

THE ROAD TO MERCY AND PEACE

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

MERCY PEACE MERCIFUL

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 5:7 and 9 and 18:21-35

PEACEMAKERS,

righteousness, filled, peace, mercy, merciful

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help preadolescents recognize the importance of being “merciful,” and seek to achieve peace among those around them

MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Some preadolescents face a constant barrage of contempt from their siblings, peers, and even adults. When they’re hurt, their natural reaction is to respond in the same way. Hurtful words seem the norm, it is no exception at this age. Without God’s help, many preadolescents often hold a grudge against those who offend them. They can plan ways to get revenge and hurt their tormentors as much as they were hurt.

Some parents teach their children to hit when they’re hit, and to defend themselves when they’re attacked. Although this lesson we not tell students to let others beat them, it will help them understand that Jesus taught about mercy and forgiveness, and urged us to try to achieve peace among people.

Forgiveness is the heart of our relationship with God and with our neighbor. The forgiveness of our sins is what makes it possible

for us to forgive those who hurt us. Preadolescents should know that through the grace of God, we can show this mercy. They can also help others discover how to live in love and peace.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Matthew 5:7. Mercy is more than sympathy and compassion. Sympathy is an emotional response to a situation that leads the person to feel sorry, but not to get involved. Compassion leads the person to feel sorry, but desire to get involved. Mercy amounts to recognizing the need and also accepting the responsibility to do something about it even when we think the person does not deserve our help. Mercy is active, not passive; it is something we do.

The Hebrew word for mercy is “chesed,” and it means that a person puts himself in the place of another, and thinks and feels how he does. Chesed (mercy) also includes the idea of looking for the roots of the other person’s attitudes, understanding why he acts in this or that way. This is not easy when someone hurts us; it is natural to feel angry and offended.

In Jesus’ day, the Romans did not show any kind of mercy or sorrow, or any other thing they considered to be perceived as a sign of weakness. The Pharisees had no mercy towards those who did not reach their standard. Suffering was the punishment deserved for sin, and “an eye for an eye” was the rule of their time.

Our world is not different. The message of Jesus is the same for us today. Even when they hurt us, showing mercy is the way to live as God planned.

This point is illustrated in Matthew 18:21-35, in the parable of the servant who would not forgive. The ability to show mercy is rooted in the realization of the mercy God showed us. We have to recognize the terribleness of our state as condemned sinners, if not for the mercy of God. As the servant without mercy, we can never pay our debt to God. We must have mercy or we’ll perish.

The main point of this parable is very emphatic. If we want forgiveness from a perfect God, and we do not extend the same grace to someone who did us wrong, we totally lose sight of what Jesus came to do and what we should do. God wants us to see things through his eyes, which are eyes of love and grace. We forgive others, not because we’re afraid of the consequences of not doing so, but because we want to imitate our heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus.

Read Matthew 5:9. As in the case of showing mercy, being peacemakers is a deliberate activity. The Hebrew concept of peace - “shalom” - is not simply the absence of conflict or problems. This verse was written for people who lived under the “Roman Pax”, that is, the peace imposed by the rule of the Roman army. With their legions, they managed to end the war, but failed to establish “shalom”, that is, harmonious cooperation aimed at the welfare of all. This is the work of God, and should also be the work of his people.

Peacemakers are those who are dedicated to the task of reconciling hostile people (individuals, families, groups and nations). We may not be able to bring the peace we desire, but by our efforts, we keep alive the vision of God, of love and well-being for all.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Important words

Tell the group: “The important words and their meanings for today’s session are:

Mercy / Merciful: Mercy includes understanding, patience, kindness, love, help, and forgiveness of one another. It is constantly remembering what God does for each one of us and doing the same for others.

Peacemakers: those who pacify and establish peace; who appease the emotions of those who fight or are enemies.

If you are developing a mural, write the important words on appropriate and good-sized posters to place on the mural.

Who needs mercy?

Discuss the meaning of mercy. Then ask: “Who needs mercy?” (Everyone needs the mercy of God and other people.) Add: “Perhaps you’ve never thought that you need to receive and give mercy. Today we’ll learn more about what mercy is and why it is so important.”

Mercy. What is that?

Divide into two groups. Give them a few minutes to think of one or two definitions of “mercy”. Ask them to explain their definitions. “Mercy is ...” Correct any mistakes. (They may give ideas such as: being kind to other people, not taking revenge, helping others, treating people better than they deserve, etc.)

In the original biblical languages, the word “mercy” had several meanings. Mercy is much more than a simple kind feeling towards other people. Mercy is an active word, or verb. Sometimes, it is giving someone something they need, like money or food. Biblical mercy also means that we should try to understand people, why they do what they do, so we can love them even when they hurt us. Merciful people remember how much God loves them and how many times he has forgiven them. This helps them to forgive others. In our Bible study today, we’ll learn more about being merciful.

