

SABBATH SCHOOL

Preteen Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level 4 • Unit 2 • Week 1

GOD IS MERCIFUL

OBJECTIVE:

To learn about God's mercy through the examples of Hezekiah, Moses and Abraham.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Can anyone define "mercy"? [Answers may vary.] If you are merciful, you can be kind, forgiving, and compassionate (have sympathetic concern for the suffering or well-being of others).

We are going to discuss three people from the Bible today and see how God had mercy on them.

BIBLE LESSON:

HEZEKIAH (2 Kings 20:1-11)

Have you ever been really sick? What if you knew you were going to die?

There was a king of Judah (in the land of Israel today) who faced this problem. God had sent the prophet Isaiah to tell King Hezekiah that he was going to die. Hezekiah didn't want to die yet. Let's read and find out what happened to Hezekiah.

Do: Tell in your own words or paraphrase the story of 2 Kings 20:1-11.

What happened? [Let students respond.] Yes, you are right. Hezekiah prayed to God, asking Him to heal him. Did you know that God can heal people? God heals people sometimes. That's pretty amazing, isn't it? King Hezekiah did eventually die. All people and every living thing eventually dies; but God gave Hezekiah 15 more years of life, just because he asked. God healed him because Hezekiah prayed a humble prayer! Hezekiah was a good king and God blessed Him as a result.

Have you ever asked your parents to change their minds about a decision they have made? [Discuss this—answers may vary.] If you ask them to change their minds and your attitude is good, perhaps they will listen to you because they want what's best for you. [It's important to add here that you must not nag or behave badly if you don't get your way.] Perhaps your parents understand that what you are asking for is not in your best interests.

MOSES (Numbers 13:17-33; 14:1-31)

The next story tells about an incident when Israel came out of Egypt a long time ago.

The Israelites complained a lot while they were in the desert between Egypt and the "Promised Land." Many times, they said that they would like to go back to Egypt, back to slavery. They said that they would have rather died in Egypt or accuse Moses of trying to lead them to their death. Can you imagine that? They were ready to rebel against God and return to Egypt. They seemed to forget the terrible life they were living in Egypt when they were slaves, and how God had delivered them.

This kind of talk made God very angry. God wanted to punish the Israelites with diseases and disinherit them as His people. God even told Moses that He (God) would make a great nation from Moses. Now any other person might have said, "Cool. Wonderful. I'll take you up on that promise. Go ahead and destroy them and give me the power." Not Moses. Moses discussed the issue with God. Moses appealed: "God, IF YOU destroy them, the other nations would think that You are not really God, that their gods are just as important and mighty as You. These other nations would think that You were not strong enough to free Your people. You wouldn't want the other nations to think that, would You?"

Do you think you could talk to God that way; and do you think He would listen if you did? God did listen to Moses. Moses stated (Numbers 14:17) that God's power is very great! But Moses also told God, "You are patient, merciful and forgiving." Moses asked God to forgive the Israelites, even though they certainly did not deserve it. God listened to Moses. He decided not to destroy the Israelites. He accepted Moses' request when Moses asked Him to be merciful and forgiving (Numbers 14:18).

Now, even though He did pardon the iniquity of the people, He still had to punish them for having such a bad attitude. He told them that out of the whole nation only two people over age 20 (Joshua and Caleb) would be able to go into the Promised Land because those two men trusted and obeyed God. The rest, all of the Israelites over 20, would have to wander in the desert for 40 years and die there—only their children would enter the land. They gave up God's promise because of their rebellion. They gave up the opportunity to go into the land that God had promised them. But consider God's mercy in this situation. God did not destroy them. He pardoned them (Numbers 14:20).

Let's think about our situation again. Sometime you might have done something REALLY bad. I don't know what you did and you don't need to tell me. But it may have been something really serious. You know you deserved a big punishment but after being very sorry and telling your parents how awful you felt, maybe the punishment they gave you wasn't as bad as you expected. You would be very thankful to them for being merciful, wouldn't you? God is very merciful and is desirous of forgiving our sins when we are sorry.

