

3

Pull Weeds of Oppression, Plant Seeds of Justice

1 TIMOTHY 2:11–15



GOAL

Children identify and call out oppression, responding against it faithfully to bring about liberation.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, full of justice, make me an instrument of your peace. May I be a generator for faithfulness and depth as I teach. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session is a little different, and it's a little challenging, but don't shy away from it. Identifying oppression and being a part of God's liberation is important to learn and practice throughout one's life. Children can begin now, and perhaps they won't have to unlearn biases that add to oppressive landscapes later. The Bible story is used to introduce children to the fact that the Bible is not just a guidebook or a love letter, but that there are parts that are really terrible. Children can learn to read all parts of the Bible faithfully. Consider this session as a seed of faith that will mature as the children grow.

THE BIBLE STORY

Spoiler alert: 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is problematic but needs to be looked at critically. It was chosen to confront how oppression is present and the need for justice is vital. This passage is full of misogynist and hurtful theology that both church and society have used to subjugate women. It reveals the intense biases of its author and the context of the time. Present this passage as it is—full of problematic, hurtful pronouncements—and work with the children to figure out a faithful response that brings about liberation where many have bred oppression. Happy undoing!

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

As children encounter this text about keeping women silent and hold that up against what they have already experienced in the world, they will know something is wrong with the text. Children are learning what is and isn't fair; they know what oppression looks like even if they don't know to call it by its name. This session will help them to develop practices to respond to the injustices they already understand.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Women in the Bible Seed Packets” (p. 36): Obtain small envelopes, five for each child (gift envelopes, 2.7" x 4" or #3 coin envelopes, 2.5" x 4.25"), and five different types of flower seeds, enough for each child to have some for their seed envelopes.
- “Weeds of Oppression” (p. 37): Prepare a sheet of newsprint with four columns and four rows. At the top of each column, write one of these verses: 1 Timothy 2:11, 12, 13, and 14–15. To the left of each row, write one of these headings: “Initial Reactions,” “Women in the Bible,” “Consider This,” and “Weeds of Oppression?”


Depending on the options you choose:


- “Minute of Your Mission” (p. 38): Invite a member of your church's mission committee to talk about the ways your church challenges oppression.



GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Pages 1 and 2
- Colored pencils
- Small envelopes, five for each child (gift envelopes, 2.7" x 4" or #3 coin envelopes, 2.5" x 4.25")
- Five different kinds of flower seeds

 The seed packets will serve as a reminder of strong, brave women leaders in the Bible who sowed the seeds of equality, a counter example to the problematic 1 Timothy passage.

 Example:
God made ladybugs.
Let's describe ladybugs.
They are small. They are red or orange and have spots. They crawl and fly.
Thank you, God, for ladybugs.

Alicia, you are made in God's image.
I like to play soccer.
Thank you, God, for Alicia.

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE SEED PACKETS

A NS X

Greet the children as they arrive. Provide copies of Resource Pages 1 and 2, explaining that they are pictures of five biblical women who sowed seeds of equality for the front of the seed packets, and information about each woman for the back of the packets. Invite the children to color the pictures. As they are coloring, read aloud the names and facts for each woman. Wonder together what characteristics these women leaders had and sowed, imagining those characteristics as "seeds of equality." Encourage the children to talk about other female leaders they know of in today's world while they are working. Give each child five envelopes. Have them cut out and glue each picture of a biblical woman to the front of the envelope and the corresponding information to the back of the envelopes.

CELEBRATING GOD'S DIVERSITY

C

Invite the children to respond with suggestions as prompted, highlighting God's diversity in creation and in us. Let the group know when they will respond individually and as a group. Use the following pattern:

God made (*name an item of creation, such as the moon or mountains, or a particular body of water or land form, or a particular plant or animal*).

Let's describe (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*Invite people to take turns describing the item of creation named above.*)

Thank you, God, for (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*One person at a time, lead this part of the litany.*)

(*Name*), you are made in God's image.

(*Invite the named person to say a sentence that describes something about themselves, such as "I am tall," or "I have green eyes," or "I like to draw."*)

Thank you, God, for (*name of person named above*).



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Copies of Resource Page 3
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, and colored pencils

GARDEN OF JUSTICE

A NS C

Review the previous two sessions of this unit, *Honor God's Diversity*, with the children: session 1 was about seeing all in God's image and widening the center to include all people, and session 2 was about honoring the diversity God created by including those who have been left out or marginalized. Tell the children that, in this session, they are going to practice what it means to challenge oppression and work for liberation so that no one gets left out in the future. Comment that this task is very big, taking lots of people to do the work, but God wants us to speak up when people are treated unfairly, when each person is not being honored as a child of God, and to work for change.

