



**Mustard Seed Children's Lesson Summary for March 14, 2010
Released on Wednesday, March 10, 2010**

"God's Great Mercy"

Lesson Text: Jonah 3:10 – 4:5

Background Scripture: Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

Memory Verse: "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah 3:10

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Jonah 4:1-5

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Teach the children that God is kind and merciful. He shows mercy to everyone.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. God was kind and merciful to the Ninevites. When they repented, He spared them.
2. Jonah was not kind and merciful. Even after the Ninevites repented, he still wanted God to punish them.
3. God wants His people to be kind and merciful like Him.

PLANNING LESSON AIDS:

For Helping to Remember, bring red construction paper, safety scissors (blunt tip), pencils, and markers for each student. Bring a few heart-shaped patterns the children can trace. Have the word "Kind" printed neatly on a card for the children to copy.

For the lesson activity, make a copy of the Word Search for each student.

TEACHER'S NOTES:

Time: about 780 B.C.

Place: Nineveh and vicinity

It seems strange to think that someone who loved God would be angry because God showed someone mercy. After all, that is what we should be praying and longing for. We should be happy when others are extended the same mercy God showed us.

In this lesson, Jonah's anger and hard-heartedness stand in sharp contrast to God's love and mercy. When the wicked Ninevites repented, God showed them mercy and did not punish them with disaster as He had intended.

Jonah should have been joyful. His ministry was a success. His preaching was heard and resulted in changed lives.

But Jonah was angry. He was angry because God is so kind! Can you hear him whining the words of today's golden text? He did not say this as a praise but as a complaint.

Jonah wanted God to be merciful to him and to his people, of course, but not to their enemies, the Ninevites. Yet he knew all along that God is kind and merciful to everyone because He is a kind and merciful God!

How much better it would have been if Jonah could have had God's merciful heart in him! This is what God desires for His people.

BEGINNING THE LESSON:

Think of someone you do not like. Think of someone who is really bad and mean. Would you be happy if bad things happened to that person? Would you say, "It serves him right!" or, "He got what was coming to him!"?

TELLING THE LESSON:

Do you remember the group of people that Jonah did not like? (Pause to let the children respond.) Yes, he did not like the people who lived in the city of Nineveh.

Why did Jonah not like them? (Let the children respond.) Yes, they were bad, mean people. They did bad things, and they did not love God.

Yet God loved them. What did God do that showed He loved them? (He sent Jonah to warn them to turn away from their sins.)

You remember that Jonah did not want to go at first, but he finally did what God told him to do. He preached to the Ninevites. He warned them that if they did not turn from their sins, God would destroy them.

Do you remember what the Ninevites did? Yes, they listened to God's message. They turned away from their sins.

They prayed to God and told Him they were sorry, but they did more than that. They really stopped doing wrong. They started doing what was right. They turned to God. They began to live differently and in ways that pleased God. They showed that they really meant it when they said they were sorry!

God saw that they had changed. He sees everything that we do. He saw how the Ninevites turned to Him.

Then God decided not to destroy the people of Nineveh. Although they were sinners and deserved to be punished for all the bad things they had done, God loved them. He wanted to be kind to them. God did not punish them as they deserved. He wanted to show them mercy, and He did. God's heart is kind toward all people.

That was God's plan all along. That is why He had sent Jonah to warn them.

Jonah's heart was not like God's. His heart was not kind toward the people of Nineveh. Jonah should have been very happy. His preaching had been a success, but Jonah was not happy. His heart was not kind and merciful like God's heart.

Jonah was angry. He was not happy at all. He wanted the Ninevites to be punished. He wanted them to be destroyed!

So Jonah prayed, but his words did not please God. His words were more like whining and complaining than praying.

Jonah said he knew this was going to happen when he was still in his country, when God first called him. That is why he did not want to go and preach to the Ninevites.

Jonah knew that God is gracious and merciful. He knew that God is slow to get angry and that His heart is full of kindness. Jonah did not want the Ninevites to receive any kindness. He only wanted them to be punished!

Jonah was so angry that he asked God to kill him. He did not want to live if his enemies, the Ninevites, got to live too!

