

GOD GIVES MERCY TO THE UNJUST

FOUNDATION: GOD IS JUST - GOD GIVES MERCY

BIG TRUTH: GOD GIVES MERCY TO THE UNJUST

Micah 7:18-19; Romans 3:21-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 1:3-5

BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:13B

"Mercy triumphs over judgment."

BIG IDEAS

- God, who is just, pursues those who are unjust.
- There is no human being who deserves God's mercy.
- God gives mercy to those who turn from sin and trust in Him.
- God's mercy triumphs over judgment through the true and greater Jonah.

BIBLE STORY: JONAH 1-4

God commanded Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to tell the Ninevites that they were going to be destroyed because of their sinful ways. Jonah disobeyed God and instead headed toward Tarshish. God did not allow Jonah to continue in his disobedience. He pursued Jonah, causing a great storm in the sea, which resulted in Jonah being thrown overboard. It was through God's mercy that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and his life was saved. Jonah then went to Nineveh and the Ninevites heard Jonah's message and repented of their sins. God spared them, showing them mercy instead of the justice that they deserved. God pursues the unjust to show them mercy because He is a merciful God.

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: SHOW MERCY TO OTHERS

Jonah didn't want to show mercy to the people of Nineveh, but God shows us by example that we can and should show mercy to people because He has shown mercy to us. When we understand how much God has been merciful to us, we'll want to show mercy to others.

BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:13B

"Mercy triumphs over judgment."

Mercy triumphs over judgment when we understand our need for mercy.

- We know how to show mercy to others because God shows us mercy.
- God desires for us to understand our need for His mercy because it will cause us to show other people mercy.
- Mercy wins over judgment when we understand how great our need for mercy is.
- We are like God when we are merciful to others and long-suffering.
- We please God when we understand just how much mercy He has shown us and in return show mercy to other people.

Mercy triumphed over judgment when God sent His Son to die for us.

- Jesus' death was God's mercy to the world. The world was undeserving of God's mercy, yet God showed the world mercy.
- Jesus' death made it possible for people to not have to face judgment for their sins.
- God showed undeserving people mercy when He sent His Son to die for the world's sins.
- All people are sinners in need of a savior.
- God showed mercy to the whole world when He sent His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world.
- God's mercy triumphed over judgment because God made a way for men to be saved.

BIBLE STORY: JONAH 1-4*Jonah and the Ninevites*

Supporting Scripture: Ezekiel 34:11; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Nehemiah 9:28

Teacher Introduction:

God chose Jonah to go to Nineveh as part of God's plan to reveal Himself to the world. Jonah was not happy to go to Nineveh. The Ninevites were pagan, sinful people and Jonah disliked them. He chose instead to go to Joppa to buy passage on a ship heading to Tarshish. God is a merciful God and in His great mercy, He didn't allow Jonah to continue in his disobedience. He caused a great storm to come up and Jonah to be tossed overboard. Jonah knew the cause of the trouble was his own disobedience. He even knew he deserved to drown in the sea, but God showed him mercy again and commanded a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah eventually went to Nineveh and warned them of the impending judgment. The Ninevites repented and turned to God. God showed mercy to Jonah and to the Ninevites. God is merciful to those who don't deserve mercy.

Teaching Guide:

The guide below is provided to help you teach the narrative: *Jonah and the Ninevites*. The four points are the Big Ideas that should guide your lesson as you share from Jonah 1-4 and teach the narrative: *Jonah and the Ninevites*. 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: *Jonah and the Ninevites*.

Opening Illustration:

Bring in enough quarters for each child to have one. Hand out a quarter to each child and ask them to hold it in their hands. Tell the children that the quarters are theirs to keep even though they have done nothing to earn the money. Ask them to decide if they will keep their money or give it back to you to give as a mission offering to help those who are less fortunate or haven't heard the Gospel. Lead them in a discussion about how God gives mercy to those who are unjust.

- You each can keep your quarter if you like, though you did not do anything to earn it or deserve it.
- You each have the opportunity to give your quarter back to include it in a special mission offering. You can give the money to help take the good news about Jesus to people who haven't heard it.
- God gives us mercy even though we are not deserving of it. We are unjust because we are all sinners. God still shows us mercy.

