

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 watched a talent show on tv? Who decides whether the performers do a good job? The judges.*

ACTIVITY PAGE

Invite kids to complete “Good News vs. Bad News” on the activity page.

SAY: *What phrases did you circle as good news? You should have circled four of the phrases. Can someone read the four good news phrases? Why is this good news? It is good news because we are all guilty of sin and because of our sin, we are separated from God. Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 6:5 together.*

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

VISITOR PREP

Distribute a plate to each kid. Explain to the kids that they must prepare a meal for some very important visitors. The kids will draw whatever foods they would serve their visitors on the paper plates. Allow a few minutes for kids to complete their plates of food. Once kids are finished, ask kids to show the group what foods they would serve their important visitors.

SAY: *Great job! Your drawings made me so hungry! Would you change your meal ideas if you knew God and two angels were going to come visit you or would you keep it the same? In our story today, the Lord appeared to Abraham with two angels. Listen during the story to see what food items Abraham prepared for them.*

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Introduce the session

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY: *Hello everyone! I am so happy you’re here today! Is Genesis in the Old or New Testament? [Allow responses.] Genesis is in the Old Testament and is the first book in the Bible. Today, our story comes from Genesis. If you brought a Bible, open it to Genesis 18. [Provide Bibles for kids who need one.] Each week, we learn from the Bible because the Bible is God’s perfect Word and is how we learn more about God.*

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION

SAY: *Our big picture question is Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God. Can someone tell me what sin is? Sin is actions, attitudes, words, or thoughts that displease God. We are all separated from God because we are all guilty of sin. When we trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and made righteous before God.*

Review the timeline

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

SAY: *Can someone show me where we are on the giant timeline? While we have learned about several stories from the Bible, did you know that this timeline is really just one big story? This timeline consists of hundreds of Bible stories that make up one giant story: God's story. It's about God redeeming people back to Himself. Part of God's story is how God deals with sin. Today, we're going to see that God takes sin very seriously.*

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: *Have you ever been punished for doing something wrong? [Allow kids to respond.] Being punished isn't fun. But did you know that punishment is actually an act of love? I know, it is sometimes hard to understand, right? Punishment is a way to correct something that is wrong. That means that someone, maybe your parents, discipline you because they love you and want what is best for you. God is holy and righteous. Because He is holy, sin must be punished. We deserve the punishment for our sin but because of God's incredible love, He sent Jesus to die on the cross and take our punishment for us. Romans 5:8 says, "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Have you ever thought about how amazing that is? Jesus, our sinless Savior, died in our place.*

Is anyone innocent of sin? Look at Romans 3:23. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Rom. 3:23] Everyone is guilty of sin. The only person who was perfect was Jesus.

Why does God judge sin? Look at Romans 1:18. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Rom. 1:18.] God is perfect and holy. Sin is an offense to God. When we sin, we are saying that our way is better than His way.

QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

Why doesn't God just forgive everyone?

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

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 to kids that a great way to remember where Genesis is in the Bible is to remember that the word Genesis means "beginning".

Consider comparing the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where these stories took place. Locate the areas in and around modern-day Israel (F4).

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 18:18-19.

SAY Genesis is in the beginning of the Bible, and in Genesis, we see a lot of beginnings. The beginning of the world, the beginning of people, the beginning of animals, the beginning of day and night, the beginning of the oceans, and the beginning of sin. Do you remember the beginning of sin? Adam and Eve disobeyed God. God judges sin but also has been at work to restore the brokenness of sin. God made a covenant with Abraham to begin redeeming the world through the promise of Christ so that our sin would be forgiven.

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GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY: *What is a judge? What does it mean that God is good to judge sin?*

Prompt kids to identify a judge as someone who makes sure laws are followed. When laws are broken, a judge provides the sentence for those who are guilty. God is the judge of all the earth and will punish the guilty. When we sin, we break God's laws and are all found guilty. We are all guilty of sin and deserve punishment. God must judge sin because God is a just judge.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 3:10-12.)

SAY: *What can we know is true about God as judge?*

Invite kids to share their responses. Point out that God is a just, yet merciful judge. Justice is to make things right that were wrong. Our sin has broken our relationship with Him. God desires to bring us back into a right relationship with Him. He has made that possible through Jesus.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:4-5.)

SAY: *How can we be declared righteous by God?*

Remind kids that when we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are completely forgiven because Jesus took our punishment on Himself.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 2:2.)

PRAYER TIME

Take prayer requests. Pray for your group.