

Agents of Mercy
Lesson: Bringing Love to a Hurting World
Grades 1-3 Lesson



Goal:

In recent months, we have seen a significant increase in violence and negativity in the news. Students see this too and wonder what to make of it all. This lesson will help them realize the big impact small acts of love and kindness can make to create a better world for everyone.

Materials:

Bibles
photocopied pages
crayons or colored pencils

Lesson:

In this Year of Mercy, we can give students some examples not only of God's mercy for us, but of ways in which they can be agents of mercy in the world to others. It is important first to define mercy. You can ask students first to offer their own understanding. A good explanation for this age group is: mercy is the ability to choose to do something that will help someone else even when you have the ability to take the easy way out and not make that choice. In other words, mercy is always a free choice to help another. It is never compulsory.

Scripture:

Read the short parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4-7.
If you'd like, have the children watch a short, animated version of the story.

Questions for Discussion:

Who do you think the Good Shepherd is describing? Who is the lost sheep?
Why did the Good Shepherd leave his 99 sheep to go look for the one who was lost?
How is this a story of mercy?
What does this story tell us of God's love?
What does it tell us about how we ought to treat others?

Discussion:

Read aloud *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde, or watch the animated video.

This story may seem a bit archaic, but with some discussion the children can understand the concept of mercy. There are two experiences of mercy in this book. The first is that of the selfish giant having mercy on the children and allowing them to play once again in his garden. The second is that of the child (Jesus-figure) having mercy on the giant for once mistreating him and offering him eternal life.

Begin with a discussion about the giant's actions. Why did he kick the children out of his garden? What did that selfish action do to the garden? What did it do to him? What did it do to the children? Why did he ultimately change his mind? Why is this an example of mercy?

Then move to a discussion of the child. Who is this child meant to symbolize? How do you know? What mercy does he offer the giant? Why? How does Jesus offer us mercy every day? How can you offer other people mercy? What types of things can you do to be agents of God's mercy in your daily life?

Activity:

Talk simply with the children about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Tell them these are ways that they can help others who need help for their bodies or for their souls. Explain that sometimes someone needs something to eat to make them feel better and sometimes they need a friend to smile at them. In either instance, sharing God's love and mercy will make that person feel better, and soon the whole world will be happier.

Have the children color the sheets on the different works of mercy.

Pray the prayer below with the children to ask God to help us share mercy.

Prayer to Share Mercy

**Dear Jesus, you created us to love you and
love all of the other people you created.
Show us how to bring your love and mercy to those in need.
Help us to hear you when you ask for our help.
Help us to love you more each day.
Amen.**

