

# 4

## Use Your Advantage for Justice!

MARK 10:17-22, 31



### GOAL

Children identify advantages people have and how they might be used to create equality in our world.

- 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](https://bit.ly) addresses are case-sensitive.



### PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for the advantage of being able to spend time learning with children. May their understanding of your grace transform our world and reverse the inequality we see all around us. Amen.

### THIS SESSION

This session is about the advantages we have in our lives and how we can use them to overturn injustice. *Advantages*, or privileges, are those conditions or circumstances we are born with or attain that have put us in a better position than others. The session will explore the great reversal that God intends for our world: The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

### THE BIBLE STORY

In Mark 10:17-22, 31 (see also Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30), Jesus does not critique the fact that the rich man has kept all the commandments; he focuses on the way the man has accumulated so many things, including a pious adherence to religious rules, without being mindful of those around him with less, without being fundamentally changed by what God intended in the commandments.

### CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Learning what an advantage is may empower children to use them to help others, especially when the advantage is knowledge. The economics of this text, the boldness of the commandment to sell everything, probably won't register with children. Children understand what it is to be first and last as they are immersed in competitive games where there are winners and losers. Cooperation is often overshadowed. Games that promote using advantages to work together are rare.

### SESSION PREPARATION

- “Using Our Advantages” (p. 48): Obtain a 20–40-piece child’s floor puzzle. Tie strings of different lengths around most of the puzzle pieces. Using painter’s tape, attach them to the ceiling so that the pieces are just at or above the reach of the tallest children.
- “Commandments Scavenger Hunt” (p. 49): Cut out coins from card-stock copies of Resource Pages 1 and 2. If possible, use yellow or gold card stock. Make a few fewer sets than the number of children. Hide the coins around your space, saving one set.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Hungry No More!” (p. 51): Invite a local food pantry volunteer to talk about food insecurity and the work that is done at the pantry, or use the YouTube videos: “What Is Food Insecurity and Why Is It a Problem?” ([bit.ly/FMFoodInsecurity](https://bit.ly/FMFoodInsecurity), 1:53) and “Food Pantry Volunteer Orientation” ([bit.ly/FMOrientation](https://bit.ly/FMOrientation), 3:30).
- “God’s Circle” (p. 52): Write the lyrics for the verses of the song “Draw the Circle Wide” ([bit.ly/FMDrawCircleLyrics](https://bit.ly/FMDrawCircleLyrics)) on a sheet of newsprint.



## GETTING STARTED

- Card stock
- 3"–4" circle templates
- Markers, crayons, and decorative items
- Glue (optional)
- Scissors
- Single-hole punch
- Ribbon

### LAST-PLACE MEDALS

A

As the children arrive, provide them with card stock and coloring supplies. Invite them to imagine that they are in a race or competition. Instead of first-place awards, there are last-place medals. Have the children design their own last-place medal using a circle template. Tell them to write the words “Last Place” in large letters and an encouraging and inspiring message that they would like to hear as they receive this medal. Some examples may be: “Way to stick with it until the finish line!” or “You are an inspiration!” or “You are the best at not giving up!” Assist with writing as needed. Have the children decorate their medals, cut them out, punch a hole, string them on a ribbon, and wear them. Encourage the children to be proud of their hard work being in last place and show one another their medals.



Example:  
God made rain.

Let’s describe rain.

Rain can be gentle or loud. Rain is wet.

Rain helps plants grow.

Thank you, God, for rain.

Simon, you are made in God’s image.

I have brown skin.

Thank you, God, for Simon.

