

**Bible Passage:** GENESIS 18**Key Passage:** Isaiah 6:5**Big Picture Question:** *Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.*

## LEADER DEVOTIONAL

There is something inside of each of us that longs for justice. When your family or community is impacted by an atrocity, there is an innate desire in every person that longs for those responsible to be punished. Where does this come from and what should we do with this?

Our desire for justice comes as a result of our being made in the image of God. We learn from Scripture that God formed each of us (Ps. 139:13) and created us in His image (Gen. 1:27). Being created in the image of God and by the hand of God leaves us with certain characteristics informed by our Creator.

So, what should we do? Should we respond to every act of sin with an act of justice? Should we point and scream when another image bearer demonstrates her sinful nature? Should we ignore evil acts and simply “let God take care of it”?

Genesis 18 speaks to some of this. As God began to unfold His plan to punish the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham stepped in. Abraham knew firsthand just how sinful these people were, how distorted their views of the world were, and how extreme their culture had turned as a result. Yet, he pleaded for God to show mercy.

It’s likely that there were people that Abraham knew and worried about. It’s clear that Abraham didn’t want those who followed God to be punished along with those who did not. But it seems there was something in Abraham that desired God to show mercy to other sinners because he knew his own great need for God’s mercy as well.

When we see that the ground is level at the foot of the cross, our desire for justice is often—at least in part—overcome by a desire for mercy. When we see ourselves in need of the same mercy as the offender we have in our sights, it may likely change how we think and pray.

Ultimately, God is the judge who discerns where there is mercy. Scripture reminds us, “What should we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! For he tells Moses, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Rom. 9:14-15)

### TERMS TO KNOW

**Justice:** order that God seeks to reestablish in His creation where all people receive the benefits of life with Him. Justice is the central ethical idea of the Old Testament.

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## WELCOME

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

***SAY:** Have you ever eaten a meal with someone you didn't know? What happened? Did you make a new friend?*

## ACTIVITY PAGE

Invite kids to complete "Did They Obey?" activity page.

***SAY:** You did a great job remembering our stories from the past few weeks! Sometimes, the Israelites did things that sounded good, but they were actually disobeying God. Remember that sin separates us from God. God loves us so much that He provided the solution to our sin problem.*

## KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

*Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 6:5 together.*

***SAY:** God is good to judge sin. Imagine how Isaiah felt when he saw God and was reminded of his sin. Thankfully, God sent Jesus to give us His righteousness.*

*Direct kids to say the key passage while looking at the poster. Then, invite kids to close their eyes. Lead them to imagine how Isaiah felt when he saw God and considered how his sin separated him from God. With their eyes still closed, encourage kids to say the key passage like Isaiah would have said it in God's presence.*

## SESSION STARTER

### FIND 10 NOTES

Number sticky notes from 1 to 10, writing only one number per sticky note. Direct kids to cover or close their eyes while you hide the sticky notes around the room. When you have finished hiding the notes, instruct kids to open their eyes and find the hidden notes. Confirm the kids have found all the notes by arranging them in order from 1 to 10. Repeat, allowing kids to take turns hiding the sticky notes as time allows.

***SAY:** In today's Bible story, Abraham asked God to save a sinful city if God could find 10 righteous people. We will hear if God found 10 people who loved Him and learn what happened next.*

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## INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

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**SAY:** *Hi, everyone! My name is [your name]. We've been talking a lot lately about the importance in knowing what the Bible says about obedience and why obedience matters. Why does the Bible help us understand obedience? [Allow kids to respond.] Because the Bible is God's Word, we can hear exactly what He says to us every time we read it. Who brought your Bible with you today? [Distribute Bibles to any kids who need one.]*

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION

**SAY:** *Our big picture question for this unit is, why does sin separate us from God? Can anyone tell me what the answer is? [Allow kids to respond.] The answer is, Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.*

*God and sin cannot be together. That's why we need Jesus, who never sinned, to take away our sin for us. When we trust Jesus to take away our sin, we can have a relationship with God again! Let's say the big picture question together. Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.*

### REVIEW THE TIMELINE

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY:** *God led His people, the Israelites, to settle in the land of Canaan. Samuel was the last judge to lead Israel. Despite God's warnings, the Israelites asked for a human king to follow Samuel. God chose Saul to lead Israel, and Saul united the people together against their enemies. Saul sinned, though, and God rejected Saul as king. It was probably difficult for Saul to face the consequences of his actions. The Bible says that God is good to judge sin. Let's find out why.*

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## **BIBLE LESSON**

Open your Bible to Genesis 18. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story or show the Bible story video “God Is Good to Judge Sin.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

### **GOD IS GOOD TO JUDGE SIN**

*Abraham was the father of God’s chosen people. **When Abraham was old, the Lord appeared to him. Abraham looked up on a hot day and saw three men standing near his tent. He invited them to rest, and he gave them food and water. The men told Abraham that his wife Sarah was going to have a baby. Sarah listened at the entrance of the tent, and when she heard this news, she laughed to herself.***

