

MERCY not Vengefulness

Learning about the word MERCY:

1. More kindness than justice requires, beyond what can be claimed

Opposite: unmerciful, unforgiving

Bible Memory Verses:

Psalm 57:10 "For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds."

Ephesians 2:4-5 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ, (by grace are you saved)."

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

James 3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Bible Stories:

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

Jesus forgives those who crucify Him.
Luke 23:33-46

Unit Aim: At the conclusion of these lessons, the student will understand that God is merciful. We all deserve God's punishment, but that God wants to show us mercy and forgiveness. As a result, the Christian child will thank God for His mercy and begin to show mercy to others by forgiving them when they have hurt him.

Lesson 1

GOD FORGAVE THE WICKED PEOPLE OF NINEVEH

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 and 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 merciful. He wants to forgive us if we will repent of our sins.

God is merciful, and He wants His people to be merciful. He has forgiven us who have believed in Jesus, and He wants us to forgive one another.

Participation:

Lead the children to all act out each action in the story together as a group.

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 loves us and wants to forgive 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 showed love to someone if their family since the last lesson. Congratulate those who tried.

If you are a believer in Jesus, God has forgiven you for all your sins. Now you can forgive others who hurt you. Can you think of someone who has hurt you? Will you ask God to help you forgive that person? (Have a silent time of prayer.) Now what will you do to show that person that you have forgiven him? (Let the children share ideas, and pray that God will help them carry them out this week.)

Invitation--Giving the Unserved 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 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 FORGAVE THOSE WHO PUT HIM ON THE CROSS

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 mercy or forgiveness?
 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 mercy to the wicked Ninevites when they repented.

Transition to the Lesson-- Today I am thinking of another time that God forgive wicked sinners. This time it was God's Son the Lord Jesus who forgave wicked men. Jesus had helped many people. He had healed many who were sick. He had given sight to those who were blind, and even raised the dead to life. He had never hurt anyone, but some people were jealous of Him. They told lies about Him, and had Jesus arrested. Remember, Pilate asked Him questions and found no fault in Him. But still He was put up on the cross to die. God had planned for Him to die to take away our sins. What a cruel way to treat someone who helped so many! How would Jesus treat those who put Him up on that cross? Let's see what the Bible says.

Jesus forgives those who crucify Him.

Luke 23:33-46

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

- 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.
- 38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
- 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?
- 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.
- 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
- 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.
- 44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
- 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.
- 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Main Ideas to Emphasize:

Jesus never did any wrong, yet He was put on the cross to die.
 He was nailed up between two bad men--two criminals.
 Jesus was suffering, but He prayed for those who put him on the cross.
 Jesus asked God to forgive them.
 Many people made fun of Jesus on the cross, but He did not get angry with them.
 Jesus gave up His life to pay for our sins so we could be forgiven.
 God is merciful. He will forgive anyone who receives Jesus as His Savior.
 Because God forgave us, we ought to forgive others who hurt us.

Participation—Rhythmic Repetition:

Lead the children in repeating this phrase with a rhythmic cadence at key points throughout the Bible story:

Je-sus did-n't strike back. Jesus for-gave.

Role Play:

With your teaching partner, you will decide on 3 situations in which a child is deeply hurt. Briefly describe the situation, and ask 3 student volunteers to act out how they would forgive those who hurt them.

Application--Step of Growth for the Saved Child:

Follow Up--Ask who forgave someone who hurt them. Give an opportunity to tell about it. Pray for those who are trying to forgive others.
 Do you have grudges in your heart? Are you angry at anyone? Ask God to help you forgive those people. Say their names to God right now. (Pray and ask God's help to forgive those we are angry at.)

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.)

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A brief introduction to some African teaching methods

(You are not limited to these methods. These are given only to acquaint you with some of the methods the children are already familiar with.)

Repetition

There is a lot of emphasis of repetition in African schools and often in sermons as well. That is, the preacher may say something and ask the congregation to repeat it. African children have more patience with this than American children do, and it can be a valuable method. The teacher needs to make sure that the children understand what they are repeating, however.

Rhythm

African children love rhythm and lively music. Drums are found in nearly every church and are the main instrument in most of them. Group dancing permeates every part of social, civic and religious life and is a part of most public celebrations. One African asked me one time, “How can you Americans praise God standing still like that? Don’t you know He is a great king?” To Africans, standing still is considered disrespectful to God, in the same way that some conservative churches consider dancing disrespectful. This is a major cultural difference. As an American, you can join or not join in the movement, as you feel comfortable in doing, but prepare yourself to see a much more lively service than you may have anticipated. This is especially true if people stand still during your worship services.

You can use rhythmic activities in teaching. You can put a memory verse or a key phrase from the lesson to music and include clapping, stomping, swaying, marching, hand and body motions. You are limited only by space considerations, since most of your teaching will be done with large groups in small spaces. You can also speak verses rhythmically without the musical melody. We will practice some of these methods as a group.

Acting Out

Acting out stories is a traditional African teaching method, used effectively with all ages. Children are not as familiar with role play acting—more familiar with acting out stories. For younger children, Grades 1 & 2, have all the children act out the same character or action simultaneously. For older children, assign individual parts.

Storytelling—(Parables)

African sermons often include long and complicated stories to teach a lesson. Stories from life are effective, but these will need to be crafted by your Ghanaian partners in order to relate to life as the children know it. Animal parables are also common and effective.

Respect for Ancestors & Elders

Age is greatly respected in African culture. Older people are assumed to be wiser. They are afforded many privileges—eating first, getting the best seats, etc. Sometimes younger children are even expected to cater to older ones in the family and sometimes to afford them special terms of respect. This means you can freely use stories and examples of older people even with younger children.

Proverbs

Proverbs—pithy little sayings that express truth succinctly—are a main characteristic of teaching as given by African elders. African proverbs are similar to the proverbs of the book of Proverbs in the Bible. We will discuss with our Ghanaian staff some well known “proverbs of the elders” that may help to drive home the truths of the lesson. Use of African proverbs has the additional benefit of helping the older generation understand and accept Bible truths.

We encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open to new methods you see as you visit African church services and schools. Ask questions if you don't understand. You will see many interesting and useful methods and may learn to use some of them.

