

Joshua Fights for Gibeon

(Joshua 10:1-15)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Today's lesson is about mercy. Do you know what mercy is? (Mercy is when you don't get the punishment you deserve.)

Have you ever done wrong and not gotten the punishment you deserved? That's mercy! How did that make you feel?

Mercy is also when you choose to be kind to someone when they don't deserve it. Here are some examples of showing mercy:

- Helping a child who borrowed your skateboard without asking and then got hurt.
- Asking a child to play with you even though he or she called you a name.

It is not easy to show mercy to someone who has wronged us. For example, it's not natural to be kind to someone who has lied to us.

When are some other times that it is hard to be kind and show mercy to others? (When other kids call you names. When it seems that others are not being fair. When the umpire calls an out when you think you are safe. When someone forgets to keep a promise.)

Today's lesson is about a time that Joshua showed mercy and if you listen carefully, you will learn that to show others God's kind of love you will treat others with mercy; you will choose to be kind to someone when they don't deserve it.

Opening Prayer

Father, we need Your help in showing mercy and kindness to others. When someone wrongs us or is unfair to us, we naturally want to lash out and get them back, but You have asked us to be kind, even to our enemies. Please give us the desire in our hearts to extend love to everyone we meet. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. (Romans 12:17 NLT)

Lesson

The Promised Land belonged to the Israelites – God had given it to them. But the people who were living there were not happy. They did not want the Israelites taking their land from them!

The news of the Israelites' victories over Jericho and Ai spread throughout the land. The people knew that the God of the Israelites was much more powerful than the false gods they worshiped. In fact, the people of Gibeon were so afraid of the Israelites that they tricked the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them. When the other kings in the land heard about this treaty they really got nervous. That meant the Israeli army was even bigger and stronger than before.

The peace treaty meant that Joshua and the Israelites must help the Gibeonites if they were ever attacked by enemies. And the Gibeonites would help the Israelites if they were attacked. This made the kings of the other cities very nervous!

When Adoni-Zedek (AD-un-ni-ZEE-dehk), the king of the city of Jerusalem, heard about the Gibeonites' peace treaty with the Israelites he got very upset.

Joshua 10:1-2

Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured and completely destroyed Ai and killed its king, just as he had destroyed the town of Jericho and killed its king. He also learned that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel and were now their allies. He and his people became very afraid when they heard all this because Gibeon was a large town—as large as the royal cities and larger than Ai. And the Gibeonite men were strong warriors.

Adoni-Zedek called four other kings together and planned an attack against Gibeon.

Joshua 10:4-5

“Come and help me destroy Gibeon,” he urged them, “for they have made peace with Joshua and the people of Israel.” So these five Amorite kings combined their armies for a united attack. They moved all their troops into place and attacked Gibeon.

The attack of the five armies caught the Gibeonites completely by surprise! They were outnumbered! They needed help, and they needed it fast! So, they sent a message to Joshua.

Joshua 10:6

The men of Gibeon quickly sent messengers to Joshua at his camp in Gilgal. “Don’t abandon your servants now!” they pleaded. “Come at once! Save us! Help us! For all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have joined forces to attack us.”

As soon as Joshua heard those words, he knew what he had to do. He had made a promise. And even though the Gibeonites had lied to the Israelites, Joshua wanted to keep his promise because he loved and obeyed God. (Joshua was an honorable man.) Joshua called for his army and they started off toward Gibeon.

Joshua 10:7

So Joshua and his entire army, including his best warriors, left Gilgal and set out for Gibeon.

As they marched, Joshua must have remembered how he had been tricked into making a treaty with the Gibeonites because he had not bothered to ask God what to do. This time Joshua must have asked God if he was doing the right thing. And God was faithful to answer.

Joshua 10:8

“Do not be afraid of them,” the LORD said to Joshua, “for I have given you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you.”

Encouraged by God’s words, Joshua and his army marched through the night to join the Gibeonites.

Joshua 10:9

Joshua traveled all night from Gilgal and took the Amorite armies by surprise.

When the enemy armies woke up the next morning, they saw that instead of just the Gibeonites, they had to fight against Joshua and the entire Israeli army, too!

Then God did something crazy! He caused the enemy armies to panic. The armies began to run from Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua 10:10 [Teacher, read...]

The LORD threw them into a panic, and the Israelites slaughtered great numbers of them at Gibeon. Then the Israelites chased the enemy along the road to Beth-horon, killing them all along the way to Azekah and Makkedah

And, God wasn’t finished with them yet!! Look what God did next!

Joshua 10:11

As the Amorites retreated down the road from Beth-horon, the LORD destroyed them with a terrible hailstorm from heaven that continued until they reached Azekah. The hail killed more of the enemy than the Israelites killed with the sword.

God sent huge hailstones down on the enemies—great balls of ice! The hail killed more of them than all whole Israeli army!

But Joshua knew that it was important to be sure all the enemies were beaten before they had a chance to reorganize and attack again. There was only one problem. The sun was going to go down soon. What do you think would happen if it got dark? The Israelites wouldn’t be able to see the enemy soldiers. And many of the enemies would escape.

The Israelites needed God's help if he was going to finish the job now. So, Joshua prayed a very bold prayer, right in front of all the people.

Joshua 10:12

On the day the LORD gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the LORD in front of all the people of Israel. He said, "Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon."

Did God answer Joshua's prayer?

Joshua 10:13-14

So the sun stood still and the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day. There has never been a day like this one before or since, when the LORD answered such a prayer. Surely the LORD fought for Israel that day!

God heard Joshua's prayer and answered it specifically! God stopped the sun from going down! It got to be suppertime, and the sun was still high in the sky. It got to be bedtime, and the sun still hadn't gone down!

