

Be Merciful

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is merciful and wants His children to be merciful, too.**
- **Mercy sees people in distress, feels compassion for them, and acts to help them.**
- **Jesus set the example of mercy that His disciples are to follow.**

MEMORY VERSE

“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

—Luke 6:36

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Luke 10:33-34, 36-37
- 2) Mark 1:40-42
- 3) Mark 8:1-3
- 4) John 19:25-27
- 5) Luke 6:36
- 6) (James 1:27)
- 7) (James 2:15-17)
- 8) (Psalm 145:9)



TEACHER INTRODUCTION

The story of the good Samaritan is widely known, and even praised in the wider secular culture—the man on the side of the road, in desperate need of help, is passed by others until the Samaritan comes along and goes out of his way to help. But, as wonderful as it is that this story has gained wide acceptance as an example of what mercy is and does, Jesus intended it specifically for His disciples. We have much to learn from it, and it should challenge us to ponder whether or not we are living out this right doctrine in right actions toward others.

In this lesson, we will briefly highlight the story of the Samaritan showing mercy, and then look at various examples of how Jesus showed mercy to those in distress, giving us an example to follow.

Pray that God would develop in the students not just right thinking about God, but also right living before Him that extends in mercy toward others. Pray that the students would be moved to look for opportunities in which to show mercy to others in the coming week.

CURRICULUM RESOURCES

- Love God Most Heart/Salvation Sign (see Visuals Preparation):
 - › Merciful Heart—Front (29A)
 - › Merciful Heart—Back (29B)
- Bike Accident (29C)
- Mercy (29D, cut apart)
- Distress (29E, cut apart)
- Compassion (29F, cut apart)
- Help (29G, cut apart)
- Growing in Faith Together Page for Lesson 29 (for each student)

OTHER SUPPLIES

- Bible (English Standard Version)
- 2 nametags (see Visuals Preparation)
- Markers (see Visuals Preparation)
- Gauze bandage wrap
- Tape or mounting putty
- Small cracker
- Box of crackers

VISUALS PREPARATION

- Print the **Merciful Heart** double-sided and cut out.
- If you choose to do the beginning story as a skit, have students and/or adults prepared before class to play the various roles.
- **2 nametags**—Write “Leper” on one, and “Very Hungry” on the other.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Mercy Opportunity (for each student)

- › Mercy Opportunity (OA-29)

2. Class Mercy Ministry Participation

- › Research the mercy ministries in your church. (See Optional Activities section for details.)

Large Group Lesson

Illustration.....

(Explain to the class that you are going to narrate (or act out) a modern-day version of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Read the narration and use the **Bike Accident** visual when appropriate, or have the actors come to the front and act out the story.)



Suppose this boy was out biking and hit a rock on the path, throwing him off his bike and causing him to be badly hurt.

The first person to come along the path is a woman busy reading the Bible. In seeing the hurt biker, she stops and says, “If you hadn’t been going so fast, you wouldn’t have gotten hurt. Proverbs 27:12 says, ‘The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.’ It’s your own fault.” Then she walks on.

Next, a man comes walking by. He stops and kneels down by the hurt bicyclist and says, “I am a Christian. I would like to help you. Is it okay if I pray for you right now?” So the man prays for the bicyclist, and then continues on his way.

Finally, a teenager jogs down the path. He stops and says, “Wow, you are really hurt badly! How would you like to come to the youth group gathering at my church next week? We are going to have a special message about suffering. It would be the perfect message for you.”

❓ *Were any of these people acting like the good Samaritan? What is missing?*

(Read Luke 10:33-34, 36-37 to the students as follows.)

Luke 10:33-34—**“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw [the man who was hurt by robbers], he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.**

Luke 10:36-37—**[Jesus asked,] “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷[The man] said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”**

(Explain that in the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus was teaching about what it means to love your neighbor. The Samaritan was showing true love toward the man hurt by robbers because he was the one who showed the man mercy.)

❓ *When Jesus says that the Samaritan showed “mercy,” what was Jesus referring to? [The Samaritan felt compassion for him, bandaged his wounds, and took care of him.]*

MERCY, DISTRESS,
COMPASSION, AND
HELP VISUALS

(Display the **Mercy** visual and ask the students how they might define what mercy means. Next, one-by-one, display and read the **Distress**, **Compassion**, and **Help** visual, as indicated below.)