### 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

- Child’s floor puzzle, 20–40 pieces hanging from the ceiling
- String
- Painter’s tape
- Step ladder
- Table

### USING OUR ADVANTAGES

AM G C X

Have the children line up from shortest to tallest. Once they are lined up, explain that their height, short or tall, will give them an advantage in one part of a task but not another. Tell them that they will need to work together to accomplish their task. Draw the children’s attention to the puzzle pieces hanging from the ceiling. Explain that this special puzzle has two characteristics: 1) The puzzle is afraid of heights but somehow is way up high! 2) The puzzle loves to be in dark, cozy places like under a table. Tell the children that they need to use their advantages to put the puzzle together. Wonder how they can work together, having the taller children

rescue the puzzle pieces from the high places and the shorter children put the puzzle together under a table where it feels safe. Encourage them to use their advantages, yet work together on both stages of getting the pieces and putting them together.

When the puzzle is complete, wonder together:

- How did it feel to use your advantage?
- What might be other advantages you have in life?
- How can you use those advantages to work with others in your church, school, or community to bring about justice?

## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### COMMANDMENTS SCAVENGER HUNT



Invite the children to listen to a Bible story about a man with some advantages in life and what decision he had to make. Read aloud Mark 10:17–22, 31. Show the children the set of commandment coins. Pass them around, and let the children look at them. Tell the children that the rich man had spent his whole life following the Ten Commandments like he was collecting coins. He thought he was a good person, and he very well may have been, because he followed all the commandments, but Jesus told him he lacked one thing. Reflect on the story with the following questions:

- What do you think the rich man lacked?
- What did Jesus tell the rich man to do? (v. 21)
- What did the man choose to do? (v. 22)
- Why do you think he was sad?
- This story was about a man with some advantages. What advantages did he have, and what could he have done with them to help others?
- What do you think it means that many who are first will be last and the last will be first?

Tell the children they are going to play a game to remember the story and imagine what it would be like if the rich man actually did sell all he had. Explain that the rich man's tokens are hidden all around your space; when they have collected ten tokens, they should come find you.

When a child has found ten tokens and brought them to you, tell them that there is one more thing they need to do. Explain that to win the game they need to do what Jesus told the rich man to do: they can use their advantage to help others! Have the child throw their tokens up in the air and let them fall so other children may have more. Encourage others with ten tokens to do the same. Comment that this demonstrates what is meant by the first being last and the last being first. Those who had the most were able to share with those who had less. It makes everyone winners! Play some happy music so everyone can dance with joy.



To make the game easier, put some or all of the border puzzle pieces in place under the table. To make the game more challenging, set a time limit so the children have to work together quickly to beat the clock.

- One set of card-stock coins cut from a copy of Resource Pages 1 and 2
- Prepared cutout coins from copies of Resource Pages 1 and 2, hidden around the room
- Bible
- Music player and celebratory music



The children do not have to collect one of each commandment, but they could for a more challenging game.



# FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Card-stock copies of Resource Page 3
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Pens, pencils
- Newsprint

## ADVANTAGE TRADING CARDS

A C

Talk together about what an *advantage* is. Recall the jigsaw puzzle game (“Using Our Advantages,” p. 48) and how being taller or shorter helped in part of the game. Wonder together what are some advantages, or privileges, we have in our lives and how we may use those conditions or circumstances that have put us in a better position to overturn injustice, help others, and change the world. Suggest that they are kind of like special powers! Have volunteers write suggestions on a sheet of newsprint. Provide some examples of your own if the children need prompting.

Hand out card-stock copies of Resource Page 3 and coloring supplies. Tell the children they are going to make their own “Advantage: for Justice!” trading cards. Invite the children to choose three advantages that they have in their lives. They can be from the newsprint or their own ideas. Explain that the top space is to draw a picture of their advantage, the middle space is to write the name of their advantage, and the bottom space with the stars is to write three ways they might use their advantage to overturn injustice, help others, and change the world. Assist with writing as needed. Encourage the children to find ways to use their advantage cards during the week.