BIG IDEA: GOD, WHO IS JUST, PURSUES THOSE WHO ARE UNJUST.**God is a just God, but He chooses to show mercy to the undeserving.¹**

- God is just and He always does what is right.
- God's command to Jonah to tell the Ninevites of their coming destruction was a merciful act.
- God loved Nineveh and felt compassion for them even though they were sinful and didn't follow God.
- Though Nineveh did not deserve God's mercy, when they were told that God was going to destroy them, they repented. God then showed them greater mercy by not destroying them.



Read Jonah 1:1-3 out loud to the children. Designate one side of the room as Nineveh and the other side as Tarshish. Ask the children to choose which direction they are going to go. Once they choose, lead them in a discussion about how even though we might choose to share the good news about Jesus with the unjust, God pursues the unjust.

God pursues the undeserving in order to show them mercy.

- God sent Jonah to an undeserving, unjust Nineveh. Jonah's job was to warn Nineveh that they were going to be destroyed and when they heard the news, they repented and turned from their sins.
- Jonah didn't go to Nineveh at first. He disobeyed and went to Tarshish. God didn't leave Jonah in his disobedience because He shows mercy to the unjust.
- God wants to show mercy to all people.
- Even though Jonah didn't go to Nineveh the first time, God sent him a second time because He was pursuing an unjust Nineveh.²
- God pursued the people of Nineveh to show them mercy. He is an all-knowing God and when He sent Jonah to warn the Ninevites, He knew that the Ninevites would repent and He would show them mercy.

Where did God send Jonah? (God sent Jonah to Nineveh.)

Who does God pursue to show mercy to? (God pursues the unjust.)

1. Ezekiel 34:11: God is our shepherd and He seeks out men. God, in His great love for mankind, seeks out men and women to draw them to Him. He pursues the unjust in order to show them mercy.

2. Jonah 1:3: Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because he did not want God to spare the Ninevites. Even though Jonah had experienced God's mercy in his own life, he did not want mercy to be shown to others whom he disliked.

BIG IDEA: THERE IS NO HUMAN BEING WHO DESERVES GOD'S MERCY.**No one deserves God's mercy.³**

- No person is born without sin. No person is born good enough to deserve anything from God.
- Jonah didn't deserve God's mercy, but Jonah still received it. Jonah was directly disobedient to God and even angry when God showed mercy to the Ninevites.
- The people of Nineveh didn't deserve God's mercy, but God still showed them mercy. The Ninevites were wicked and evil, not pursuing the things of God.
- God does not show mercy to people who deserve it because no one is deserving of God's mercy.
- No one is worthy enough of God's mercy, but God still shows mercy in His great love.



Bring in a large blanket or sheet. Designate one side of the room as Nineveh and one side as Tarshish. Spread the blanket out and tell the children that they are Jonah and you are the great fish. Have them get "in the boat" by sitting on the blanket. Pretend that a great storm comes up and they are tossed overboard. As the great fish, pretend to "swallow" them up by grabbing them. Once everyone has had a chance to play, lead them in a discussion about how Jonah didn't obey God, but God still showed him mercy by sending the great fish to save Jonah.

All people are sinners and undeserving of God's mercy.

- God shows mercy to people even though they don't deserve it.
- Jonah's response to God's command to go to Nineveh shows how people don't deserve mercy. Jonah's heart was not obedient to God even though God had already shown him mercy.
- Jonah didn't love people like God loved people. He was unjust, himself.
- Jonah didn't even want God to show mercy to Nineveh because he didn't like Nineveh.
- Jonah's heart shows how sinful people are, yet God still shows mercy to us.

All people are sinners and in need of a savior.

- Our sin makes us undeserving of God's mercy. It makes us unjust.
- We all have hearts like Jonah's because we are sinners.
- God still shows mercy to the unjust even though our hearts are not good.

Does anyone deserve God's mercy? (No, no person deserves God's mercy.)

Does God show mercy to people who don't deserve it? (Yes, He is merciful and shows mercy to those who don't deserve it.)

3. Ecclesiastes: 7:20 No one on earth is righteous or good. Every person is a sinner and in need of a savior. No person is good or does good works. All are in need of mercy from a just God.

BIG IDEA: GOD GIVES MERCY TO THOSE WHO TURN FROM SIN AND TRUST IN HIM.**When people turn from their sin, God shows them mercy.⁴**

- Jonah admitted his disobedience to God when the great storm came up while he was on the boat to Tarshish. He turned away from his sin when the great fish swallowed him up and he was faced with God's great mercy.
- God shows Jonah more mercy by giving Jonah a second opportunity to go to Nineveh.
- God saved the people of Nineveh, relenting from destroying them, when they repented of their sins.
- God shows mercy to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him.

