



BRIAN CRESS

SERIES

# SEEKING JUSTICE

EXPLORING GOD'S  
PERSPECTIVE  
TEN MINUTES  
AT A TIME



simply for students



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**MOMENTS** 

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YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER

## **10 Minute Moments: Seeking Justice**

Exploring God's Perspective Ten Minutes at a Time

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ISBN 978-1-4707-1029-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13

Printed in the U.S.A.

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# INTRODUCTION

Kumar is a young guy who's probably not too different from you. He works his hardest at school and is learning new skills in his after-school internship. He likes sports and keeps up with new music. He's always joking around with his friends. If you met him, like I did, I bet you'd have a lot to talk about.

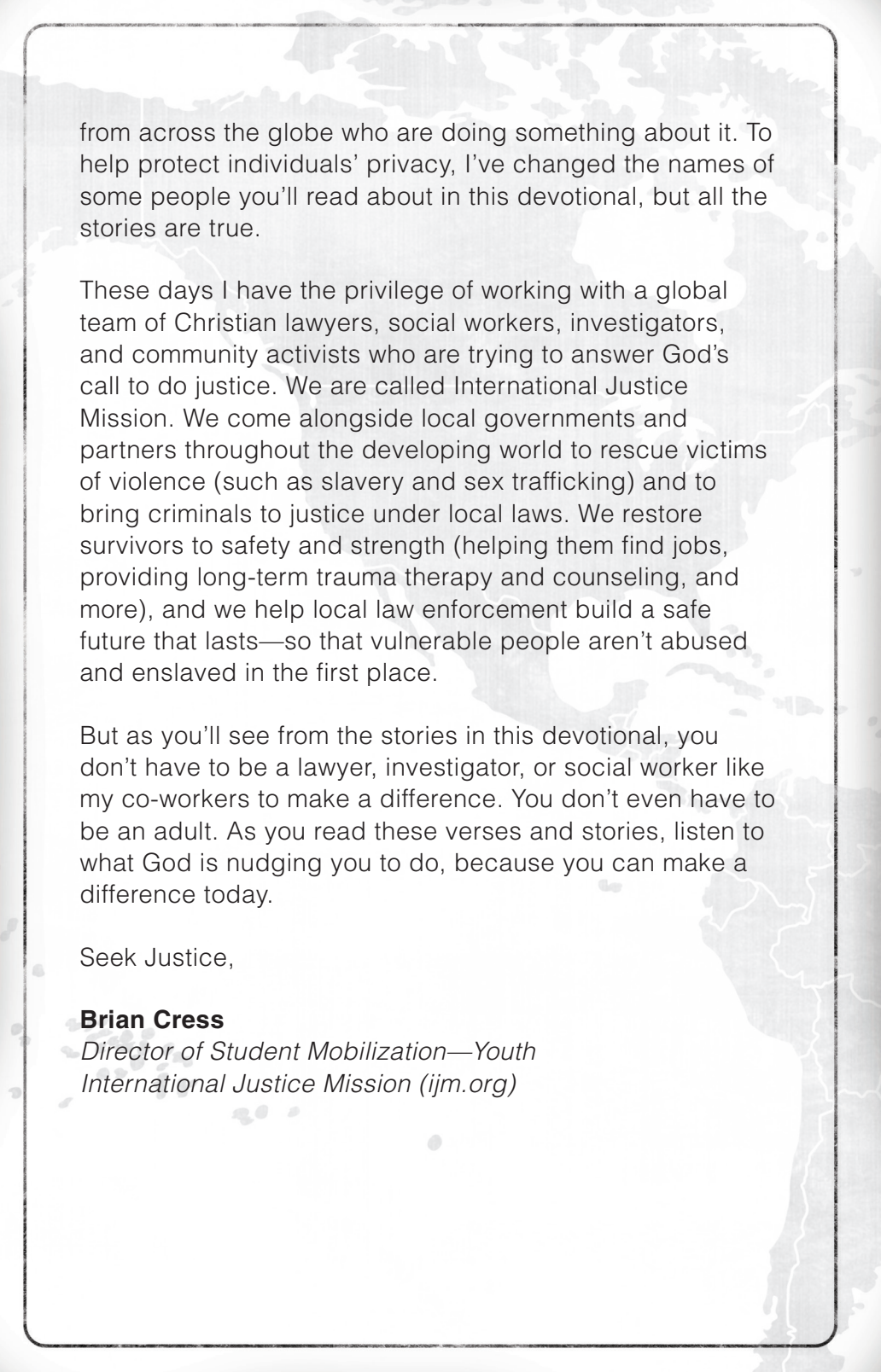
But there's something about Kumar's past that's hard to believe: When he was just a kid, Kumar was held as a slave. That's right—a slave. He had to make bricks all day, every day. He wasn't free to leave the brick factory. The owner beat him up.

