

Compassion (2 Lessons)

(Part of a series on Character Building from the Bible)

Introduction: This unit of 2 lessons consists of two Bible stories showing a common character trait--one story from the Old Testament, and one story showing that trait in the person and life of Jesus Christ. Two Bible verses will be learned as a class for the unit. The character traits are presented as desirable qualities in our lives, and Jesus Christ as the only one who ever fulfilled them perfectly. In the beginning of the series, refer to the word CHARACTER in the dictionary. Ask these thought questions:

What are YOU really like? What is JESUS really like? We will be thinking a lot about both these questions during this series.

COMPASSION

Learning about the word COMPASSION:

1. A feeling of kindness, concern and love toward another person that results in action to help.

Opposite: hardhearted

Bible Memory Verses:

Lamentations 3:22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.

Bible Stories:

God shows compassion on the wicked people of Nineveh.
Jonah 1:1-2, ch 3-4.

Jesus shows compassion.

Unit Aim: At the conclusion of these lessons, the student will understand that God's heart is tender and compassionate toward us. We all deserve God's punishment, but that God wants to show us compassion, mercy and forgiveness. As a result, the Christian child will thank God for His compassionate heart and begin to care more deeply about others and show concern for them.

Lesson 1

GOD SHOWED COMPASSION ON THE WICKED PEOPLE OF NINEVEH

Review for Older Students:**For Younger Students:****Beginning the Lesson:**

Who is the worst, most wicked person you have ever known? (Let the children respond briefly. Ask them to explain why they think the person is so wicked.) We know that God hates wickedness. So here is a question to think about: How does God feel about people who are very wicked? Does He hate them? Does He want to punish them?

Transition to the Lesson--Let's look at a Bible story about some people who were very wicked. Let's look at a Bible story about some people who hated God, and hated God's people. Let's look at the story of the wicked people of Nineveh.

God forgives the wicked people of Nineveh when they repent.**Jonah 1:1-2, ch 3-4.**

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.
4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.
5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.
6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:
8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.
9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?
10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.
4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.
2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.
3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.
4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Main Ideas to Emphasize:

The people of Nineveh were very wicked people who hated God and hated His people.

They deserved punishment, but God loved them. In His great compassion, He sent a warning first by His prophet Jonah.

When Jonah preached, the people repented, so God did not punish them.

God must punish sin, but God is compassionate and merciful. He wants to forgive us if we will repent of our sins.

God's heart is full of compassion, and He wants the hearts of His people to be like His own. He wants us to have kind, loving feelings that results in kind, helpful actions towards them.

Questions & Discussion:

Ask if we have done some wicked things that need to be punished. Ask for examples.

Ask if we deserve to be punished. (Yes, the Bible says we are all guilty--Rom. Ch. 3.)

Ask how we know God wants to show compassion for us. (He sent Jesus to be our Savior, and He sent people to warn us and teach us His word, just like He did to the Ninevites.)

Application--Step of Growth for the Saved Child:

Follow up--Ask how they have seen someone show compassion for another person.

If you are a believer in Jesus, God has shown compassion on you by forgiving you for all your sins. Now you can show compassion to others.

Discuss—Ways in which they can show compassion (show they really care) for others.

With older children, suggest specific groups that may be challenging to show compassion for, such as the mentally retarded, the handicapped, someone who is always dirty, someone who brags a lot, someone who is mean, someone who is very poor. Ask for ideas on specific ways to show compassion to members of each group. Choose one or two of these groups and ask students to act out showing compassion to them.

Invitation--Giving the Unsaved Child an Opportunity to Receive Christ

If you have not yet received Jesus, you are still in your sins. But God wants to forgive you. He wants to throw all your sins away. You deserve punishment. We all do. But God has compassion for you. He wants to show you mercy. Jesus has already paid the punishment for your sins. Now you have only to say yes to Him. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, but today you would like to do so, pray this prayer in your heart right now. (Teacher, lead in the sinner's prayer, found in the preface to these lessons. Then ask those who prayed to raise their hands briefly. You pray for God's blessing on them.)

Lesson 2

JESUS SHOWED COMPASSION IN HIS MINISTRY

Lesson Scripture: Mark 1:23-42

Review for Older Students:

How do we know that God loved even the wicked people of Nineveh?
 They deserved punishment. How did God show them His compassion and mercy?
 What happened when Jonah preached to them?
 How did God respond?
 Why was Jonah angry?
 What is God's final plea to Jonah?

Younger Students:

Who did God send to Nineveh to warn the wicked people?
 When they repented, what did God do?
 How did God feel about the people of Nineveh?
 How do you know God wanted to forgive the wicked people of Nineveh?

Beginning the Lesson:

Review-Last time we were together we learned that God showed compassion and mercy to the wicked Ninevites when they repented. Jesus also showed compassion in His ministry.

Mark 1:40-42, Luke 22: 47-51, Luke 23:33-34, 35-37, 39

Main Points of the Bible Lesson--

Mark 1: 40-42 Jesus showed compassion by touching a leper and healing him.

Now a leper came to Him, imploring him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, I am willing; be cleansed."

42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

Jesus showed His love not only by healing the leper, but by TOUCHING him. Leprosy was thought to be a very contagious disease. Lepers were considered unclean. By law they had to live away from other people. Jesus must have understood that the man was not only

very sick, he was very lonely, too. He was an outcast. Jesus showed compassion not only by healing him, but also by touching him.

Luke 22: 47-51 Jesus showed compassion by healing a man's ear when the man was coming to have him arrested and crucified.

And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.

48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49 When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"

50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him."

Jesus healed many people, but to understand the significance of this event, we have to remember when it happened. Judas had just betrayed Jesus. Jesus was being arrested. He knew He would soon be tortured and crucified. Yet He was not thinking of His own suffering, but of the well-being of one of those who had come to have him arrested. This is the reason this act of compassion is so amazing.

Luke 23:33-34 Jesus showed compassion by forgiving and praying for those who were torturing Him and crucifying Him.

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Even when Jesus was suffering and dying on the cross, He was still thinking of others. He was still showing compassion, even for those who were causing Him such pain. He prayed for them. He asked God to forgive them.

Luke 23:35-37, 39 Jesus showed compassion for US by staying on the cross and paying the punishment for our sins.

And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,

37 And saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself."

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

Many around Jesus ridiculed Him for not doing a miracle and coming down from the cross. The One who cleansed lepers could easily have come down. But there was a reason He chose not to come down from the cross. He needed to die there in order to pay the punishment for our sins so that He could be our Saviour. He could have saved Himself

only if He were willing to let us be eternally condemned. He showed compassion for all of us by staying on the cross and completing the sacrifice that God would accept to take away all our sins.

Application for the Saved Child

Discuss: What kinds of people did Jesus show compassion for? (Be sure the following points are raised—the sick, the unlovely, the outcast, the lonely, His enemies.) What are some kinds of people that are hard for you to show compassion for? Why?

Ask some students to pray, asking God for His strength to show compassion to a specific person or a specific group of people this week.

Invitation--Giving the Unsaved Child an Opportunity to Receive Christ

Jesus forgave those who were nailing Him on the cross. Yet He wasn't on the cross just because someone nailed Him there. He could have come down any time. He stayed there because He knew He needed to pay the punishment for our sins so we could be forgiven. He died for you, and He rose again for you. He will save you today if you will trust in Him. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, but today you would like to do so, pray this prayer in your heart right now. (Teacher, lead in the sinner's prayer, found in the preface to these lessons. Then ask those who prayed to raise their hands briefly. You pray for God's blessing on them.)