

# Seeking Justice

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# Welcome!

Someone cuts in front of you in the ticket line outside the movie theater. . . .

Someone makes a mistake and then makes it look like it's *your fault*. . . . Some of your friends believe a bunch of **rumors** about you. . . .

Someone takes your favorite music tape. . . . Your older sister ruins your favorite sweatshirt. . . . You are treated like trash by a salesperson at the mall. . . . Nobody helps you find your missing assignment. . . .

You feel like life is just *not fair*. It's just not right that people get ripped off and are not respected. It's not right that people have to put up with **prejudice, violence, greed, hate, and rejection**. It's not right that your favorite park is full of junk and the pool is full of scum.

Seeking justice is about *seeking fairness*, doing the right thing, and **caring** about both the little things and the big things in life. Seeking justice is about **paying attention**. Seeking justice is about people in this world, and the world itself. Seeking justice is about **you**.

In this course you get a chance to think about others and how you treat them. You get to talk about **standing up for** and **respecting** the human rights of God's people. You get to discuss **community, compassion**, and social sin. You get to learn about yourself as a seeker of justice and peace, as a caretaker of the earth that is your home. You get to learn how to face and handle problems.

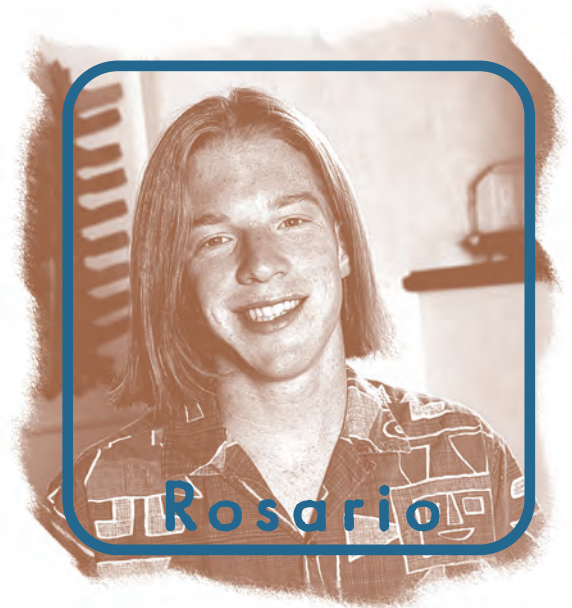
Seeking justice is a huge part of the way God expects us to live and how Jesus showed us to live. We have a chance to make our own decisions about what we want to stand for. We have a chance to stand up for ourselves, for others, for the earth, for all God's creatures. We have a chance to stand up and be counted among God's just ones. We are called to be seekers of justice.



# Limiting

With your partner read your assigned situations and their related questions. Record your responses on a separate sheet of paper. Be ready to report and discuss your ideas with the whole group.

1. Rosario has long hair and loves to listen to classic rock. He also loves fast cars and hangs pictures of them in his room. His mother thinks that he is not doing well in school, and his stepfather thinks that he is going to be lazy once he gets in high school. Some of the athletes in Rosario's class talk about him behind his back because he does not go out for any sports, even though he is bigger and faster than most of his classmates. The girls like Rosario because he is polite and considerate. They do not hang out with him, though, because their parents think that he is not making anything out of himself.
  - a. How has Rosario been labeled?
  - b. Why do people label him like this?
  - c. What might Rosario be good at?



2. Mi Linh is really quiet. She dresses well and listens to the right music, but she does not talk to anyone. People say that she has friends at the other junior high school in town. One of the girls in her class invited her to a sleepover, but she declined.
  - a. How do Mi Linh's classmates label her?
  - b. Why do you think Mi Linh seems to avoid her classmates?

3. Randall dresses all wrong. He wears clothing styles that everyone else has quit wearing. A lot of times, he forgets to comb his hair before coming to school. His friends seem to be just like him. Nancy is a classmate who lives next door to Randall. She never walks to school with him and seldom talks to him. She makes up excuses not to walk home from school with him.
  - a. How is Randall labeled?
  - b. Why does Nancy avoid Randall?
  - c. Do you think that Randall might be generous or loyal or sensitive? Why or why not?