I bet it makes you mad to know that a guy like Kumar was held as a slave. And I bet it makes you even madder to know that he's not the only one—experts tell us that there are millions of slaves in the world today.

When I first heard these numbers as a youth pastor, it floored me. I wanted to jump in with both feet and do something about it. Chances are you want to do something, too.

What I discovered along the way was that God does not like this injustice either. In fact, all throughout the Bible, I began to find verse after verse about God's passion for justice. Once I had a passion for justice, these verses jumped off the page at me—but somehow, even though I'd been reading my Bible for years, I'd missed them before.

This devotional is all about helping you encounter some of those Scriptures that have been so important on this justice journey—along with stories of real people who have experienced injustice and stories of students just like you



from across the globe who are doing something about it. To help protect individuals' privacy, I've changed the names of some people you'll read about in this devotional, but all the stories are true.

These days I have the privilege of working with a global team of Christian lawyers, social workers, investigators, and community activists who are trying to answer God's call to do justice. We are called International Justice Mission. We come alongside local governments and partners throughout the developing world to rescue victims of violence (such as slavery and sex trafficking) and to bring criminals to justice under local laws. We restore survivors to safety and strength (helping them find jobs, providing long-term trauma therapy and counseling, and more), and we help local law enforcement build a safe future that lasts—so that vulnerable people aren't abused and enslaved in the first place.

But as you'll see from the stories in this devotional, you don't have to be a lawyer, investigator, or social worker like my co-workers to make a difference. You don't even have to be an adult. As you read these verses and stories, listen to what God is nudging you to do, because you can make a difference today.

Seek Justice,

**Brian Cress**

*Director of Student Mobilization—Youth  
International Justice Mission ([ijm.org](http://ijm.org))*



DAY  
ZERO

DATE : \_\_\_\_\_

Every great idea, accomplishment, event, habit, or life-change has a “Day Zero.” It’s that day you decide to start something new. It’s that day you decide to try out for a sport. It’s that day you decide to start saving money for a car. It’s that day you decide to learn how to play an instrument. It’s that day you start studying hard to pass a big final exam.

I remember my “Day Zero” when I decided to start running a couple of years ago. I had just come home from a doctor’s appointment, and the scale in his office showed my weight was way more than I wanted. I decided right then that I wanted to lose some weight, and I set a goal to run a half marathon. It was my “Day Zero.” So my plan included things such as finding the time to run, getting the right shoes to wear, planning out how many days a week I would run and how long my runs would be, and other important details.

I started off slow, by walking a mile several days a week. That grew to jogging a mile several days a week, then two miles, and so on, until I was able to run a half marathon—and lost the weight I wanted. It did not happen overnight; in fact, it took six months. But one thing happened along the way: Running became something that I looked forward to on almost a daily basis. It became a part of my life. Now I have completed three half marathons, lost 40

pounds, subscribe to running magazines, and even raised thousands of dollars for International Justice Mission by running, and it all started because I had a “Day Zero” when I started making a plan.

The same is true with reading the Bible. Coming up with your plan will help you succeed. So today is your “Day Zero,” the day to make your plan. This is the beginning of a journey to discover what the Bible has to say about God’s passion for justice.