Explain that, to introduce what this looks like, they will use the image of a garden, the Garden of Justice, where they will pull weeds of oppression and plant seeds of justice. Provide copies of Resource Page 3 and scissors. Show the children how to cut out the weeds at the bottom of the page by cutting along the dotted lines. Then show them how to fold the bottom of the page up along the dashed fold line so that the top of the weeds point to where it says “Garden of Justice.” Have the children draw and color weeds on the four pieces sticking up and add roots below the ground.

As the children are coloring, talk about these “weeds of oppression,” commenting that new seeds won’t grow where weeds will choke them out. Wonder together what weeds of oppression might be, explaining that *oppression* includes those things that keep people from having what they need to grow and thrive. Talk together about examples of oppression that might be in your community, such as bullying, racism, and hatred. Have the children write some examples of oppression on the stems of the weeds.



An example of a weed of oppression might be one school that has money for computers while another can’t afford computers. People at the school without computers won’t be taught the skills to get higher-paying jobs, better housing, and adequate food for their families.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

WEEDS OF OPPRESSION



Tell the children that weeds of oppression can pop up anywhere, even where we least expect them, even in the Bible. Comment that we live in an incredibly different time from the one during which the stories of the Bible were written. Wonder together what some of those differences might be.

Explain that the Bible passage you are going to explore together is one of the places in the Bible that was written when customs and practices were different than today; it has been used over the centuries to oppress women. Tell the children that you will read one or two verses at a time and then, together, you will explore four questions about each verse. Invite volunteers to take turns recording responses to each verse on the prepared newsprint. Use Resource Page 4 (two pages) to guide your conversation about 1 Timothy 2:11–15. Encourage the children to review their seed packets when thinking about women in the Bible.

- Resource Page 4 (two pages)
- Prepared newsprint and marker
- Seed packets from “Women in the Bible Seed Packets” (p. 36)

FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

WEEDING THE GARDEN OF JUSTICE



Invite the children to hear one or more stories of children who took a stand and challenged oppression. Show one or more of the YouTube videos listed below. After each video, invite volunteers to write suggestions on newsprint from the children on who or what was being oppressed and how the person highlighted in the video worked to challenge it.

- “Who Is Greta Thunberg? —Newsround” (bit.ly/FMGreta, 2:39)
- “Jaylen Arnold’s Bullying Campaign” (bit.ly/FMJaylen, 1:49)
- “11-year Old Marley Dias Creates Change through #1000BlackGirlBooks Campaign” (bit.ly/FMMarley, 2:53)

- Internet-connected device
- Newsprint and marker
- Garden of Justice papers from “Garden of Justice” (p. 36)


- “Little Girl Shares Immigration Message with Pope” (bit.ly/FMSophie, 1:44)
- “The Syrian War as Seen through a Child’s Eyes” (bit.ly/FMBana, 2:39)

Tell the children that they have talked about what oppression may look like, wrote words on their weeds, looked at a Bible passage that led to centuries of oppression, and seen children working against oppression. Suggest that it is time to uproot and clear away the weeds of oppression so the seeds of justice have good, fertile soil in which to grow.

Form groups of two or three children and have them share their Gardens of Justice with one another. Ask them to pick one weed they want to pull out of their garden. Have the groups talk about ways that they could challenge the oppression written on the weed. Invite the groups to share some of their ideas. Then have the children tear out the weeds from their garden and throw them in a pile in front of you. Gather up the weeds and pray the following prayer, or one of your own choosing. Then throw away the weeds or set aside for “Minute of Your Mission” (below).

Dear God, we know you hear the voices of the oppressed. May we hear them too and work to challenge and change oppression where we can. Amen.

-
- Mission committee member
 - Garden of Justice papers from “Garden of Justice” (p. 36)
 - Weeds from “Weeding the Garden of Justice” (p. 37)
 - Paper
 - Markers, crayons, pencils

 Talk with your pastor about having the children share their “Minute for Mission” and posters during a worship service.

MINUTE OF YOUR MISSION (optional)



Introduce your guest and invite them to talk about some of the ways your congregation challenges oppression in the mission and outreach work the church does. Wonder together what lines up with the weeds of oppression they have or tore out in their Garden of Justice. Ask the children to name some of their weeds of oppression and identify what work the church does that may address that oppression.