TEACH THE LESSON

The servant who did not want to forgive

Ask the students to form teams of three or four members. Explain to them: In your teams, you’ll have the opportunity to listen to God and your companions as you learn the Bible story. I will read a story (parable) from the Bible twice. Jesus taught this story after Peter asked him how many times he should forgive someone. “Up to seven times?” Peter asked. To which Jesus replied that he should be willing to forgive up to seventy times seven.

The first time I read, just listen. Listen if there is a word or phrase that catches your attention. When I read the story a second time, choose the word or phrase you consider the most important. Before reading, let’s pray for the Lord to help us hear what he has to tell us today.

Read Matthew 18:23-35 twice. The second time, emphasize some words. When you finish reading, say: I’ll give you a minute of silence.

Ask the students to discuss among themselves the words or phrases that caught their attention. Tell them to explain why they chose those phrases. When you see that they have finished discussing, say: “Thank you for your comments. Now we all want to know what caught your attention from the biblical reading. What did you think Jesus wanted to teach with this story?” Give them time to talk. (We hope they understand the main point of the story, the need to show mercy to one another. Some will notice the contrast of servants’ attitudes, others the need to feel sorry for others, others will talk about the importance of forgiving, of having patience, etc.)

Have the group discuss the following questions.

1. At the beginning of the story, was the king merciful?
2. Did the first servant deserve the king’s mercy?
3. Was the servant merciful to his fellow servant?
4. Did the servant deserve the mercy of the fellow servant?
5. Was the king merciful at the end of the story?
6. Are we like the servant when we don’t forgive others?
7. Read verse 35. What do you think “forgive from your heart” means?

While discussing their answers, emphasize the following points:

Whether the person deserves mercy or not, we must still be merciful. Refer the students to Romans 5:8 and 10, which describes God’s mercy towards us, who do not deserve it.

Forgiving with the heart has more than one meaning.

It is to forgive others with a heart full of love for God, who forgave us first.

It shows us that forgiving is not only a cozy feeling, but is a feeling of love and compassion towards others. When others have mistreated us, it will take time for feelings towards that person/ those people to change. But in the Bible, the “heart” includes our will, that is, the determination to do what is right. When we forgive with our hearts, we determine to treat others as Jesus would have treated them: with patience and love.

Forgiving with the heart is more than saying mere words. It includes our feelings, and our determination to do what is right.

Finish the study by asking the students to express in a single sentence a summary of what they learned today.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Public opinion

Divide into two teams, those who will be in favor of being merciful, and those who will be against it. Read Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." The teams will list all the evidence they can think of to support it or that is against it.

Explain: "Those in favor will try to convince me that this whole issue of having mercy is the best way to find joy in life. Those who are against it will try to persuade me that being merciful is a bad idea." Allow time for students to prepare their arguments for and against. Then ask them to give their explanations. We hope that students will have fun with this way of learning. After each side has been presented, tell them that they worked hard to make their presentation, that they made a good summary of their case, etc. Then express your "verdict." If possible, tell of a personal experience about having mercy towards someone and the final results. End with a round of applause for all participants.

My declaration

Provide each student a paper to declare "My Declaration". If possible write the following on the paper before the session:

Because Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy", and because I'm sure that God loves me more than I deserve, I want to live like Jesus lived.

So, I, _____ (name), commit myself, this week, to live with an attitude of mercy towards others.

Say: "We've talked a lot about showing mercy to others. But mercy is a word that has action, it is something we do, not just something we talk about. It is important that we express how we'll live this important beatitude. Have them read the Declaration aloud and all together. Ask them to look for a place in the room with some privacy to complete the Declaration and write names of people to whom they'll show mercy this week. Then sign the Declaration. They can fold it in half so nobody reads what they wrote.

Allow time for the students to list ways they can be merciful to others in the coming week.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Repeat the activity of the last session. You already have the memory verse on the 13 cards from the last session. Before this session, hide the cards in different places in the room. Write the passage on the board for review. Ask the students to look for the cards and assemble the puzzle. You can give small prizes.

Encourage students to say the text by themselves. By this session, they should know the passage very well. If there are students who do not know it or are new to the group, ask those who have already learned it to help them study it. You can organize a competition for girls and boys. Ask them to come forward one person from each team at a time and write the text on the board. Give 10 points to each one who wrote it without errors.

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #411 (Public opinion) and guide the students in listing the evidence for and against the statement. Help them link "righteousness" and "merciful".

WRAP-UP

Pray

Pray for the group. Ask God to help everyone to be merciful and carry out the commitment made in their My Declaration.

Encourage

Encourage the group by singing an appropriate chorus or song.

Invite

Say something interesting about the next session and encourage the students to attend. Encourage them to invite visitors.