## **HERE’S HOW TO GET STARTED:**

### **1. PICK THE DAYS**

Set a goal of how many days each week you are going to read, and circle the ones you’ll start with below. Increase the number of reading days as you go from week to week. Remember, just like my running, it’s fine to start slow and build. Don’t be discouraged along the way if you miss a day or two; that happens to us all. What matters is that you pick it back up.

This devotional has 31 days. Maybe reading the Bible is already a daily part of your life, or maybe you’re feeling really motivated to make a change. If that’s you, you might want to do the 31 days straight in a row, learning something new about God’s justice every day for a month.

Weeks 1 & 2 Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Weeks 3 & 4 Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Weeks 5 & 6 Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Weeks 7 & 8 Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

## **2. PICK A TIME OF DAY**

This will help you create consistency. The more specific you can be, the better.

\_\_\_\_\_ a.m. or \_\_\_\_\_ p.m.

## **3. PICK A PLACE**

I recommend someplace that is not filled with distractions—maybe on the floor in your room, a comfortable chair in your living room, the kitchen counter, or even a local coffee shop. I would suggest that you pick someplace other than your bed, when you're about to fall asleep.

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

## **4. BRING YOUR BIBLE WITH YOU**

Bring along a highlighter and a pen, too. You'll want to be able to quickly jot down your thoughts and reflections in this devotional, and each day you'll underline or highlight the key Scripture in your Bible as well, so you can easily return to it in the future. You may even want to write the date you studied the verse next to it in your Bible—in years to come, this will remind you of what God showed you during this time. Reading the Bible online, on your smartphone, or on a tablet is fine, too, but just a bit trickier for keeping your notes.

## **5. TELL SOMEONE YOUR GOAL**

Having others who know about your goal to encourage you along the way is essential. I never would have made my goal of running a half marathon if I had not told anyone else

about it. Knowing that my wife, Lori, would ask me how my run went was often all the motivation I needed to put on my shoes and head out the door on those days when I simply did not want to run. It's especially helpful if the friend you tell about your goal has a similar goal to read the Bible and this devotional, too—you may even be in a small group that could do this study together.

Name of friend: \_\_\_\_\_

*Now send this friend a text, email, or social media post telling them of your goal.*

## **6. DAILY ACTION ITEMS**

Each day you will be challenged to do something. Some of the ideas are ways to seek justice. Some of the ideas are ways to help what you've read sink in. The ideas listed are simply suggestions for you. If you sense God telling you to do something else, then go for it.

## **7. NOW PRAY AND ASK GOD TO**

- give you success in reaching your reading plan goals
- give you fresh insights as you read each day
- give you ideas and actions you can take along the way
- make your heart and passion for justice to be in line with God's

**WITH YOUR PLAN IN PLACE, WRITE YOUR  
DAY 1 DATE HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_



DATE : \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been standing in the “10 items or less” checkout line at the grocery store with your soda, chips, and candy bar, and you look at the basket of the person in front of you and they have 13 items? Feels like an injustice, right? Well, today in our society, the words *injustice* and *justice* can almost mean anything. So here are the definitions we will be using for this devotional book.

- Injustice is when someone abuses power to take from others the good things that God has given them—their life, liberty, and the fruits of their love and labor.
- Justice is about using power rightly—to make sure everyone is safe, defended, and protected.

Justice comes up a lot in the Bible regarding how we treat people who have less power than we do—people who are vulnerable.

Often, when we think about what's just and unjust, we think of governments: judges sentencing criminals for their crimes, police catching bad guys. That's true—this is an important picture of justice, and it's one that we'll return to a few times in this study. But just because you're not a judge or police officer doesn't mean that you don't have a role to play in doing justice. You see, justice is about using power—and we all have power. God calls you to use the

power you have to make sure that everyone—especially people who are weak or vulnerable—is treated fairly.

## TODAY'S READING:

- Find today's verses, highlight them, and add today's date next to them in your own Bible.
- Read the verses several times, thinking about each word and asking God to help you understand what these Scriptures mean.