## LAST SHALL BE FIRST

G C

Play the “Last Letter Game.” Form teams of two or three children, mixing younger children with older children. Tell the children that you will give them a category, and one team at a time will choose a word that fits the category. For example, if the category is colors, a team may choose the word *yellow*. The last letter in *yellow* becomes the first letter for the next team’s word, so they may choose *white*. The next team may say *ecru* or *eggplant*. Continue making the last letter the first letter until someone gets stumped or it seems time for a new category. Once a word is used, it cannot be used again in that category, but it may fit another category, like *eggplant!* Use the following categories, or ones of your own choosing: animals, names, food, places (including cities, towns, street names, and so forth), jobs, sports and hobbies, and books. Encourage the teams to work together to choose a word. Assist teams with spelling so they know what the last letter is if they need help.

With the children, reflect on the game using the following questions:

- ✿ Was it easy or hard to put the last first?
- ✿ What things make people *first* or *last*? (*Think about advantages, not order in a race.*)
- ✿ When does it seem easy for us to use our advantages to help others? When does it seem hard for us?
- ✿ Why do you think Jesus would ask us to put others first?



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

### HUNGRY NO MORE!

S A T X

Tell the children that churches, schools, and communities often have food drives for local food pantries, believing that no one should go hungry. Wonder who has been a part of a food drive and what they did. Suggest that it is important to educate ourselves about what food insecurity is and what a food pantry is, so that we can better care for one another. Comment that everyone does not have the same advantages in life at certain times. Food insecurity, not having enough food and healthy food choices, can affect people for many reasons at any time.

Introduce your guest from a local food pantry and invite them to talk about food insecurity and how the food pantry works, or show the YouTube videos: “What Is Food Insecurity and Why Is It a Problem?” ([bit.ly/FMFoodInsecurity](https://bit.ly/FMFoodInsecurity), 1:53) and “Food Pantry Volunteer Orientation” ([bit.ly/FMOrientation](https://bit.ly/FMOrientation), 3:30).

Tell the children that they are going to learn about what foods are helpful for a food pantry and what foods are not. Explain that this knowledge will help them teach people who have the advantage of having or being able to buy food to give away. Distribute cards cut apart from Resource Pages 4 and 5 and ask the children to determine if those items would be wanted at a food pantry or not, and why they think so. For each item, wonder what might be its good or bad alternative. Using Resource Page 6, help the children learn about food pantry donations.

Have the children make a poster to display in your church to educate people about food pantry donations. Invite them to work together to determine a title, where to glue the pictures of the food items, whether to add drawings, and what to write about them. Provide copies of Resource Page 6 for the children to use while making their poster. Tell the children that they all now have the advantage of knowledge! Encourage them to take their copy of Resource Page 6 home for a time when they may have the advantage of being able to help others in need of food.

### ONE GOOD THING

C S

Ask the children what Jesus told the rich man to do in the Bible story. (*Sell everything and give the money to the poor.*) Wonder together what that would really be like. Start with minor things, such as clothes they’ve outgrown, an old toy, a can of food they don’t particularly like. Then wonder about things they like, such as a cool pair of shoes, a video game they play a lot, or time doing an activity they enjoy. Zoom into more necessary things, such as a winter coat (if you live in a cold climate) or an air conditioner (if you live in a hot climate), giving up their home to move to a smaller place to live, and transportation. Then ask about something really personal, such as their favorite thing in the whole world.

Suggest that it feels impossible! Explain that, when we think of using whatever advantages we have to help others, it is hard to go all in, and so we freeze and don’t do anything. The problems of injustice feel so big and we feel so little. Sometimes, when it feels like we can’t do anything, we can try to do just one good thing and that can get us going.

- Invited guest from a local food pantry or internet-connected device
- Cards cut apart from Resource Pages 4 and 5
- Copies of Resource Page 6
- Posterboard
- Glue sticks
- Markers



Recognize that there may be children in your group who experience food insecurity and have used a food pantry or received food donations. Foster an atmosphere of no shame and assure children that we all have different needs at different times, and that is why some people’s advantages can help others.



If your group is large, make more than one poster. Form small groups, divide the pictures, and have the children add drawings of food items to their posters.