Form groups of two or three. Have each group choose one of the weeds of oppression and the mission work your church does to address it. Invite them to write a short script for a “Minute for Mission” to be used during a worship service or make a poster to display.

If the children have not torn out their weeds from their gardens, have them do so now. Throw the weeds in a pile in front of you. Gather up the weeds and pray the following prayer, or one of your own choosing. Then throw away the weeds.

Dear God, thank you for the work of this church as it challenges oppression and works for justice. Help us be a part of that mission too. Amen.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF JUSTICE

A C

Tell the children that, with the weeds of oppression pulled out, their gardens are ready to be planted with the seeds of justice. Review the “Grow Facts” on the back of the seed packets that tell about each of the five women from the Bible and how they planted seeds of justice. Have the children look at the newsprint sheets with the information they collected about ways oppression was challenged and justice was planted. Invite the children to use some of these ideas or their own and write them in the spaces where the weeds used to be. Assist with writing as needed. Then, have the children draw and color beautiful plants and flowers springing up in their garden where the seeds of justice have been planted.

- Garden of Justice papers from “Weeding the Garden of Justice” (p. 36) or “Minute of Your Mission” (p. 38)
- Seed packets from “Weeds of Oppression” (p. 37)
- Newsprint from “Weeds of Oppression” (p. 37) and “Weeding the Garden of Justice” (p. 37)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils

CALLING OUT OPPRESSION TOGETHER

C

Tell the children that challenging oppression is hard work, and trying to do it alone is even harder. Comment that the people and programs they have learned about today did not do the work of justice alone. They worked with others and had others for support. Invite the children to make a *covenant* to support one another in the hard work of challenging oppression when they see it. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read, the covenant on Resource Page 5. Talk together about ways you’ll support one another and add them to the covenant. Invite the children to sign their names or use the ink pad to make thumb marks. Provide cleaning wipes if you are using the ink pad. Place the covenant in your gathering place where the children will see it whenever you meet, to remind of their work together for justice.

- Resource Page 5
- Pens
- Ink pad and cleaning wipes (optional)



FOLLOWING JESUS


GOD’S CIRCLE


M T

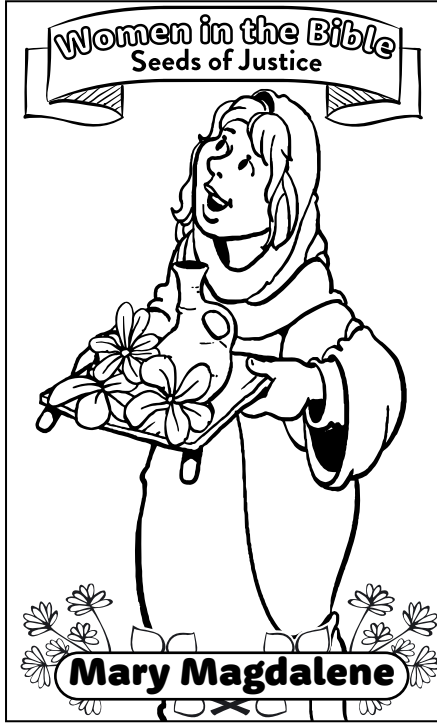
Show the YouTube video “BCUC: Draw the Circle Wide—Lyrics & Actions” (bit.ly/FMDrawCircleActions, 2:48) and invite the children to sing along and follow the actions, especially with the chorus as it becomes familiar.

Invite the children to sit in a circle. Tell the children that, when we widen the circle, we include more and more people in the work of justice and we are not alone. Turn to the person to your right and say, “You are not alone. You can trust me. Let’s call out oppression when we see it. God is with us!” Have that person turn to the person on their right and together both of you say the blessing. Continue in the same manner, adding more and more voices to the blessing.

- Internet-connected device

 The song “Draw the Circle Wide” with a different video, will be used in each session so the children will have the chance to learn the verses.

 Encourage the children to plant their seeds at home so they may be reminded of the acts of justice planted by these women in the Bible.



Deborah

Judges 4–5

Grow Facts:

- Deborah was a judge, prophet, warrior, and leader.
- She settled arguments fairly.
- As a prophet, she thought very carefully about God’s plan.
- Deborah’s story is told twice in the Bible, once in an ancient poem.

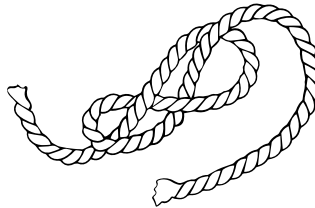


Rahab

Joshua 2; 6

Grow Facts:

- Rahab is an ancestor of Jesus (see Matthew 1:5).
- She took big risks to help God’s people.
- She had faith and acted on it.
- She risked her life for others.