God tried to reason with Jonah, to reach his cold, hard heart. "Is it right for you to be angry?" God asked. Jonah was too angry to even listen.

He went outside the city. He built a little shelter to protect himself from the sun. Then he just sat there—just waiting and hoping that maybe God would still change His mind and destroy the city.

Jonah's attitude must have made God very sad. His heart was not like God's heart at all. Jonah had received mercy from God. All of us have sinned; so none of us deserve God's kindness. Why was Jonah so slow to show God's kindness to others?

God shows kindness to all people. His mercy is for everyone. God's love, kindness, and mercy are for every person and to every group of people everywhere. That is just the way He is. He has a loving heart.

Even when God's people fall short of being as loving and kind as He is, He is still loving, kind, and merciful to them. He cannot be any other way.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

It is so easy to pay people back for the wrong things they do to us. If they say or do something mean to us, we say or do something mean right back. This is the way the world lives. Jesus' followers, though, are to be different. They are to always show love.

God wants His people to have hearts like His. He wants us to be kind and loving. He wants us to show mercy to others and to be glad when God shows them mercy. He wants us to love even our enemies. After all, we who believe in Jesus were once enemies of God too. God showed us mercy when we believed in His Son Jesus; so we should be quick to show others mercy too.

Who were the bad people you thought of at the beginning of our lesson? Who are the people who hurt you or laughed at you?

God is not happy that they are hurting you, but He loves them just as He loves you. He wants to show them His kindness.

Can you think of one or two ways you could show kindness this week to someone who is mean to you? (Let the children give some ideas.)

Do you need God's help to show kindness? God is ready to help you become kind and loving. (Teacher, let them pray for one another to be able to show God's love.)

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Have the children trace and cut out hearts. Have them write the word "Kind" on their hearts to remind them that God's heart is always kind and that He wants our hearts to be like His. Let them put their hands on their hearts and pray, "God, give me a kind and loving heart like Yours. Help me love even those who are mean to me."

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE:

"I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Jonah 4:2).

These are Jonah's words to God. It is very sad that these words were not said to God with a heart full of praise and worship as God desires. Jonah was complaining that God was merciful and showed kindness to his enemies.

Yet what Jonah said about God was true. They tell how God really is. Yes, God is gracious. He gives us more than we ever deserve. He is merciful. God is quick to forgive when we turn from our sin. He is slow to anger. His heart is full of kindness. He desires to do good - not only to us but to all people.

Jonah wanted God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and kindness for himself. He wanted it for his family and his people. He did not want it for the Ninevites. He wanted God to destroy them.

God is kind and merciful to all people because His heart is kind and merciful. That is just the way God is!

When we know God is loving and kind, it would make Him happy if we want to have kind hearts like His. He would be happy if we show kindness to everyone.

He can help us become loving and kind. We can pray to God and ask Him to give us a heart like His.

CONCLUSION:

This week's lesson shows us God's great mercy at work. Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh, they repented of their sins and God showed them mercy and did not punish them.

Jonah was unhappy that God showed mercy to his enemies. But unlike Jonah, we should pray to have a heart like God - to be loving and kind to all people.

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank You for the great love and mercy that You have shown to us. Help us to be like You and have kind and loving hearts, in Jesus' name. Amen.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "**Ruth and Naomi: A Family**," and shows how Ruth chose Naomi's family and came to know about God. Study Ruth 1:1-16.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries
www.jesusisall.com

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The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson

WORD SEARCH

"God's Great Mercy" (Jonah 3:10 – 4:5)

Find the following keywords from the lesson:

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| CITY | PROPHET | REPENT | PUNISH |
| NINEVEH | SORRY | PRAY | HEART |
| ANGRY | PREACH | LOVE | JONAH |
| MERCY | SHELTER | ENEMIES | KINDNESS |

Y L R R S R A O E E E Y E R S T J S O R R Y S
R K H N H E O H E C R L S S T P E E H G E R H
Y N C H A L I I E T A C O N S S A H R M E H E
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Solution to Word Search

"God's Great Mercy" (Jonah 3:10 – 4:5)

S O R R Y
H E S
C I S S
A M E H
E E M E R C Y N E
R N T D L
P Y T I C Y E P R N T
A Y R A I E
R R O E K R
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