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Scissors
- Envelopes

Ask the children to name some simple good things they can do. Write their suggestions on newsprint, one suggestion per line. Have the children come up with at least as many suggestions as there are children in the group. Distribute envelopes and have the children write “ONE GOOD THING” in big bold letters on their envelope. While the children are writing, cut the newsprint apart in strips with one suggestion in each strip. Fold the strips to fit in the envelopes. Place at least one strip in each child’s envelope and have them seal their envelopes. Send the envelopes home and encourage the children to open them and try to do just one good thing to help others.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

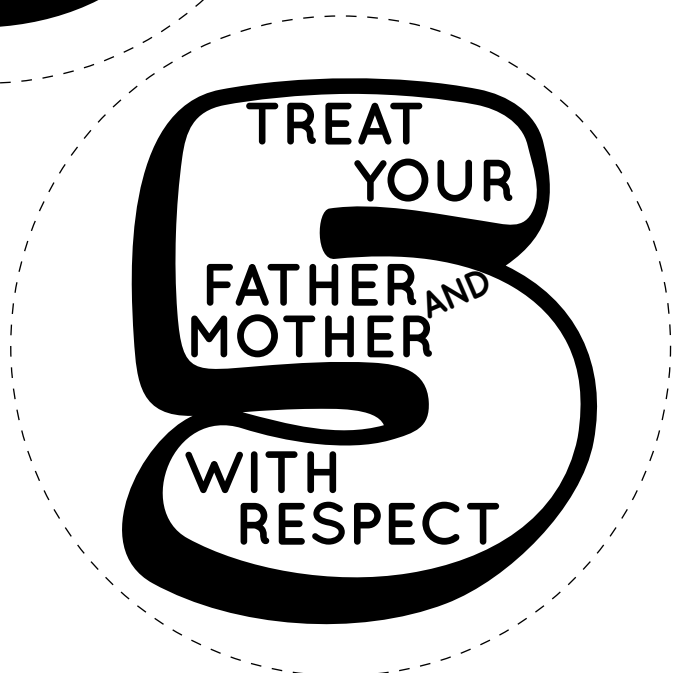
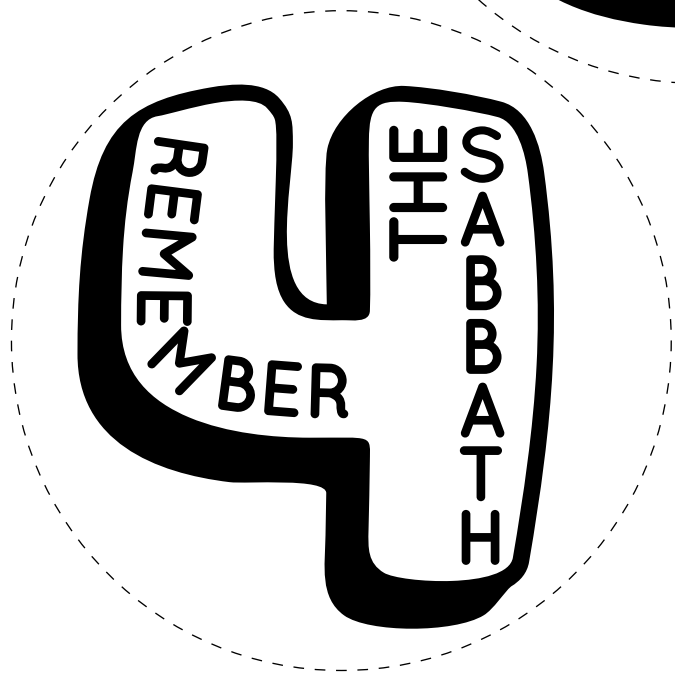
- Prepared newsprint with lyrics to the verses of the song “Draw the Circle Wide”
- Internet-connected device
- Rhythm instruments

