

# GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED FOR HIS MERCY

FOUNDATION: GOD IS JUST - GOD GIVES MERCY

## BIG TRUTH: GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED FOR HIS MERCY

Psalms 14:1-3; Matthew 5:43-48; 18:32-35; Romans 3:9-10

## BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:13B

"Mercy triumphs over judgment."

## BIG IDEAS

- There is nothing we can do to earn God's mercy.
- We must understand our need for mercy before we can receive mercy.
- God opens our eyes to see our need for mercy.
- God gives mercy to those who do not deserve it.

## BIBLE STORY: LUKE 18:9-14

Jesus shares a parable about two men and their very different prayers. One man, the Pharisee, congratulates himself in his prayer for not being a sinner. He then goes on to talk about all of the religious activities that he participates in. The other man, a tax collector, could not even lift his eyes to heaven because he knew how unworthy he was to even look at heaven. His prayer was a declaration of his unworthiness of God's mercy. The truth Jesus taught through this parable is the truth that we are all undeserving of God's great mercy, yet God still gives His mercy to us.

## FOUNDATION: GOD IS JUST - GOD GIVES MERCY

Every decision that God makes is perfect and completely just. He is a good judge who cannot and does not allow evil to go unpunished. This means that God must punish injustice. The problem that we all face is that we are unjust sinners. We deserve justice. God's justice is why we need a substitute, and He sent Jesus to become that substitute. Instead of justice, those who place their faith in Jesus receive mercy.

## BIG AIMS



### Every child should know:

- God's justice means He always does what is right
- God's mercy means that He does not give us what we deserve



### Every child should feel:

- Thankful because God shows us mercy when we do not do what is right



### Every child should be able to:

- Think about the decisions they have to make in light of what God says is right and wrong
- Obey God because He always does what is right



### Every child should want to:

- To trust God and to obey Him because He is just

## FAMILY DEVOTION: WE CAN'T EARN GOD'S MERCY

God's mercy is a gift to us. There is nothing we can do to earn it or to be worthy enough of it. None of our good works or deeds are ever good enough to earn God's mercy. Because we are all sinners, we can only accept God's mercy as His gift to us.

# GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED FOR HIS MERCY

**BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:13B**

*"Mercy triumphs over judgment."*

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**We show mercy when we understand God's mercy to us.**

- God is merciful to the world.
- God's mercy helps us show mercy to others.
- When we understand how merciful God has been to us, we'll show mercy to others.
- When we understand that God willingly gave His Son for our sins, we'll show mercy to others.

**When we don't show mercy, we are judged.**

- Not showing mercy to others means we will experience God's judgment because we don't really understand His mercy to us.
- God is gracious and merciful to us, so we should follow His example and be gracious and merciful to others.
- God's mercy is unfailing and abounding; therefore, we should show mercy always.

**When we don't show mercy, we don't understand God's mercy to us.**

- God shows us our need for His mercy when He shows us how we are unmerciful people.
- When we understand how much God has forgiven us, we will show mercy to others.
- We cannot be unmerciful to others when we fully understand just how much mercy God has shown us.
- When we truly understand our own sinfulness, we'll understand God's great mercy and we'll want to show mercy to others.

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY**BIBLE STORY: LUKE 18:9-14***The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*

Supporting Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:12-13

**Teacher Introduction:**

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector teaches us many things about God's mercy to sinners. First, we understand just how sinful we are and what our response to this understanding should be when we see the Tax Collector's prayer. The Tax Collector understood his own sinfulness and the great mercy that God had shown him. He humbled himself before God. The Pharisee's response to God was different. He trusted in his own good works instead of trusting in God. The Pharisee's prayer was one of self-promotion. He glorified his own works instead of glorifying God. The Pharisee didn't understand the mercy that God had shown him. Our response should be what the tax collector's response was. We should understand our own sinfulness and we should humble ourselves before God. We should understand that God has shown us much mercy and in return, we should show much mercy to others.

**Teaching Guide:**

The guide below is provided to help you teach the narrative: *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*. The four points are the Big Ideas that should guide your lesson as you share from Luke 18:9-14 and teach the narrative: *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*. Footnotes are provided for further study of the text and God's interaction with His people. Throughout the lesson, questions are placed to help you guide the preschoolers to think about and process the narrative: *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*.

