

The King's Kindness

(2 Samuel 4:4; 9)

Introduction

What do you use your feet for? What things might be hard for you to do if you didn't have any? Do you know anyone who is disabled? What is their handicap? What do you think life is like for them? [Teacher, lead a discussion about how it may feel for someone to have a disability and what someone could do to be kind to that person. As an object lesson, bring in garden gloves and have the children take turns trying to pick up coins, paper clips and/or pencils.]

In today's Bible story, we are going to hear about what a king did when he met a person who had a disability and couldn't walk normally.

Opening Prayer

Father, teach us this morning how important it is for us to show kindness to people who have disabilities. Show us how to love them. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.
(1 Thessalonians 5:15b NIV)*

Lesson

Today we are going to learn about a man named Mephibosheth. I want you to repeat that name out loud with me, "mih-FIHB-eh-shehth." That's a hard name to say, isn't it?

Mephibosheth was the grandson of King Saul and the son of Jonathan. Remember that after David killed Goliath, King Saul asked

David to come live in the palace. It was there, growing up in the king's household, that David became best friends with Jonathan, the king's son. David and Jonathan had made a promise to always be loyal and true friends with each other, no matter what. They also made a promise to always show love and kindness to each other's families, as well.

Well, Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son. And, he was crippled in both feet. He couldn't walk. Here's what happened. . .

2 Samuel 4:4

(Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, who was crippled as a child. He was five years old when the report came from Jezreel that Saul and Jonathan had been killed in battle. When the child's nurse heard the news, she picked him up and fled. But as she hurried away, she dropped him, and he became crippled.)

On the day that Saul and Jonathan were killed in the battle with the Philistines, Mephibosheth's nurse (the woman who took care of him) heard the terrible news. So, she picked him up and ran away from the palace as fast as should could.

They must have been frightened when they heard that both Saul and Jonathan were killed. They probably thought the Philistines would come after them next. The nurse was in such a hurry that she dropped the little boy and his feet were hurt.

What do you think it was like for Mephibosheth as he was growing up? He couldn't run, jump, and play as a boy. He was not able to work in the field and grow food. He couldn't go to battle as his father and grandfather had done. Many people with disabilities in those days were treated unkindly. Some people even went so far as to blame a person for his disabilities, saying that it was because he was sinful. Life was hard for Mephibosheth.

Many years later, after David had been king for a long time, he asked if anyone from the family of Saul was still alive.

2 Samuel 9:1

One day David asked, "Is anyone in Saul's family still alive—anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Keep in mind that because he had spent years running and hiding from Saul, David probably never knew Jonathan had a son. Now that he was king, David wanted to know if there was anyone he could show kindness to because of his love for Jonathan and the promise they had made to each other.

God expects you to show kindness to others and to keep your promises.

A former servant of King Saul was found and he told David that Jonathan's son was still alive. So he was told to bring Mephibosheth to the palace to meet King David.

How would you have felt if you were Mephibosheth? It might have been scary to hear that the King wanted to see him. It's like being sent to the Principal's office, isn't it? But David only wanted to show God's love and kindness to whoever was left in Jonathan's family.

As Mephibosheth entered the presence of King David, he bowed down before him.

2 Samuel 9:6

His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David said, "Greetings, Mephibosheth." Mephibosheth replied, "I am your servant."

Mephibosheth was probably shaking in fear as he bowed down to the king. He might have thought that David wanted to kill him! David saw that Mephibosheth was really scared. So he tells him not to be afraid.

2 Samuel 9:7

"Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property

that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!"

David told Mephibosheth that he was invited to be a permanent guest at the palace! What a shock this must have been to Mephibosheth!

Here he thought he was about to lose his head, but instead he was brought into the royal family.

This is a picture of God's grace. Let me explain:

According to the customs of those days, when a new king from another family came to the throne, he searched out the sons of the former king and had them put to death so that they could never take power. Mephibosheth was a member of the enemy family and expected to be put to death. Until you and I ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, we are like Mephibosheth – we deserve eternal death. But instead of death, Mephibosheth was given a royal life!

Mephibosheth did not deserve the great love and kindness that King David offered him. Like Mephibosheth, we do not deserve God's great love and kindness, either. David received Mephibosheth because of his great love for Jonathan. The Bible says that even though we don't deserve God's kindness. He receives us into His family because of His love for His only begotten Son, Jesus.

King David showed kindness to Mephibosheth by receiving him as part of his royal family and gave him the privilege of eating at his table every day. In the same way, God, in His great loving kindness, offers you everlasting life in His family. If you ask Jesus to be your Lord and your Savior, God makes you His child. You become a member of God's family (John 1:12). Your Heavenly Father will care for you while you live here on Earth. And, someday He will take you into His heavenly home where you will live with Him forever.