## ECCLESIASTES 4:1

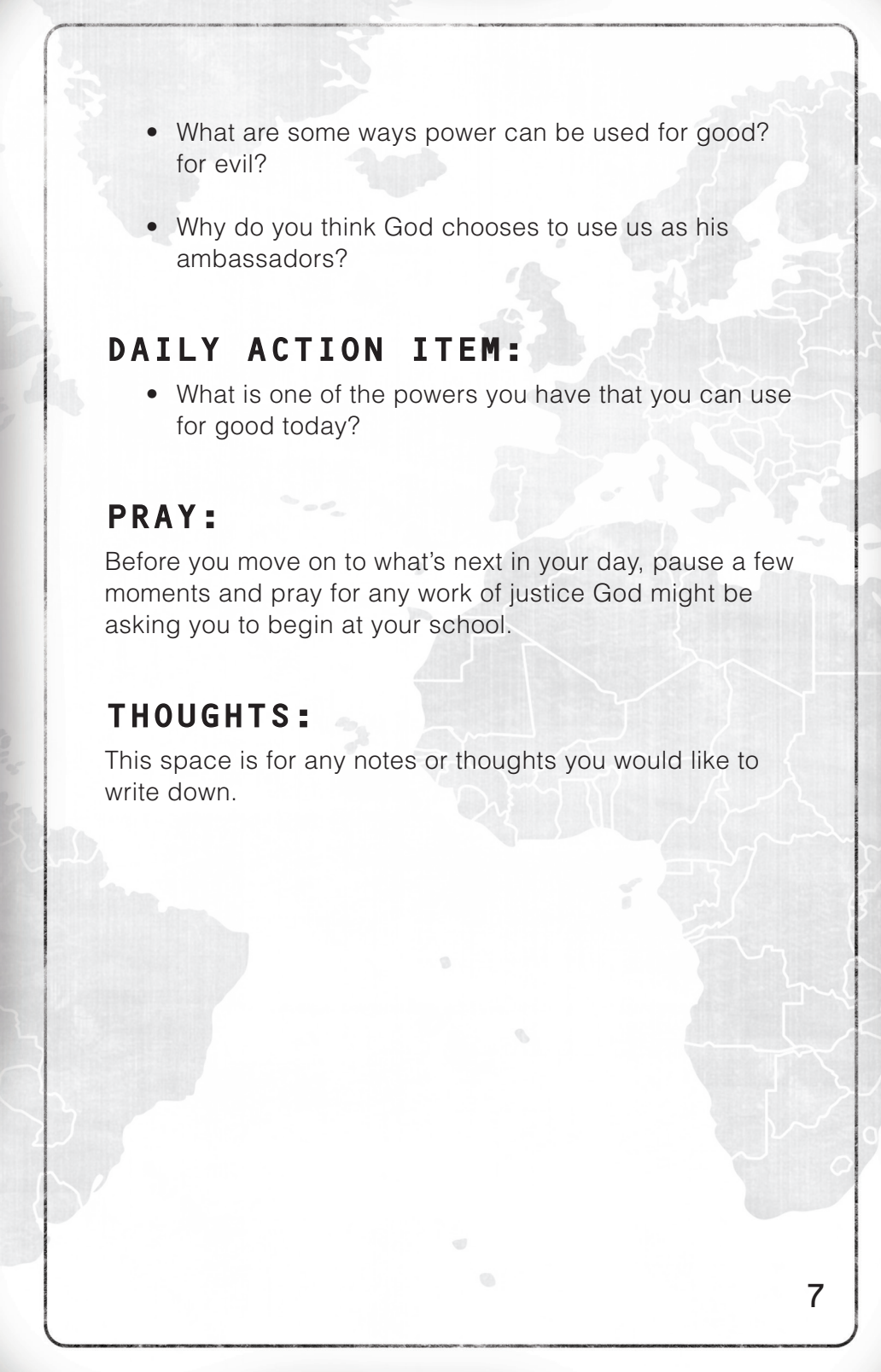
*Again, I observed all the oppression that takes place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, with no one to comfort them. The oppressors have great power, and their victims are helpless.*

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

*So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.*

## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

- What are some ways you see power being abused in our world today? What are some specific local examples that come to mind?
- What are some of the powers that you have? Circle all that apply: social, financial, intellectual, athletic, musical, other.