God miraculously helped the Israelites win the fight.

God honored Joshua for keeping his promise to the Gibeonites. Joshua showed mercy and helped the Gibeonites even though they had lied to him and tricked him!

Loving and obeying God is more than just going to church or reading our Bibles. It also means treating others fairly and kindly, whether we think they deserve it or not! That means we need to be careful not to say mean things about kids who say mean things about us, to be kind to kids we may not even like to be around and to keep our promises even when it is hard. God wants us to choose to be kind to people, even when they don't deserve it. God doesn't expect us to do these things on our own – He will help us show mercy to others.

Closing Prayer

O merciful Father, we love You so much! Thank You for showing us mercy. You sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins even before we understood that we were sinners. Help us to be merciful to others, too. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Game Center

1. Mercy Shot

Materials: six to eight slips of paper, marker, paper bag, container (wastebasket or cardboard box) beanbag or Nerf ball.

Preparation: On three or four slips of paper, print the word "mercy." Place the slips of paper you wrote on, along with remaining blank slips of paper, in the paper bag.

Procedure: Students line up about 5 feet from container. Place paper bag and beanbag at the front of the line. First student in line faces away from the container and throws the beanbag over his head, attempting to get the beanbag into the container. Student gives beanbag to next student in line and then goes to the end of the line. Each student in line takes a turn. When the first student is back at the front of the line, invite student to pick a paper from the bag. If the paper is blank, student attempts backwards throw again. If the paper says "mercy" on it, student may stand about 1 foot from container or face the container when tossing the beanbag or student may choose to give the mercy paper to another student.

Response: Ask the children how the game changed when you could pick a slip of paper? (It was a lot easier if you could take a mercy shot. You could take the mercy shot even if you didn't do anything to deserve that shot.)

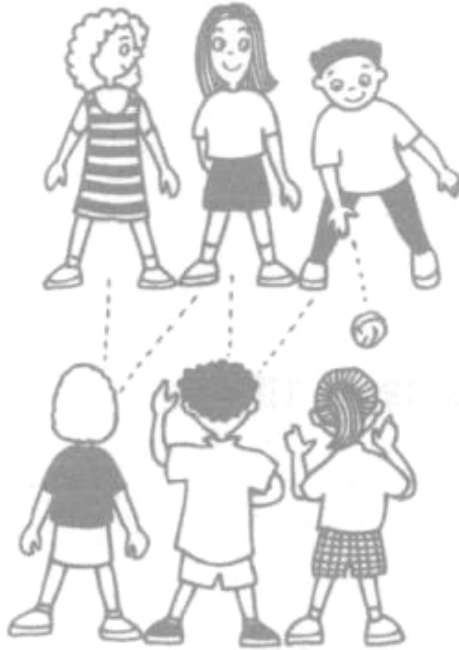
2. Foil Ball

Materials: Bibles, music, aluminum foil, one marble.

Preparation: Make several small balls from pieces of foil. Hide a marble in the center of one foil ball.

Procedures:

1. Lead students in a tossing game. Divide class into two groups. Groups line up facing each other, leaving about 3 feet between the two lines.
2. Using the foil ball with the marble in it, students toss the ball down the lines in a zigzag pattern. When the balls gets to the end of the line, the last student in each line runs to the front of his or her line and then tosses the ball to the student across from her or her. Practice a few rounds so that students get used to tossing and catching the ball in the correct pattern.
3. Play the music while students play the game again. Add the additional balls you prepared so that students are tossing three or four balls down the line at the same time. After a few moments, stop the music. Students unwrap the foil balls they are holding. Student holding the ball containing the marble answers one of the discussion questions below. Rewrap foil balls and play additional rounds as time allows.



3. Give me an "A"

Print the words of Romans 12:17 on index cards, drawing blank lines for each vowel. Make one set of cards for each group of two students. (You might copy each set onto a different colored paper.)

Mix up cards in each set. When you say "Go," have each team fill in the vowels to complete the words of the verse. Then put the cards in correct verse order. Team that finishes first wins.

After game, read the verse and ask:

- (1) What does this verse tell us to do and not to do?
- (2) What does repaying evil for evil mean?
- (3) How did Joshua obey this verse in today's story?
- (4) How can we learn what is right to do?

Or, use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

1. How did Joshua show that he loved and obeyed God? (He showed mercy to the Gibeonites and kept his promise to help them.) How did God help Joshua win the battle against the five kings and their armies?
2. Why might it have been hard for Joshua to keep his promise to help the Gibeonites? When are some times that it is hard for kids your age to be kind and show mercy to others? (When other kids call you names. When it seems that others are not being fair. When the umpire calls an out when you think you are safe. When someone forgets to keep a promise.)
3. Why do you think God wants us to show mercy to others?
4. When has someone shown mercy to you? When might you be able to obey God by showing mercy to a friend or family member?

Sword Drills

1. Read **Micah 6:8**. What does God require of us, or want us to do? Tell one way you can act justly (be fair), love mercy (treat others with undeserved kindness) or walk humbly with God (read His Word and obey what He commands).
2. Read **Matthew 5:43-44**. Verse 44 gives a good example of what it means to show mercy. What is it? How can you obey this verse?
3. Read **Luke 6:36**. How does God show His mercy to us? How can we follow that example when we try to show mercy to others?
4. Read **Romans 12:17**. What does this verse tell us to do? (Do what is right.) What does it tell us not to do? What does repaying evil for evil mean? (To be mean to someone because they were mean to you.) How did Joshua obey this verse in today's story? (Helped the Gibeonites even though they tricked him.) How can we learn what is right to do? (Read the Bible. Talk to wise people. Pray.)

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(R_m_ns
12:17)