# Labels



4. Jacki is really into books. She always seems to be reading something. She loves romance, autobiography, nonfiction, science fiction, and poetry. Some of the girls in her class think she is weird. They say that she hides behind her books and that she is afraid of people, especially boys.
- What makes people label someone like Jacki?
  - What other things do people your age say about someone like Jacki?
  - Would you be surprised to find out that Jacki is also a great gymnast or a terrific tennis player or a backpacker? Why or why not?

5. Carl is a great athlete. He practices constantly so that he will be able to compete when he is in high school. The high school coaches have already talked to him about playing football and basketball and joining the track team. Carl's parents are proud of him, and his classmates like him. But a lot of students call him a jock or an ironhead.
- Why do students label Carl like this?
  - Would you be surprised to learn that Carl is a good pianist and that his hobby is designing computer graphics? Why or why not?



6. Rachael's older sister, Connie, always got in trouble in school. She dropped out of high school after she got pregnant. Now Rachael's teachers and her friends' parents often ask, "Are you Connie's sister?" as soon as they meet her. Rachael feels that people who hardly know her are already comparing her with Connie.
- How are people labeling Rachael?
  - Why might labels make it hard for Rachael just to be herself?



To promote acceptance and tolerance in your world, when talking about members of racial or ethnic minority groups, avoid using words that stereotype or unfairly judge.

# CREATED & LOVED

These passages from the Bible speak of the great dignity that every person possesses simply through being created by a good and loving God. That dignity is a gift we do not have to learn. Listen carefully to these words as your teacher reads them; they are spoken to you.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God created a great vault in the waters so that a great dome separated the water above and the water below. Then God bade dry land to appear. And on the land God created all growing and flowering plants, all seed-bearing plants and fruit trees.

God created all the shining lights of the heavens and filled the sky with flying creatures. And on the dry land, God placed animals of all kinds.

And then God said, "Let us make a human person in our own image and likeness." So God created the first man and the first woman, and God gave them all of creation to enjoy and care for—the sun and the moon and all the growing plants for food and the animals for their delight. All this was given to God's loved ones for their happiness. (Adapted from Genesis 1:1–30)

O Lord, our Lord, how great is your name in all the earth.

What are we that you keep us in mind?  
How is it that you care so much for us?  
You have made us a little lower than the angels.  
You have crowned us with glory and splendor.

O Lord, our Lord, how great is your name in all the earth.

(Adapted from Psalm 8:1–9)

You created me;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I thank you for making me so wonderfully;  
I praise you for all your wonderful works!

(Adapted from Psalm 139:13–16)

Remember the price that has been paid to free you from a useless way of life. Silver and gold were not enough to rescue you, to bring you back home. No, Christ himself died for you. He was innocent as a lamb, but his blood was shed for you. (Adapted from 1 Peter 1:18–19)

# Tell the World

In the United States, ideas for stamps come from the citizens. Anybody who wishes to do so can submit to the postal service a stamp idea and design of some place, issue, thing, event, or person that they think is of great importance. Some of the citizens' ideas get accepted and become popular stamps used and collected all over the world.

Use ideas from the Scripture passages under "Created and Loved" on page 4 of this booklet, your own ideas, and ideas from the words of others to create a stamp in the space provided here. Try to express on your stamp the dignity God has given to each human being.





# Have a Right! Right?

Read your assigned situation. Decide what rights are being violated and think about how you would solve the problem. Jot notes on blank paper as you do so. Be prepared to discuss your responses.

1 Lately my two friends have been driving me nuts. See, I get along fine with both of them, but they don't get along with each other. If one friend wants me to go bowling on Friday night, the other friend wants me to go to a movie. If I go with one friend, the other gets mad at me. They each say that they have a right to ask me to go with them.