Have you become a member of God's family by believing on the Lord Jesus? If you trust Jesus as your Savior, then you will know God's great kindness in your life.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the love and kindness You have shown us by sending Jesus to take the punishment that we deserve for all the sinful naughty things that we do. Thank You that You receive us into Your family and that someday we'll be brought to live with You in Your heavenly home. We look forward to that glorious day! In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Have a Heart

Cut large hearts out of construction paper, enough for each child. On each heart print, "_____ can be kind to . . ." with a marker.



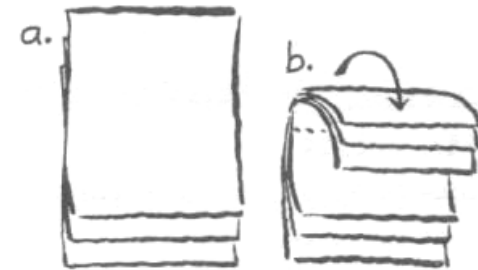
Sit with the children in a circle. Give a marker and a heart to each child. Each child writes his name on the blank line of his heart.

Say, "Let's discover the names of people we can be kind to in our class today. On the count of three, pass your heart to the person on your right. One, two, three!" Children pass their hearts and then write their names in an open space on the front of the hearts they receive. Children continue to pass hearts and write names until children end up with their own hearts.

On the back of hearts, children draw pictures of ways they can be kind to others in the class. Ask the questions below as children draw pictures.

- How many names are on your heart? How can you be kind to the people whose names are on your hearts?

- Read our Memory verse with the children. Who does the Bible say that we should be kind to? (Each other and everyone else.) Who can you be kind to this week?



My Kindness Plan

1. Give each child three sheets of paper. Each child layers one sheet on top of the other so that papers look like stairs (see sketch a.) children then fold papers so that six layers show (see sketch b). Staple pages in place.
2. Children print "My Kindness Plan" on the top page, and print the days of the week (Monday-Friday) on the edge of the pages. Children lift pages and write or draw ways they can show kindness to others each day of the coming week.



(Note, if you have a class of younger children, fold and staple papers and write the title and days of the week on each book before class.)

Game Center

Hot Spot

Designate two chairs; label one "David" and the other "Mephibosheth." Ask volunteers to take turns choosing a Hot Spot to answer questions about the Bible story. Volunteers choose to be either David or Mephibosheth and answer one of the questions below:

Questions for David:

1. Who was the big guy you killed? (Goliath)
2. Who's household did you grow up in? (Saul's)
3. Who was your best friend? (Jonathan)
4. What did you promise Mephibosheth's father? (To always show love and kindness to each other's families.)
5. What did you say when Mephibosheth came to see you? (Don't be afraid, I will be kind to you because your father, Jonathan, was my best friend.)
6. What kind thing did you do for Mephibosheth? (Gave him land that belonged to his grandfather Saul. Invited him to eat at the king's table every day.)
7. Why were you kind to Mephibosheth? (Because you promised his dad, Jonathan, to love and care for his family. And Mephibosheth needed help.)
8. Why was Mephibosheth surprised at your kindness? (He was expecting to be killed.)

Questions for Mephibosheth:

1. Who was your father? (Jonathan)
2. Who was your grandfather? (Saul)
3. Who was kind to you? (King David)
4. What happened to your feet? (My nurse dropped me.)
5. Describe your life after your nurse dropped you?

6. How did you feel when you were told to come to the palace to see King David? (Scared)
7. What did you do when you came into the presence of King David? (Bowed down.)
8. How did David surprise you? (He didn't kill me; he invited me to live at the palace.)
9. What did David give you? (A place to live. Good food to eat, your grandfather Saul's land.)

Or, use the following review questions in another game of your choice:

1. What are some ways we can be kind to others? (Share with them. Help them. Give them a hug or a smile.)
2. How can you be kind to someone on the playground? In your neighborhood? (Give them a turn before you get one.)
3. Who can you be kind to this week? (New kids at school. The disabled. The elderly.) Why might these people need some extra kindness? (They might be sad or lonely. They may need help.)
4. How do you feel when someone is mean to you? (Angry. Sad.) How do you feel when someone is kind to you?
5. What are some ways kids can be kind to others? (Sit with a new kid at lunch. Help carry books for someone on crutches or in a wheel chair. Bring the newspaper or mail to an elderly neighbor.)

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