Mercy =
sees distress.
feels compassion.
acts to help.

In the story of the biker, did anyone actually see his need, feel true compassion for him, and then act to help him? What did the biker need as he lay injured on the path? In this situation, is simply giving him a Bible verse true mercy? Is inviting him to a message on suffering going to help him while he lies there? No. Mercy goes beyond mere words.

- Mercy is love in action.
- Jesus’ earthly ministry is filled with examples of showing mercy to hurting people.

LEPER NAMETAG,
TAPE, AND GAUZE

(Choose a student to come to the front and **tape** the **Leper Nametag** on him. Quickly wrap the **gauze** around one of his hands. Explain that in Jesus’ day, leprosy was a dreaded disease without any cure. It often affected your hands, feet, and face. Others could look at you and know you were a leper. Leprosy could spread from person to person, so in order to try and stop it from spreading, lepers were forced to live away from others. They became outcasts and were considered “unclean” and untouchable.)

(Read Mark 1:40-42.)

Mark 1:40-42—...a leper came to [Jesus], imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.”⁴¹Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.”⁴²And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

❓ *What emotion did Jesus feel toward the leper? [pity] How did Jesus act to help the leper? [Jesus healed him of his disease.] Did Jesus do this from far away—keeping His distance from an “unclean” man? No, Jesus touched him!*

LEPER NAMETAG,
GAUZE, VERY
HUNGRY NAMETAG,
TAPE, AND SMALL
CRACKER

(Remove the **Leper Nametag** and **gauze** from the student. Have him return to his seat. Choose another student to come the front and **tape** the **Very Hungry Nametag** to him. Hand him the **small cracker**. Have the students imagine that this person has had nothing to eat all day and this small cracker is all the food he has. Then read Mark 8:1-3.)

Mark 8:1-3—*In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, [Jesus] called his disciples to him and said to them, ²“I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.”*

❓ *What need did Jesus see? [The people were hungry and needed food.] What did Jesus feel toward them? [compassion] Do you remember how Jesus helped them? [He prayed and multiplied the loaves of bread and fish so everyone was fed more than enough.]*

VERY HUNGRY
NAMETAG AND
PACKAGE OR BOX OF
CRACKERS

(Remove the **Very Hungry Nametag** from the student and hand him the **package or box of crackers**. Have him return to his seat. Next, ask the students if they know what a widow is. Ask them to state a few difficulties a widow may have. Then read John 19:25-27.)

John 19:25-27—... *standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister... ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, [Jesus] said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

❓ *While Jesus hung on the cross dying, He saw his own mother, Mary, and was concerned for her. She was a widow, and after Jesus died she would need someone to take care of her. What did Jesus do to help her? [He had one of His disciples, John, take her into his own home.]*

MERCY, DISTRESS,
COMPASSION, AND
HELP VISUALS

(Display and review the **Mercy, Distress, Compassion, and Help** visuals again.)

Mercy =
sees distress.
feels compassion.
acts to help.

- Jesus was merciful—He saw people’s various needs and had compassion for them. He then acted to help them.

What about you?

Do you know of an older person in your neighborhood who needs help of some kind?

Does your mom need help around the house because she is sick?

Is there a student in your class who seems very sad and lonely lately?

Are there people in your city who don't have enough food to eat?

Have you heard about children in another country who don't have clean water to drink?

Would it be a lot easier to just "walk by" and ignore these needs? Yes, it would. But what would Jesus have us to do?

MERCIFUL HEART
VISUAL, LOVE GOD
MOST HEART,
AND TAPE

(Choose a student to come and remove the **Merciful Heart** from the pocket of the **Love God Most Heart**. Have him read the verse printed on the back of the heart and then **tape** it to the larger heart.)

Luke 6:36—Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

- Jesus commands us to be merciful to others just as God is merciful toward us.
- We all have received mercy from God: He sees our needs, feels compassion for us, and acts to help us in various ways.
- If you are a child of God, you are to be merciful, too.
- Although we are not Jesus and cannot simply touch someone and heal them, or miraculously feed thousands of hungry people, we can see needs, feel compassion, and act in small ways to help those around us.
- Christians are to be like Jesus in showing mercy.