- 
- What are some ways power can be used for good? for evil?
  - Why do you think God chooses to use us as his ambassadors?

## **DAILY ACTION ITEM:**

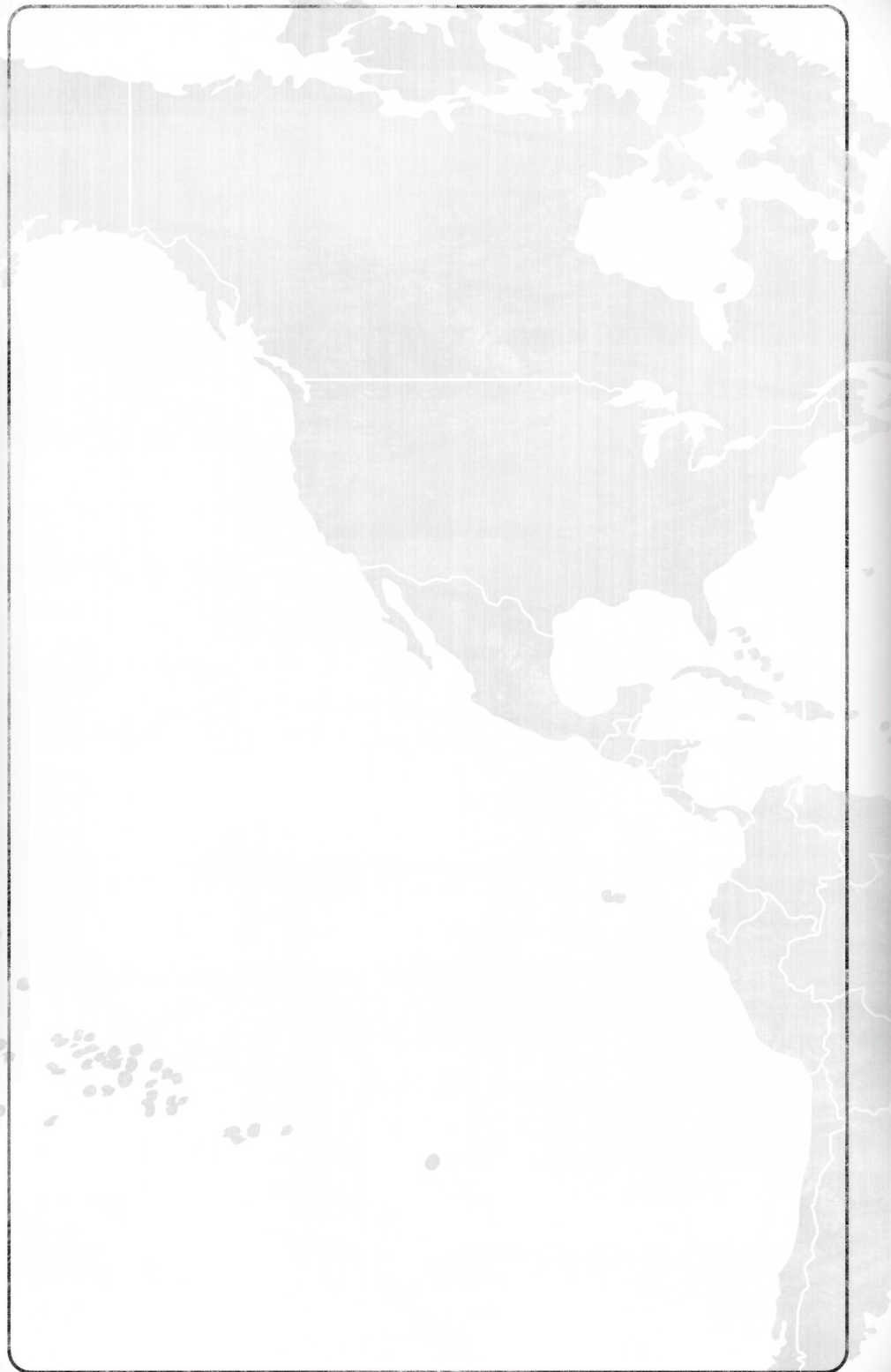
- What is one of the powers you have that you can use for good today?

