

# Upper Elementary “Just for Life!” Sample Lesson

## ***Grant Me Justice!***

### **Focus question**

How is God’s justice like a squeaky wheel?

### **Theme statement**

God’s justice persists and overcomes human injustice.

### **Objectives**

This Bible study will help campers and their leaders:

- learn that God’s justice is persistent.
- appreciate God’s justice overcoming human injustice.
- carry out God’s justice to others around them who need help.

### **Bible basis**

Luke 18:1-8 (The unjust judge and the widow)

### **Materials**

Bibles.

### **Gather**

#### **Car trouble**

As you travel to the Bible study location, ask the campers to pair up with someone that they don’t know as well in the group. Explain to the pairs that they need to think of what parts of cars often have to get repaired—what are some reasons that cars end up on the side of the road or at the repair shop. (*Suggested examples: flat tires, loose brakes, nail stuck in the tire, hub cap fell off, oil change, out of windshield washer fluid, spark plugs, out of gas.*)

### **Road trip**

Once you arrive at your Bible study location, explain to the campers that they now have some driving to do. Ask if anyone has her or his car parked nearby. Of course, the campers don’t have their own cars at this age, so tell them that they’ll need to get into groups and make their own cars. (*Note: each group will need at least five people—four to be the car and one to be the mechanic. Depending on the number of campers in your group, you can adjust how many car parts you have so everyone is included. You could add a steering wheel or a bumper, etc. Be creative!*)

Ask four campers to stand spaced apart like the wheels of a car. Tell them that they will need to connect the wheels so they will all move together. Ask the two front wheels to stretch out their inside arms toward each other and place a hand on the other front wheel’s shoulder. Ask the back wheels to stretch out their inside arms toward each other and place a hand on the other back wheel’s shoulder. Now ask the back wheels of the car to stretch out their outside arms in front of them and put their hand on the shoulder of the front wheel in front of them. The car is now ready for driving! Tell them that since they will be taking a fairly long road trip it is a good idea to take a mechanic along with each car because one never knows when there might be some car trouble. Choose a mechanic to travel alongside each car. The mechanic will fix any car trouble that happens by pantomiming using his or her tools. Explain that the mechanic can only fix whatever problems he or she hears about. The campers who are parts of the car should call out problems frequently. Ask them to recall the different kinds of car trouble that they discussed with their partner on their way to Bible study. Tell the wheels that they can choose their car trouble from those ideas. (*Note: Keep safety in mind before turning your cars loose. Remind the cars that this is not a race and that they don’t want to get a speeding ticket. Tell the*

*cars that they are all in a slow zone and that the speed limit is only about 5 mph, about walking speed. We don't want any of the cars to crash!)* Give the cars boundaries of where they can and cannot drive based on the site, keeping them always within your sight. Also, instruct the wheels to be careful as they hold onto their other wheels—remind the campers not to pull on one another's arms. After the cars start their engines, follow them around as they drive, helping to give the wheels inspiration and ideas if needed. Switch roles within the cars so others get a chance to be the front wheel, back wheel, or mechanic. Continue to drive as long as the campers are all enjoying the experience.

### **Being squeaky**

After you've stopped driving the cars, gather the group in a circle. Ask the mechanics how they decided which part of the car to fix. Ask the mechanic what he or she did when there was more than one problem with the car at the same time. How did he or she decide which problem to fix first? Ask the mechanics if they were ever annoyed by the wheels who kept yelling at them. Did that make them fix it faster so the wheels would stop yelling about the problem?

Ask the wheels if their problem got fixed right away. Whenever there was more than one problem with the car at a time, how did the wheels let themselves be heard? Ask the campers if they think it was easier or harder to keep telling the mechanic about their car trouble. Were there any wheels that stopped telling the mechanic about their car trouble? If so, did their problem get fixed?

Ask if they have ever heard of the saying "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Ask them to share what they think that saying means. Explain that the saying comes from when people used to drive wagons pulled by horses—before there were cars. Whenever a wheel was squeaky, folks knew that there was something that needed to be fixed. Even if the wagon drivers would forget that it needed to be fixed, once they started driving the wagon again they would hear the squeaky wheel and be reminded that it needed fixing.