Small Group Application

Choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students during this time.

Workbook

Have the students look at the definition and symbols for mercy on the workbook page. Have them write the words "sees, feels, acts" on the appropriate lines. Next have the students share a situation in which they saw someone in distress. What words describe how they felt toward the person? Did they take any actions to help that person? What happened as a result? Do they wish they had done something differently? Why? Have the students summarize the situation in the appropriate boxes.

Showing Mercy Is a Way of Showing That We Are True Followers of Jesus

Review the beginning story of the hurt bicyclist.

Did you get the impression that the three people who passed by were Christians? Why or why not? If the bicyclist thought these people were truly followers of Jesus, what might be his impression of Jesus based on their words and actions toward him?

Remind the students that in the parable of the good Samaritan, the men who passed by were also “religious” men.

Why do you think Jesus purposely told the story that way—making the religious men the “bad guys”? What should we learn from this? Is being a true follower of Jesus simply “knowing” right things? Or is it something more? How does showing mercy demonstrate true love for God?

Read and talk about James 1:27—“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...” and James 2:15-17—“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Growing to Be More Merciful to Others

Ask the students to share a time when they were experiencing some kind of distress. Did someone show mercy to them? In what way? How did that feel? Recall that Jesus has commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves by treating others as we would want to be treated.

Have you ever seen someone in distress but were tempted to avoid him and simply pass by? Why do we sometimes feel this way? Do you ever feel like the person “deserved what he got”? Did you ever feel, “I have something else I really want to do instead”? Did you ever think, “It’s someone else’s turn to help”? Are these thoughts pleasing to Jesus? What should we do when we have these feelings? Are there things that can help us? [e.g., reading the gospels and looking at Jesus’ example, recalling the ways God has been merciful to us, praying and asking the Holy Spirit to help us, asking your parents for instruction and encouragement, etc.] Is there a step this week that you could take to help you in growing to be more merciful toward others?

Looking for Opportunities to Show Mercy

Recall the examples from the lesson of Jesus healing a leper and feeding a hungry multitude.

Does Jesus expect us to show mercy in exactly the same way He did? Why isn’t this possible? But what could you do to show mercy to your brothers or sisters when they are sick? What could you do to show mercy to children in a far-off land who do not have enough food to eat? Can you think of other examples of showing mercy—ways that are not beyond your

ability? If you never see someone in distress, what might that say about you? Have you ever thought about looking for opportunities to show mercy to others? Why or why not? What could you do this week to seek out an opportunity to show mercy to someone? What might it require you to do?

Everyone Needs God’s Mercy

Point out that some people do not like to admit that they need help from others. They think that they are strong, independent, and self-sufficient. They have a proud attitude.

Can a person live without being on the receiving end of mercy? If a person has food to eat, and clothes to wear, and a house to live in, was it ultimately that he gained these things through his own efforts? Who provides all these things? [God]

Read and talk about Psalm 145:9—“The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.”

What is everyone’s most distressing need? [needing to be saved from God’s wrath because of our sin] How can that need be met? [by crying out to God for mercy, trusting in Jesus alone to save us] Why is this important to keep in mind when we are helping people in distress?

Emphasize that while it is important to care for people’s physical needs, Jesus does not want us to neglect their greater spiritual need.

In the beginning story of the bicyclist, how could someone have been merciful in meeting his physical needs? How could someone have also encouraged him to see his greater spiritual need? Depending on the situation, is it always appropriate to speak openly about their spiritual need in times of crisis?

Optional Activities

1. Mercy Opportunity

Give each student a **Mercy Opportunity** sheet to take home. Encourage them to pray for and seek out an opportunity to show mercy to someone in distress this week, and then share their experiences next week.

2. Class Mercy Ministry Participation

Explore mercy ministries at your church or those that your church partners with. As a class, choose a practical way that the students can participate together in helping this ministry.

Send Home

- Growing in Faith Together Page for Lesson 29 (for each student)
- Optional: Ministry Opportunity (OA-29, for each student)