When people place saving faith in Jesus, God shows them mercy.

- A saving faith in Jesus means God forgives a person for their sins because they have repented of their sins and trusted in Him.
- God does this because He is full of mercy and grace and He showed mercy to the world when He sent His Son to die for our sins.
- The people of Nineveh turned from their sins when they heard about their coming destruction. God relented from destroying them and instead showed them mercy.



Bring in two hats. One should be labeled REPENT and the other should be labeled MERCY. Lead the children in a discussion of how the Ninevites repented when they heard that God was going to destroy them and God showed them mercy. Allow each child to pretend to be a Ninevite. They first wear the REPENT hat and then they get to wear the MERCY hat. Talk about how God shows us mercy when we repent of our sins and trust in Him.

To whom does God show mercy? (He shows mercy to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him.)

4. Nehemiah 9:28: God hears the repentant heart cries of people. He is merciful and desires that people know Him. When people turn away from their sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them and show them mercy.

BIG IDEA: GOD'S MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT THROUGH THE TRUE AND GREATER JONAH.

All people deserve judgment, but God shows mercy.

- Nineveh deserved God's judgment because they were wicked and didn't follow after God.
- Jonah deserved God's judgment because He was disobedient to God and undeserving of God's mercy.
- God showed both Nineveh and Jonah mercy by not destroying Nineveh and rescuing Jonah from drowning.
- God's mercy triumphed over judgment when He sent His Son to pay the sin debt of the world.



Sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" with the children. Lead them in a discussion about how Jesus came to the earth to save sinners, but He was sinless.

God's Son is a true and greater Jonah.

- Jesus willingly came to the earth to humble Himself and to pay the sin debt of the world.
- God showed mercy by sending His only Son to die for people who didn't and don't deserve His mercy.
- God gives mercy to the unjust because He is a merciful God.
- He chooses not to give judgment to those who deserve judgment when they turn away from their sins.
- God's great mercy to the world is the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is a greater Jonah.

- Jesus is the true servant and messenger of God. He came willingly to a world full of unjust and sinful people, unlike Jonah who was not willing to go to one city.
- Jesus did not hesitate or seek an alternative to telling the world of the coming judgment.
- He was willing to lower Himself that men might be saved.

Who is the greater Jonah? (Jesus is the greater Jonah because He willingly came to a sinful world and Jonah wasn't willing to go to Nineveh.)

HOOKS

**No One Deserves God's Mercy**

Bring in a small scale, a brown paper bag, and small pebbles or marbles. Place the paper bag on the scale. The scale should remain at zero. Tell the children that the pebbles or marbles represent our sin. Help them think of ways we all sin and each time they name a sin, place a pebble in a brown paper bag. Tell them that in order for a person to be good and just, the scale has to remain on zero. Each time a pebble or marble is placed in the bag, the scale should go up. Lead them in a discussion about how even though we are unjust, God still shows us mercy. Remove all the pebbles and place the bag on the scale. Show the preschoolers how when our sin is removed the scale is on zero again.



- No one is deserving of God's mercy, but He still shows us mercy.
- Our sin makes us undeserving of God's mercy, but He sent Jesus to take away our sin. He showed us great mercy in sending Jesus.

**Jonah and the Big Fish**

Bring in a large blue container and several small balls. Play a game with the preschoolers in which they have to toss "Jonah" (the ball) into the big fish (the blue container). Lead them in a discussion about how God showed Jonah mercy by having the big fish swallow him up.



- Jonah disobeyed God and was thrown overboard into the raging sea. He was going to drown.
- God showed Jonah mercy by sending a big fish to swallow Jonah up and keep him alive.
- God shows mercy to people who don't deserve it because God is merciful and faithful.

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

Bring in a toy sword that is labeled MERCY and several empty 2-liter bottles that are labeled JUDGMENT. Have each child take turns "triumphing" over judgment by knocking the 2-liter bottles down with MERCY (the sword). Lead them in a discussion about how God's mercy triumphed over judgment when He sent Jesus to pay our sin debt.

- No one deserved God's mercy. We deserved His judgment instead.
- God sent Jesus to pay our sin debt and when He did, God's mercy triumphed over judgment.
- We no longer have to face judgment if we turn away from our sins and trust in God.