## **PRAY:**

Before you move on to what's next in your day, pause a few moments and pray for any work of justice God might be asking you to begin at your school.

## **THOUGHTS:**

This space is for any notes or thoughts you would like to write down.





DAY 2

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

In sports, percentages are typically used as a way to measure an athlete's skill. For example, in baseball, if you actually hit the ball and make it to base one out of every three times you're up to bat, you are hitting .333, which is fantastic. But in basketball, someone making one out of three free throws is considered a bad free-throw shooter. When playing golf on a "par three" hole, getting the ball in the hole in three hits is considered average—but most of us take four or five tries! In tennis, you only get two tries to serve the ball into the correct spot, and then if you miss, the other player gets a point.

To be considered excellent in any sport, you must follow the advice of coaches and get lots of practice to move your percentage to the highest level. This idea is actually in the Bible, too. Did you know that one of the prophets in the Bible talks about going three for three? Read on to see how.

### **TODAY'S READING:**

- Find today's verse, highlight it, and add today's date next to it in your own Bible.
- Read the verse several times, thinking about each word and asking God to help you understand what it means.

## MICAH 6:8

*O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Why do you think God sees these things as required actions rather than just suggestions?
- In your own words, write a brief definition or explanation of these three phrases.

1. To do what is right / to seek justice =

---

2. To love mercy =

---

3. To walk humbly with your God =

---

- Now list specific ways that you, your youth group, or your school can do these things.

1. To do what is right / to seek justice =

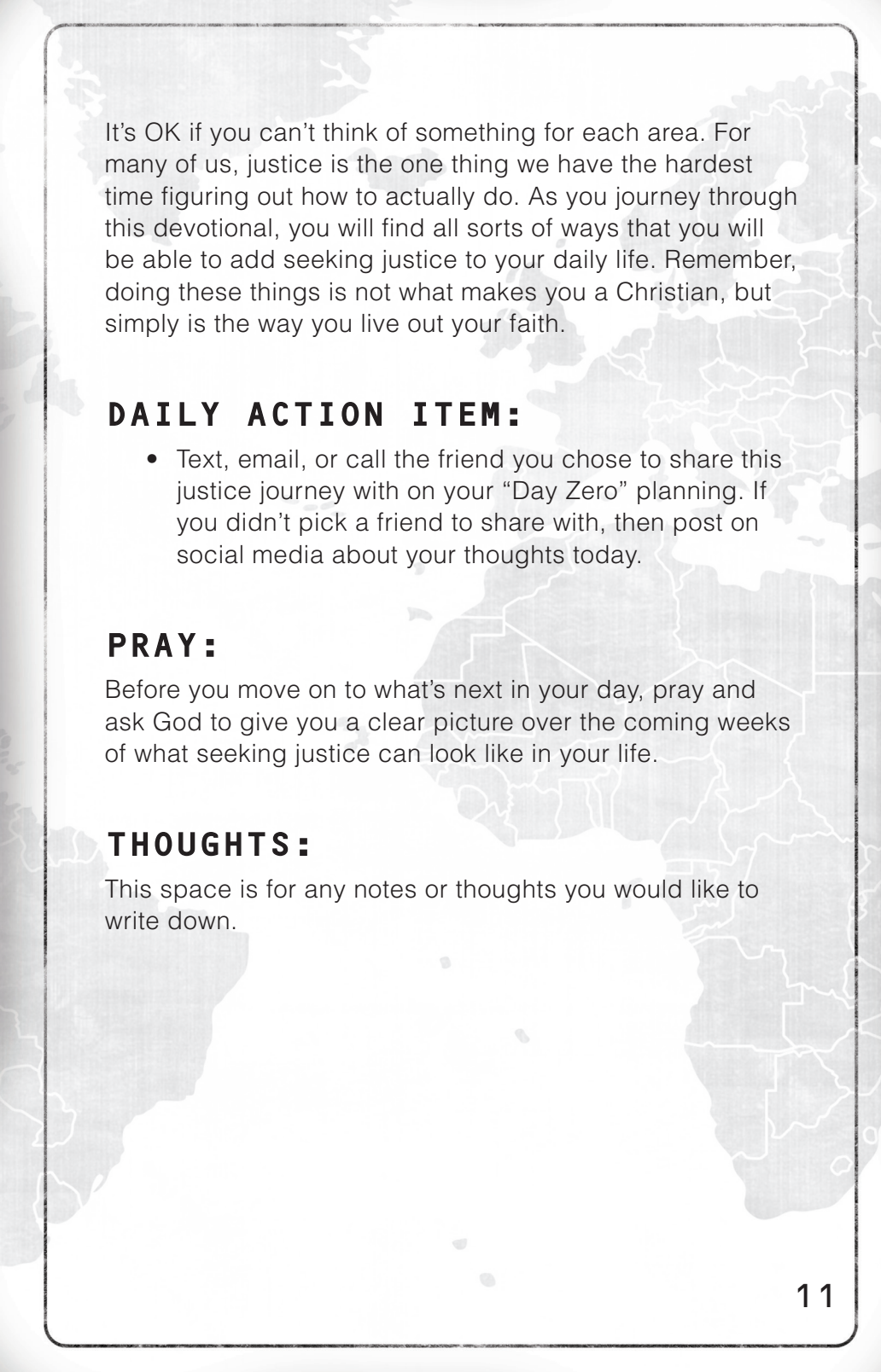
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2. To love mercy =

