

# A Brief Study Guide for People of Faith

Based on a

New Public Television Series Entitled

## “Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?”

Because this series is open-ended and thoughtful it offers an opportunity for people of faith to engage in discussions of their values. Discussion could focus on questions like, “What does our sacred text advise?” or “What would a revered person of my faith do?” or “What would I do?” in the situation presented. For some, this series could be the focus for small group discussion at home, an opportunity to view and discuss episodes with children, or a chance to have an adult forum on one or more episodes.

Taught by Professor Michael Sandel, “Justice” is one of the most popular courses in Harvard’s history. It addresses key topics of our day—affirmative action, patriotism, and rights. Now it has been adapted as a 12-part public television series that, by presenting situations with ethical content, challenges its viewers to clarify their values. In each episode, Professor Sandel presents difficult moral dilemmas and asks, “What is the right thing to do?” He then asks us to examine our answers in the light of new scenarios. The results are often surprising. *(WGBH in Boston has already screened several episodes that can be viewed on its Web site.)*

TPT, Minnesota’s public television station, is screening one episode a week on Sunday afternoons beginning in January. The topics to be discussed are:

<b>Week 01</b>	The Moral Side of Murder / The Case for Cannibalism
<b>Week 02</b>	Putting a Price Tag on Life / How to Measure Pleasure
<b>Week 03</b>	Free to Choose / Who Owns Me?
<b>Week 04</b>	This Land is My Land / Consenting Adults
<b>Week 05</b>	Hired Guns? / For Sale: Motherhood
<b>Week 06</b>	Mind Your Motive / The Supreme Principle of Morality
<b>Week 07</b>	A Lesson in Lying / A Deal is a Deal
<b>Week 08</b>	What’s a Fair Start? / What Do We Deserve?
<b>Week 09</b>	Arguing Affirmative Action / What’s the Purpose?
<b>Week 10</b>	The Good Citizen / Freedom vs. Fit
<b>Week 11</b>	The Claims of Community / Where Our Loyalty Lies
<b>Week 12</b>	Debating Same-sex Marriage / The Good Life

## Questions for Discussion

### 1. Before viewing an episode:

What does the scripture and other teachings of your faith say about this topic? Among the resources you can identify, which are most important to you? Why? When does this type of situation create difficulties for your faith tradition? Why? How do you solve those difficulties? In which are you likely to differ from people of other faiths? Why? Is this difference important to you? Why or why not?

### 2. After viewing an episode:

- a) Did anything about this program surprise you?
- b) Did it cause you to think more carefully about your faith commitments or values?
- c) Where did it help you become more clear about what is important to you?

### 3. After viewing an episode with children:

- a) What did the children find most interesting? Why? What did they want to discuss?
- b) How did their perspectives differ from those of the adults who also watched it? Why?
- c) Does this suggest other topics that might be part of the children's future education or life experience?

### 4. About the series:

Do you like the idea of watching an episode or series of episodes that are being watched by people of other faith traditions? Does any particular topic lead you to wonder how discussing it with people of another faith would be helpful or informative? If so, which topic and which group? Would you like assistance in finding a way for this to happen? If so contact Gretchen Milloy, United Theological Seminary, 651.255.6162 ([gmilloy@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:gmilloy@unitedseminary.edu)) for information about persons or groups to contact.

The use of this series as a basis for discussion by people of many faiths across the Twin Cities area is endorsed by the Minnesota Council of Churches and United Theological Seminary and made possible by the screening of "Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?" by TPT, our educational television station. If you would like to share your experience with any of these three groups, please send an e-mail to [memcnamara@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:memcnamara@unitedseminary.edu).