### GOD’S CIRCLE

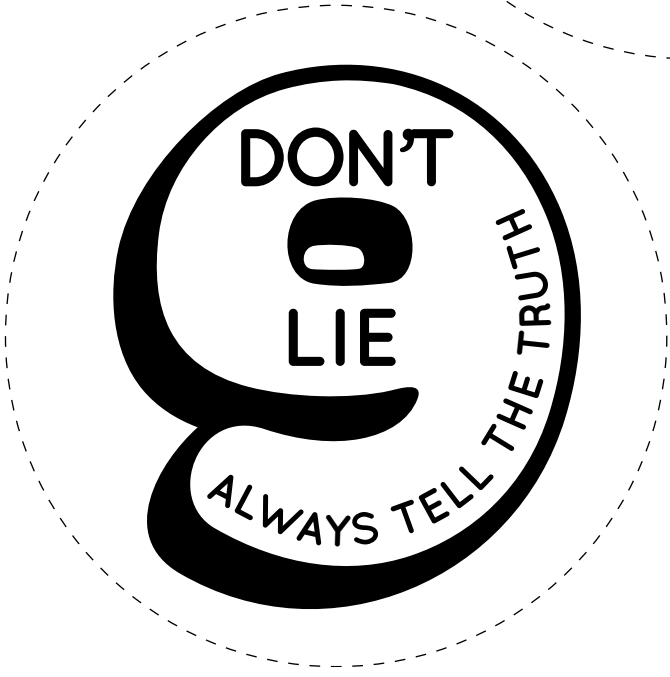


Close with a “Last Shall Be First” prayer. Have the children sit in a circle. Start the prayer by saying, “Amen.” Then have the children go around the circle taking turns to add a sentence to the prayer. Have the last child end the prayer with “Dear Gracious God.”

Display the prepared newsprint with the lyrics to the verses of the song “Draw the Circle Wide.” Show the YouTube video “Draw the Circle Wide” ([bit.ly/FMDrawCircleInstruments](https://bit.ly/FMDrawCircleInstruments), 2:29) and invite the children to sing, clap, and play instruments along with the family on the video.









**ADVANTAGE: FOR JUSTICE!**

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# Food Pantry Donation Tips

Donating to a local food pantry helps anyone experiencing food insecurity. Food pantries can always use donations, but some are better than others. Consider these tips when donating food and personal care items.

**Check with your local food pantry:** Find out the hours when they accept donations. Ask if they accept refrigerated foods and produce if you are interested in donating those items. They will also give you a list of what they need most at that time.

## Do donate:

For healthy food options, look for low or reduced sodium, no salt added, and/or low or no sugar added, when applicable.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** canned vegetables, canned fruits, applesauce, dried fruit, canned or boxed 100% fruit juice, canned tomato or pasta sauce
- **Whole grains:** hot or cold cereals, brown or wild rice, pasta, crackers, rice cakes
- **Protein:** canned meat and fish; canned beans; dried beans, lentils, and peas; nuts and seeds; nut and seed butters, protein bars
- **Dairy:** shelf-stable, low-fat powdered or evaporated milk
- **Staples:** flour, spices, salt and pepper, vegetable or olive oil (no glass), broth
- **Meals and mixes:** boxed meals; canned or boxed stews, chili, soups; mixes that need only water
- **Snack items:** 100% fruit rolls, raisins, graham crackers, pretzels, granola bars
- **Baby items:** baby food, formula, diapers, wipes
- **Personal care items:** toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, disposable razors, tampons/pads, hand and body lotion

## Do not donate:

- Opened, dented, or punctured items
- Expired items
- Refrigerated or frozen items (unless you have checked first)
- Glass containers
- Fruits and vegetables (unless you have checked first)—if donations are accepted, they should be simple to prepare, able to be used in many different ways, able to be stored at least one or two days without refrigeration, and be familiar to most people
- Homemade goods
- Unlabeled items
- Specialty or gourmet items