**Opening Illustration:**

Bring in a special treat for each child. At the beginning of the class, ask the children to recite the Bible Verse for the week. This verse should be unfamiliar to them and they should not be able to recite it by themselves. Tell them if they can recite the verse, they can have a special treat. When they can't recite the verse give them the special treat anyway. Talk with them about how God shows us mercy when we don't deserve it.

- Even though no one could recite the verse to earn the special treat, you still got it because I'm showing you mercy.
- God showed us mercy when He sent His Son to die for our sins even though we didn't deserve it.

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY**BIG IDEA: THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO TO EARN GOD'S MERCY.****God's mercy cannot be earned.**

- We cannot be good enough or make enough right decisions to earn God's mercy.
- We are all sinners and nothing we do apart from God is good enough to earn His mercy.<sup>1</sup>
- We cannot be righteous enough or good enough to deserve God's mercy.
- He gives His mercy to us freely even though we do not deserve it.

**Even if we think we are good enough, we are not.**

- The Pharisee thought he was righteous enough because of all the things he had done.
- He thought he was good and deserving of God's mercy because He had not sinned like others had sinned.
- Jesus taught that the Pharisee was not good and deserving, even though the Pharisee thought he was.
- There is nothing we can do to earn God's mercy; even if we do a lot of spiritual or religious activities, we still won't be good enough to earn God's mercy.



Bring in a handheld mirror and a charcoal pencil. Rub the charcoal pencil on your fingers. Gather the children together and tell them you are going to trace the outline of their face with your fingers. The charcoal should rub off on their faces. After you trace each child's face ask them to raise their hand if their faces are dirty. For the ones who say, no, show them their faces in the handheld mirror. Lead them in a discussion of how God shows us our need for His mercy.

*Are we able to earn God's mercy? (No, we cannot earn God's mercy.)*

*Who thought he was good enough to earn God's mercy? (The Pharisee thought he was good enough to earn God's mercy.)*

1. 2 Corinthians 3:5: No one is good enough to earn God's mercy or grace. Nothing we do is sufficient enough to merit receiving God's mercy. He gives it as a free gift to us all.

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY**BIG IDEA: WE MUST UNDERSTAND OUR NEED FOR MERCY BEFORE WE CAN RECEIVE MERCY.****When we understand our own sinfulness, we know our need for mercy.**

- The Pharisee did not understand his sinfulness, so he did not understand his need for mercy.
- The Tax Collector did understand his own sinfulness, so he understood the great length of God's mercy.
- We must recognize and understand our true selves as sinners to understand God's mercy.
- When we truly know we are sinners, we'll understand just how much mercy God has shown us.



Help the children make a list on the board of the ways they have not obeyed God. Help them think of the ways they've disobeyed their parents or have been unkind to their friends or siblings. Share with them about times that you have disobeyed God. Talk with them about how we are all undeserving of God's mercy, but He still shows us mercy.

**When we understand ourselves and our own sinfulness, we can receive mercy.**

- We cannot trust in our works to make us deserving of mercy.
- We must see ourselves as we really are—sinners before God.
- When we recognize our great need for mercy, we can receive God's mercy.
- The Tax Collector understood his own sinfulness and he humbled himself before God.
- When the Tax Collector humbled himself before God, he could truly receive God's mercy.
- We must be like the Tax Collector and recognize we are sinners before God and then we must humble ourselves in order to receive God's mercy.

*How did the Pharisee see himself? (He saw himself as worthy and deserving of God's mercy.)*

*How did the Tax Collector see himself? (He saw himself as unworthy and undeserving of God's mercy.)*

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY**BIG IDEA: GOD OPENS OUR EYES TO SEE OUR NEED FOR MERCY.<sup>3</sup>**

**God shows us mercy by helping us see ourselves as we really are.**

- When God helps us see ourselves as sinners, we understand our need for His mercy.
- The Tax Collector saw his need for mercy and he humbled himself before God.
- God moves in our hearts and opens our eyes to see the truth about ourselves.
- When we see the truth about ourselves, we understand our great need for God's mercy.