***When the men got up to continue their journey, Abraham walked with them for a ways. They looked out over the city of Sodom, and the Lord decided to tell Abraham about His plan.***

***The Lord said, “I’ve heard about Sodom and Gomorrah. The people living there are wicked, and their sin is very serious. I’m going to go see if they are as bad as people say.”***

***The men turned and went toward Sodom. Abraham stood there and asked, “Lord, do you plan to destroy the good people along with the evil people? What if there are 50 good people in that city? Will you still destroy it? Surely you will save the city for the 50 good people living there. You are the judge of all the earth. Won’t you do what is right?”***

***The Lord said, “If I find 50 righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the whole city for their sake.”***

*Then Abraham answered, “What if there’s not quite 50? Will you destroy the whole city if they’re five short?”*

*The Lord replied, “I will not destroy the city if I find 45 righteous people there.”*

*Then Abraham asked, “What if there are 40?”*

*God said, “I will not destroy the city if there are 40 righteous people.”*

***“What if there are 20?” Abraham asked.***

***The Lord said, “I will not destroy the city if there are 20 righteous people.”***

*Abraham asked, “Suppose there are 10?”*

***The Lord answered, “I will not destroy the city if I find 10 righteous people.”***

***Then the Lord departed, and Abraham went back to his tent. The next morning, Abraham returned to the place overlooking Sodom and Gomorrah. All he saw was smoke because God had destroyed the cities.***

*Christ Connection: God is good to judge sin. He is the Judge of all the earth, and He always does what is right. God will punish the guilty. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus took the punishment our sin deserves, and everyone who trusts in Him is declared righteous before God.*

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## REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

*SAY: God is good to judge sin because it restores our relationship with Him. If God allowed sin to exist and spread, it would go against the holiness of His character. Holy means to be “separate.” How would you describe God and His holiness? [Pause for kids to respond.] Yes! God is loving, good, and full of grace. While sin may feel or sound OK for a time, it leads to unhappiness, shame, and death. By judging sin, God defines His perfect, loving character and gives us an opportunity to receive His gifts of love, joy, and peace.*

*In today’s story, we saw how the spread of sin led Sodom and Gomorrah to be a wicked, dangerous city. God did not enjoy judging the city; in fact, He agreed to Abraham’s request to save the city for just 10 righteous people. Did God find 10 righteous people in the city? [Allow responses.] Sadly, there were not even 10 people who loved God in the whole entire city! God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah to protect the land from more sin.*

*Thankfully, God gave us a way out from sin so we would not be destroyed by it. He sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life, die on the cross, and come back to life in order to defeat sin. When we trust in Jesus, God helps people make right choices and live in ways that please Him.*

### Questions from kids

Why doesn’t God just forgive everyone?

What attitude toward sin do you think is most honoring to God?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Small Group ACTIVITIES



Say • Raise your hand if you had heard this Bible story before today.

Distribute Bibles and help the kids find Genesis 18. Explain that the Bible is split into the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament tells us about God's good plan to judge sin and keep His people holy. The New Testament tells us about Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection that fulfilled God's plan.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 18:20-21 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud. Consider pointing out the location of the Dead Sea (J6) (the area in which Sodom and Gomorrah was located) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map.

**SAY:** *God recognized Sodom and Gomorrah's sin. He heard the cries of the people who had been hurt by people in the cities. To protect the people who depended on Him, God judged the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. His actions showed that He loved and fought for the people who wanted a relationship with Him.*

*God hears our cries today, too. He recognizes how our sin hurts ourselves and hurts other people. He loves us so much that He gave us Jesus. By reading the Bible, we can learn to recognize sin and to call on Jesus. Jesus' sacrifice made the way for us to have a right relationship with God.*

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

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**SAY:** *How does sin affect our lives?*

*Remind kids that God is holy, and sin separates us from Him. Invite kids to consider how sin also hurts our relationships with each other. Ask kids how sins like lying, cheating, and stealing hurt other people.*

**SAY:** *How can we fight against sin in our lives?*

*Tell kids that we can always pray and ask God to help us. Explain that God will help us fight sin when we seek to obey Him. Invite kids to memorize Bible verses about temptation, such as 1 Corinthians 10:13, and recite the verses when they are tempted to sin.*

**SAY:** *Why should we tell others about the effects of sin?*

*Remind kids that sin separates all people from God, and God wants a restored relationship with all people because He loves everyone so much. Encourage kids that they obey God when they tell others about the effects of sin and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to take away our sin. Encourage kids to pray for God's help in obeying. Invite kids to consider if they would choose to obey more often if they stopped and thought before acting. Suggest that kids post reminders on their walls or mirrors of instructions they struggle to obey the most. Take prayer requests.*

## PRAYER TIME

Pray for your group.