*Do I have any rights here? What should I do?*

2 My older brother is in the tenth grade. He watches whatever he wants on television. We only have one television, and when he's home I never get to choose. I say that I have a right to watch what I want, and he says that he has a right to watch his shows.

*Who is right? What should I do?*

3 I love my music, but my mom doesn't. She thinks it's just noise. I think it's great to put on my favorite CD or tape and turn up the sound. It makes me relax, think, and feel good. What's wrong with that? I think that I have a right to enjoy my music, and my mom thinks that she has a right to peace and quiet.

*Who is right? What should I do?*

4 I had a crush on this guy, and we have been seeing a lot of each other lately. But I want to start getting to know other guys now. I think that I have a right to date anyone I want to, and he says that he has a right to expect me to date him and nobody else.

*Who is right? What should I do?*

5 I like this girl in school that nobody else seems to like much. She is kind of different. No one else in my group wants her hanging around. But I do. I say that she has a right to be part of our group, and the others say that they have a right to pick their own friends.

*Who is right? What should I do?*

# Rights for All

## The Ten Commandments

Long ago God called the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Moses led them to freedom. God told the people that they were now a chosen and free people. And God gave them ten commandments to tell them how they were to act now that they were free.

- I* I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.
- II* You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- III* Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day.
- IV* Honor your father and your mother.
- V* You shall not kill.
- VI* You shall not commit adultery.
- VII* You shall not steal.
- VIII* You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- IX* You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
- X* You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

*(Catechism, pages 496–497)*



There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us.  
(Martin Luther King Jr.)



# The U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights



## Preamble

*In the preamble to the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the nations that helped create the declaration made a commitment to the following principles, among others:*

1. — Each person in the human family has the same rights as every other person.
2. — Almost all people now want a world in which human beings can enjoy the right to say what they think, to choose their own beliefs, and to live without fear and without need.
3. — Human rights must be protected by laws.
4. — All nations need to be encouraged to be friendly toward one another.
5. — The U.N. Charter states that peoples of the United Nations believe in human rights, that all members of the human family are worthwhile, and that men and women should have the same rights.

(Adapted from the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights)



## Articles

*The declaration contains thirty articles outlining human rights. Here are five that protect you as a person and as a member of the whole human race:*

- Article 5.* People have the right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment.
- Article 12.* People have the right to privacy within family and home.
- Article 16.* People have the right to marriage and family.
- Article 17.* People have the right to ownership of property.
- Article 18.* People have the right to freedom of belief and religion.

(Adapted from the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights)



# Basic Human Rights

*Rights are yours by the very fact of your birth. These human rights empower you and free you to become fully human:*



to worship  
to proper authority  
to knowledge of the truth



to a life without the threat of harm or death  
to private ownership of property

to freedom from attacks on one's reputation  
to respectful and loving sexual relationships



Include both males and females whenever you talk about a profession or its members in general. For example, instead of *policeman* try to use *police officer*, and rather than *mailman* try *mail carrier*.

# My Rights, Your Rights

God's revelation helps us to understand our personal rights as well the responsibility we owe to others. As children of God and brothers and sisters to one another, we all possess basic human rights. Our task as people of God and as people of this earth is to see that we respect others' rights and that our own rights are respected. Take some quiet time now to reflect on and complete the sentence-starters below.

The two rights that mean the most to me right now are . . .

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I have not been willing to give one person her or his rights. That person is . . .

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These are the steps I will take to give this person her or his rights, right now!

First, I will \_\_\_\_\_

Then, I will \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, I will \_\_\_\_\_



## John Paul II Speaks to Young People

In his address on World Youth Day in 1996, Pope John Paul II spoke from Manila, the capital city of the Philippine Islands, to the youth of the world. These are some of his words:

Are you capable of giving of yourself, your time, your energies, your talents, for the good of others? Are you capable of love? If you are, the Church and society can expect great things from each one of you. . . . The vocation to love, understood as true openness to our fellow human beings and solidarity with them, is the most basic of all vocations. It is the origin of all vocations in life.