ABRAHAM (Genesis 18)

We have all heard of Abraham and Sarah. We are going to talk more about Abraham in a couple of lessons, but I would like us to discuss Abraham today as well. We can learn many things from the life of Abraham that can help us love and follow God even more closely.

Abraham followed God. He left his hometown and his family when God told him to. It pleased God when Abraham obeyed right away. Later, in the Bible, Abraham is called, "the friend of God." How would you like to be God's friend? I know you would.

One time, Abraham was sitting near his tent, and he saw three men coming toward him. Abraham told Sarah to prepare some food for his company. While they ate, they talked.

These "men" were really messengers from God. They shared the news that God was going to destroy two cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) which were fairly near the area where Abraham lived.

Now, I know it sounds strange that our loving God would destroy a city, but these cities had very evil people living in them. Nevertheless we want to think about God's mercy in the way He handled this situation.

[Read or tell the story in Genesis 18. Emphasize verses 23-32, with the discussion between Abraham and God.]

Can any of you explain how this example shows God's mercy?

If you had a face-to-face conversation with God, would you feel like you could discuss this situation with God as Abraham did?

God was willing to work out a different solution if He found 50, then 40, then 30, then 20, and yes, even 10 righteous or good people in Sodom and Gomorrah. He would have shown mercy to these cities if He could find only 10 good people. There weren't 10 and He had to destroy the cities. [Remind the children that these people, although very evil, will all have a chance to follow God later.]

Did you know that you could talk to God and ask Him to have mercy? He might also change the mind of your parents, your teachers and your friends if you are not selfish in your request. Can you imagine God taking your advice (just like He took Abraham's)? It's pretty exciting to understand that we can be the friend of God, just like Abraham!

How does God show mercy?

- He forgives everything bad that we do if we ask Him and are sorry.
- He answers our prayers.
- He heals us when we are sick or ill.

LESSON APPLICATION:

Have the class cut out the word "mercy" in block letters. Then have them write the words "God is a loving God" on the letters (one word per letter).

Music:

Read the following poem and/or sing a hymn.

When we pray, God listens to everything we say.
We can talk and He will listen, our words will he weigh.
He may not always say yes, sometimes He must say no.
But by our words of good things, His Mind may we sway —
God our Friend will listen to everything we say.
(Karen Allwine)

Hymns (found in the United Church of God hymnal) to choose from:

- "In Thy Loving Kindness, Lord" (p. 24)
- "O Lord, Thou Art My God and King" (p. 49)
- "O That Men Would Praise Their God!" (p. 42)
- "Our God Is Good and Upright" (p. 72)
- "The Lord Eternal Reigns!" (p. 59)
- "They Are Blessed Who Are Forgiven" (p. 70)
- "How Excellent Is Thy Name!" (p. 5)
- "Joyfully Sing and Praise God!" (p. 13)

MEMORY VERSE:

1 Chronicles 16:34 "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

family activity

THE POINT:

To learn about God's mercy through the examples of Hezekiah, Moses and Abraham.

ACTIVITY:

A scripture is hidden in the puzzle below. The words go horizontally. Find the words and then see if you can figure out what scripture it is.

O H P G I V E R U
D J T H A N K S E
U N T O Z F T H E
W U Q X L O R D Y
K N F O R V H E B
P I S H J G O O D
F O R V T H I S U
Q Y M E R C Y M P
U E N D U R E S J
F O R E V E R X A

To discover the subject of our next lesson, decode the secret message below.

—
7 15 4 12 9 19 20 5 14 19 20 15 21 19
—
1 14 4 1 14 19 23 5 18 19 15 21 18 16 18 1 25 5 18 19

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

Discuss how God has answered prayers for you with your family this week.

MEMORY VERSE:

1 Chronicles 16:34 "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."