J line up first. Engaging them while they transition lends order and draws attention away from undesired behavior.*



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Ask a volunteer to hold the Bible so the group can see where it is opened. Tell them that the Bible is open to the book of Amos in the Old Testament. Invite them to pronounce *Amos*.

Say that Amos was famous because he was a prophet, which is a messenger of God. Tell the children that Amos speaks God's message telling the people how they have neglected God's laws and have not cared for God's people as they should.

Hearing the Story L

Encourage the children to listen as you tell the story from **SCM 12**. Use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story livelier. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Tell the children you will read the story again, or use the story audio. Invite them to listen for things that are not fair or are unhelpful and to put their thumbs down when they hear them. When they hear things that are fair, or ways to be helpful, they should put their thumbs up.

Reflecting on God's Grace B MS

Explain to the children that you are going to ask them a series of questions that require a "yes" or "no" answer. After each question, they need to stand on a footprint with either *Yes* or *No* on it and shout out their answers. They cannot stay on the same footprint for two questions in a row. They must find another footprint even if the answer is the same. Ask the following questions"

- ▼ Was Amos always a prophet? (*No!*)
- ▼ Was God unhappy with the behavior of the Israelites? (*Yes!*)
- ▼ Did Amos scold them for their bad behavior? (*Yes!*)
- ▼ Does God want us to be selfish and keep all that we have for ourselves? (*No!*)
- ▼ Does God want us to use showy religious words and not do anything that shows our faith? (*No!*)
- ▼ Does God want us to care for others and show God's justice and righteousness? (*Yes!*)
- ▼ Does God want us to say one thing and do another? (*No!*)
- ▼ Does God want us to be faithful and live our lives according to God's will? (*Yes!*)

Invite each child to take one of the "Yes" or "No" footprints and think of a question that they could ask based on Amos's message. The question should be answered by the footprint they have chosen. For example, a "Yes" footprint might have the question, "Does God want us to show justice to others?" and a "No" footprint might have the



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



question, “Should we just go to church and ignore those in need in our community?” You may need to help the children with their questions. Invite them to share their questions, hold up their footprint, and have the group respond with the correct answer, “Yes!” or “No!”

Singing

MS

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**SCM 24**. Have the children sit in a circle. Show them how to draw an imaginary semicircle in the air with their right hands, starting in the center going down to their right and up and around, resting with their palm facing left on “Lord, I want to . . .” Continue with the left side, mirroring the motion and ending with both palms joined in prayer hands on “. . . be a Christian.” When the song says, “in my heart, in my heart,” have the children bring their hands to their hearts in a beating motion.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.



Celebrating God’s Grace

F TD

Invite the children to share any experiences they have had with rivers, creeks, or lakes. Ask if they have seen how the water rushes by. Open the Bible to Amos 5:24 and read the verse: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Wonder aloud what might be different in the world if fairness and caring could flow from us like water flows from rivers. Explain that the children will follow Amos’s words and similar words to find the center of a maze.

Have each child put a copy of **GN 2** into a plastic page protector or gallon-sized zip-closure bag. Put a few drops of food coloring into a cup of water. Invite the children to dip a straw into the water and put a finger over the end, trapping a few drops of water. Have them remove their finger from the straw, dropping the water on the arrow at the beginning of the maze. Encourage them to use the straw or a toothpick to drag the water drop through the maze along the correct path. As they encounter words that Amos would have liked, have them read the words aloud. The words along the wrong path are ones that Amos spoke out against.

Encourage the children to take the mazes home and tell their families what Amos said.



Praying God's Grace

Have the children find their "Yes" or "No" footprints from earlier in the session. Invite each person to recall his or her question aloud and have the class respond with a loud "Yes!" or "No!" Tell the children that Amos said if we are going to talk the talk (professing to be people of faith and followers of God), then we need to walk the walk (practicing what we preach and putting our faith into action).

Read each of the following sentences. Invite the children to respond aloud with "If we're going to talk the talk, then we have to walk the walk!" at each asterisk (*).

If we say we love others but are unkind to them, we need to change our actions. *

If we say we are thankful for God's creation but litter or harm the earth, then we need to change our actions. *

If we say we love God but do not serve God or put God first, then we should change our actions. *

You are God's messengers! Talk the talk and walk the walk! *
Amen (*say together*).



In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous act; it is simply an act of justice, a duty that gives poor people what they deserve.

Offering God's Grace



Invite the children to participate in a project based on the Jewish tradition of placing a *tzedakah* (tsu-DAW-kuh) box in their home or community to collect coins for different organizations. Tell the children that the word "tzedakah" is derived from the Hebrew word for justice. Explain to the children that they will make a box, collect coins, and bring their offering to the church. There will be not be a designated date for the offering. Rather, it is for each child to decide when to bring their offering.

Encourage the children to raise funds for their tzedakah boxes by doing odd jobs around their house or, with parental permission, for neighbors.

Invite the children to choose a container to make their tzedakah box and decorate it as they choose with the craft supplies provided. Encourage them to use the word "justice" somewhere on their boxes. If the container has a lid, help the children cut a slot in it.



Extra Activity

Remind the children that Amos said God wants us to treat people fairly. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and invite the children to color the top hand green and the bottom hand red. Help them cut the hands out, not cutting along the dotted fold line. Instruct them to fold the hands along the dotted line. Have the children glue the hands together. Show them that the hands make a thumbs-up and thumbs-down sign.

Read the following situations and let the children show if it is fair or unfair by turning the hand to the thumbs-up or thumbs-down position. If time allows, let the children add situations.

- Your older sister gets to stay up later than you.
- Your friend brings a ball to the playground and let's everyone play with it.
- Nick always gets to be the line leader.
- Your friend lets you cut in line at the drinking fountain.
- There are too as many kids on the soccer team. The coach always plays the best players; some kids hardly play at all.
- Juan is in a wheelchair. He can't get to Sunday school class because there are steps.
- The math teacher decides to give everyone with brown hair an A on a math quiz.
- Everyone in the class wants to take the class pet home for the holiday so the teacher puts all the names in the hat to choose one person who will take care of the pet.
- The school only has one soccer field. There is a girl's soccer team and a boy's soccer team. They take turns using the field.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Ask the children to help clean up the space.

Invite the children to gather in a circle. Sing "God Gives Us a Gift"—**SCM 23**—together.

Place a candle in the middle of the group and turn it on. Read the following prayer:

May the light remind us that God sent us prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Amos to prepare the way of justice for all people. Help us, O God, to bring about a world of love and peace for all. Amen.

Say the following blessing:

Let us go now, living our lives with God, letting justice flow like an ever-flowing stream. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Turn off the candle.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).