---

3. To walk humbly with your God =

---



It's OK if you can't think of something for each area. For many of us, justice is the one thing we have the hardest time figuring out how to actually do. As you journey through this devotional, you will find all sorts of ways that you will be able to add seeking justice to your daily life. Remember, doing these things is not what makes you a Christian, but simply is the way you live out your faith.

## **DAILY ACTION ITEM:**

- Text, email, or call the friend you chose to share this justice journey with on your “Day Zero” planning. If you didn't pick a friend to share with, then post on social media about your thoughts today.

## **PRAY:**

Before you move on to what's next in your day, pray and ask God to give you a clear picture over the coming weeks of what seeking justice can look like in your life.

## **THOUGHTS:**

This space is for any notes or thoughts you would like to write down.



**If you're like many teenagers today, you're tired of living in a world filled with injustice—but what can you do about it?**

*10-Minute Moments: Seeking Justice* will give you a biblical foundation for making a lasting, life-changing difference in this world. You'll discover how God loves justice, and you'll discover how you can honor God through involvement in justice issues. You'll also encounter stories from the life of author Brian Cress—who helps mobilize students for International Justice Mission—and from the lives of other teenagers and people who've been rescued by IJM.

This 31-day devotional is set up as a journal. Each day, you'll read a Scripture dealing with God's heart and passion for justice, chew on a few thought-provoking questions, consider simple action steps, and then pray a simple prayer to close the reading. It's a one-month plan that's easy to read and easy to stick with.

Written in partnership with International Justice Mission, *10-Minute Moments: Seeking Justice* will help you explore what the Bible says about seeking justice in our world today—and how you can make a meaningful impact in other people's lives!

10



**BRIAN CRESS** is Director of Student Mobilization-Youth for International Justice Mission in Washington, D.C., where he works to connect youth ministries with the goals and strategies of IJM. Before that, he was a longtime local church youth pastor who also helped lead a large network of youth ministries in Washington state. Brian and his wife, Lori, live in Bellevue, Washington, and have three grown children.

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