### **Word**

#### **Talk show**

Explain to the campers that you are all going to create a talk show. The talk show host will be interviewing two people from a story the group will hear. Invite them to open their Bibles to Luke 18:1-8. Ask a volunteer to read the story, or divide it into sections and choose a few readers. Work in groups of at least three: an interviewer, the unjust judge, and the widow (to involve everyone you can add other rolls—witnesses, a director, camera person, cue card holder, light technicians, etc). Help the campers decide what questions the talk show host could ask. Encourage the widow and the judge to fill in missing details of the story: why the widow needed help, why the widow kept coming back to the unfair judge, why she didn't just give up and think that he wasn't going to grant her request, why the judge didn't grant her request right away, and what made him grant her request in the end. Guide the campers through a rehearsal or two and then "film" the talk show.

### **Art museum**

Read the story in Luke 18:1-8 again to the campers. Tell them to pretend that they are in an art gallery or museum. They are in a room with statues and sculptures and they *are* the statues and sculptures. Explain that as you read the story again that they must become a statue showing a part of what is happening in the story or showing how someone is feeling in the story. After every verse or so, the sculptures can change. Stop at appropriate times when reading it for the campers to change their sculptures.

### **Good from bad**

Ask for a volunteer to read Genesis 50:20. Ask the campers to explain what they think the Genesis text means. Explain that sometimes when people try to do bad things, God is able to turn it into good.

- Ask the campers to consider the story about the widow and the judge:
- Do you think that the judge was trying to help the widow?
- Why did the judge grant the widow's request? (*Because he was annoyed with her and wanted her to*

go away.)

- Was the judge's motivation fair or just?

Explain that even though that judge was unjust and wasn't trying to do the right thing, God still used him to bring God's justice to the widow.

### **God's justice**

Suggest that when we see the world from God's perspective, we have to consider who is who in this parable.

- Who does the unjust judge represent? God or us? (*Us.*)
- Who does the persistent widow represent? (*God.*)
- How do these representations make sense? (*As much as we would like to think we know what is fair and just, our judgment is always skewed by self-interest.*)
- What do these representations tell us about God and about God's justice? (*God is persistent, God refuses to give up on us, God's justice will prevail.*)

### **Send**

#### **Persistent creation**

Ask the campers to help define the word *persistent*. Explain that persistence is when someone or something does not give up or give in. Using the ground as their canvas and the things found in nature—pinecones, rocks, leaves, sand, twigs, etc.—around them, ask pairs of campers to create a design that represents persistence. Ask them to explain their creations.

#### **Get squeakin'**

If you have not done so at another point in the Bible study, ask the campers if they understand what a widow is. Explain that in Jesus' time, women could not own land or vote or have jobs. Women received a home and care from their husband. If a woman's husband died, she didn't get to keep any of the property that her husband had. Widows needed other people to take care of them and provide for them. Ask if they know of anyone today who is like the widow in the story—is there anyone they know who might need someone to care for them or watch out for them?

Ask the campers to get back into their cars that they created earlier. Ask them to recall how the squeaky wheels spoke up and let the mechanics know that they needed help. Once they are in their cars, ask each car to think of a situation that might happen at home or school or at soccer practice when they can be a squeaky wheel to help speak up and care for someone else to help spread God's justice.

Once the cars have come up with ideas, send the cars out driving once more, but this time the wheels should declare what they will do to help someone else. The mechanic can even give the wheel a high-five when the wheel shares his or her idea.

#### **Closing prayer**

Gather campers together in a circle. Invite them to share events happening in the world today that they think are bringing injustice to people or animals or creation.

Explain that they are now going to pray for those things. Since we know that God's justice can overcome injustice here on earth, we will ask for God's help. Tell them that you will use part of the Lord's Prayer. Ask if they know the phrase, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Tell them that you're going to change a couple of the words for this prayer. When you say, "O Lord" they should respond with "Your justice be done on earth." Practice that a few times. Now tell them that you will all take turns around the circle to say the thing that they want God to help with here on earth. The prayer will go like this:

Camper: [*shares his or her request.*]

Counselor: "O Lord,"

All: "Your justice be done on earth."

Repeat this until all requests have been shared and then close by praying the Lord's Prayer together.