Esther

The book of Esther

Grow Facts:

- She and her cousin Mordecai saved the king from being killed.
- Esther risked her life to speak truth to the king.
- With persistence, bravery, and intelligence, Esther saved her people.

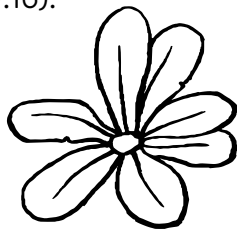


Mary Magdalene

Luke 8:2–3; John 20:1–18

Grow Facts:

- She was one of Jesus’ disciples.
- She used her money to help Jesus’ ministry.
- She is named in all four Gospel accounts of the resurrection.
- Jesus calls her by name (John 20:16).

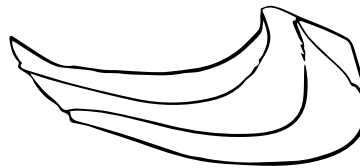


Lydia of Thyatira

Acts 16:11–15

Grow Facts:

- Lydia had a successful business selling purple cloth.
- She listened well to God and Paul.
- She is the first documented convert to Christianity in Europe.
- Lydia offered hospitality to Paul and his team.

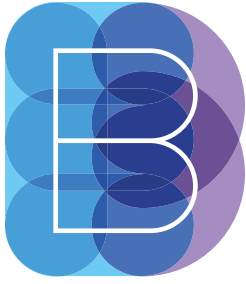


Garden of Justice

FOLD

HERE





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON 1 TIMOTHY 2:11–15

Four questions to consider after each reading:

Verse 11: Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.

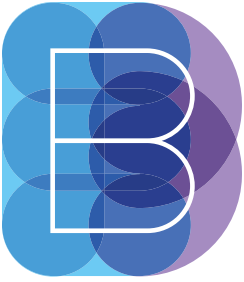
- Initial Reaction: What's your initial reaction to this verse?
- Women in the Bible: What might the women in the Bible from your seed packets say to this?
 - Hint: Queen Esther saved her people by not submitting; she broke the king's rules to save her people's lives.
- Consider This: When you are confused about something at school, what helps you learn? Staying totally quiet so no one knows you don't understand or raising your hand, speaking up, and asking questions?
- Weeds of Oppression? Is this verse an example of oppression? Why or why not? If so, how?

Verse 12: I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.

- Initial Reaction: What's your initial reaction to this verse?
- Women in the Bible:
 - Hint: Deborah had authority over a whole nation. She taught them, men and women, what was right and wrong. She had authority over Barak, a man, and he valued her leadership and wanted her to go with him into battle.
 - Hint: Lydia was a successful businesswoman.
- Consider This: Lots of women have positions of authority and teaching positions today, and have for many years. Who are women you know who teach and have authority?
- Weeds of Oppression? Is this verse an example of oppression? Why or why not? If so, how?

Verse 13: For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

- Initial Reaction: What's your initial reaction to this verse?
- Women in the Bible:
 - Hint: Mary Magdalene and a group of women were the first to see Jesus resurrected. The male disciples didn't believe them and came second.
 - Hint: (not on a seed packet) God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of Jesus, God's son. Later, Joseph had a dream that Mary would have a baby.




BIBLE STORY

- ✦ Consider This: Line up the children from shortest to tallest. Ask the children:
 - Does being first in line make (*Name*) taller than the other children?
 - Does being first in line make (*Name*) faster?
 - Does being first make (*Name*) better?
 - Comment that being first just means you arrived to that place earlier than another. It is not a designation of being better.

Verses 14–15: . . . and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

- For these verses, consider initial reactions and how these verses may be weeds of oppression.
- Explain that a *transgressor* is a wrongdoer or lawbreaker, and that the story in Genesis 3:6 says that both humans were together and ate the fruit they were told not to eat. Both made a choice to disobey.



On the ____ day in the
month of ____ in the year ____
here in this place of ____
we bind ourselves together with this covenant:

We will forever and always support one another
in challenging oppression wherever we may see it.
We know this work is hard, but we are not alone
because we have one another and God's Spirit working through us
to tend and grow a Big, Beautiful Garden of Justice.

We commit to sharing with one another when we see oppression
and thinking and working together to challenge it.
We will support one another in the following ways:

Signed in Faith, _____