**When God opens our eyes, we understand we are sinners in need of mercy.**

- The Pharisee did not see his need for mercy, though God had shown him.
- The Pharisee focused on his own works and not God's work.
- The Tax Collector saw his need because he focused on God when God opened his eyes.
- When we see what God shows us about ourselves, we, too, will see how much we need mercy.
- We cannot be like the Pharisee and trust in our own good works if we want to receive God's mercy.
- We must be like the Tax Collector and humble ourselves before God in order to receive God's mercy.



Gather the children around a table at the front of the room. Ask them to tell you what is on the table. (It should be empty.) Give each of them a cloth to cover their eyes with. Make sure no one can see. When they can't see, put several mirrors on the table. Ask the children to uncover their eyes and look at themselves in the mirrors. Talk with them about how God opens our eyes to see our need of His mercy.

*How can we receive God's mercy? (When we humble ourselves before God, we can receive God's mercy.)*

3. 1 Peter 1:3-4: God is rich in mercy and in His mercy, He showed us our need for Him.

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY**BIG IDEA: GOD GIVES MERCY TO THOSE WHO DO NOT DESERVE IT.****All people are undeserving of God's mercy.<sup>4</sup>**

- Because we are all sinners, no one deserves God's mercy.
- Our sinful natures keep us from being good enough or doing enough good works to deserve God's mercy.
- We can never do enough good things to deserve God's mercy.
- The Pharisee believed he was good enough. He believed his works were good enough to earn him God's mercy.
- The Tax Collector knew he was undeserving; he knew he didn't deserve any of God's mercy.

**God gives mercy to all, even the most undeserving.**

- God's mercy does not depend upon our own goodness.
- God shows us we need mercy by showing us who we really are.
- God gives mercy to those who recognize they are sinners and believe in Christ.
- God gives mercy to those who do not deserve it.
- He shows His great mercy to those who are undeserving.
- God opens the eyes of those who don't deserve mercy and He shows them mercy.



Create several small signs with James 2:13b on them using craft sticks and small pieces of paper. Divide the children into two or more small groups. Mark a spot at the end of the room. Each child in each group will take the sign, run to the marked spot, say James 2:13b out loud, and then run back to their team. The next child in line will do the same thing until every child has run to the spot, said the verse and run back to their team. Remind them that God gives mercy to those who don't deserve it.

*To whom does God give mercy? (God gives mercy to undeserving people.)*

4. 1 Timothy 1:12-13: Paul gives thanks that though he was undeserving of God's mercy, God still showed him great mercy. Paul was a persecutor of Christians, yet God still opened Paul's eyes and revealed to him his great need for mercy.

GOD SHOWS US OUR NEED  
FOR HIS MERCY

## HOOKS

**We Can't Earn Mercy**

On a large piece of paper or the board, create a chart of behaviors. Each row should be labeled with each child's name. The top of each column should include several perfect behaviors, such as always obeying, being kind, not lying, always sharing, and always listening. As you go through the list of behaviors, ask the children to put a checkmark next to their name if the behavior is always true of them. Lead them in a discussion about how we never do anything always because we are sinners, which means we can't ever earn God's mercy. It is a gift given to us because God loves us.

**God Opens Our Eyes**

Bring in a pair of sunglasses with the lenses covered with paper so that it is impossible to see through them. Decorate the paper to look like a pair of closed eyes. Have the children take turns trying on the sunglasses. Lead them in a discussion about how God opens our eyes, or helps us see that we need His mercy.



- Before God opens our eyes, we can't see that we need mercy, just like you can't see through the sunglasses.
- Then God opens our eyes and it's like when you take the sunglasses off. You can see and God shows you that you need His mercy.
- God helps us see our need for His mercy and He shows us great mercy.

**We Can Receive Mercy When We Understand Our Need**

Give each child a piece of paper. Ask the child to draw a house and to color their house with crayons. Do not give the child any crayons or pencils. Ask them to draw and color without them. When they can't, lead them in a discussion about how we can receive God's mercy when we understand that we need it.

- What do you need to draw your house and to color it? (You need a pencil and crayons.)
- Can you draw your house and color it without crayons or a pencil? (No, you must have the pencil or crayons to draw and color the house.)
- When we understand that we need God's mercy, we can receive His mercy.

(Give each child the pencil and crayons so they can draw and color their house.)

- When we understand our need for mercy, God gives us mercy like I'm giving you the things you need to draw and color your house.