

Character Building from the Bible Lessons
From Every Child Ministries

LOVING KINDNESS VS HATEFUL MEANNESS

Follow Up for assignment from lesson 2--Ask how many have been reading from the Bible, and congratulate any who are trying to do that.

Review from last TRUTH lesson:

- ◆ How many times did Jesus tell a lie?
- ◆ Why couldn't Pilate find any fault in Jesus?
- ◆ Why didn't Jesus say He was not the Messiah, so then they would not have killed Him?
- ◆ What about when He promised impossible things—like He would rise from the dead?

Transition from Truth to Loving Kindness lessons:

TRUTHFULNESS is one of the character traits of God. A character trait shows what someone is really like. God is really truthful. He is also loving and kind. This week we are going to talk about **LOVING KINDNESS**.

Learning about the words LOVING KINDNESS:

Definition: 1. Kindness coming from love, good, gentle, caring

Opposite: Meanness, sternness, unkind, uncaring

Bible Memory Verse for Lessons 3 & 4:

Psalm 92:1-2 “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night.”

Adaptation Grades 1-2

(Say this with a rhythmic beat.)

It is good...to declare (to tell about) Your lovingkindness.

Bible Stories:

**Ebed-Melech shows love for the prophet Jeremiah
Jeremiah 38:4-13**

Jesus shows love by forgiving those who crucify Him.

Luke 23:32-47

Unit Aim: At the conclusion of these lessons, the student will understand that love is not just a feeling, but is shown in how we act toward others. They will understand that God is love. God's heart is full of love toward him, and that Jesus loves Him so much that He willingly suffered and died to pay for our sins, even forgiving those who crucified Him. As a result of this understanding, the Christian child will thank God for His love and show love to others.

Lesson 3

Beginning the Lesson:

Skit—A teacher is talking to two girls. The teacher tells them they should love one another. They agree. They repeat, “We will love one another.” As soon as the teacher leaves, they begin making faces and fighting.

Transition to the Lesson—Are these girls showing love? No? Why not? They SAID they loved each other. But they didn’t show it in the way they acted toward one another. In today’s Bible lesson we meet someone who didn’t just SAY he loved. This person SHOWED he REALLY loved. His name was Ebed-Melech. He was an African from the country of Ethiopia, and we meet him in the Bible book of Daniel, chapter 38.

Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 38

4 Therefore the princes said to the king, “Please, let this man be put to death,” for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm.

5 Then Zedekiah the king said, “Look, he is in your hand. For the king can do nothing against you.”

6 So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. (*mud*) So Jeremiah sank down in the mire.

7 Now Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, who was in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin,

8 Ebed-Melech went out of the king’s house and spoke to the king, saying,

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For there is no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded the Ethiopian, saying, “Take from here thirty men with you, and left Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies.”

11 So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12 Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes.” And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Ideas to Emphasize:

- ◆ Jeremiah was in prison because the king did not like the messages he brought from God.
- ◆ The weak king Zedekiah listened to his princes who told him to kill Jeremiah.
- ◆ The king let the mean princes do what they wanted.
- ◆ They had Jeremiah put down in a dungeon that was full of mud.
- ◆ Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian in the king’s palace, knew that Jeremiah would die there.
- ◆ Ebed-Melech spoke up for Jeremiah, and got permission to get him out of the dungeon.
- ◆ Ebed-Melech pulled Jeremiah out of the dungeon and saved his life.
- ◆ Ebed-Melech showed lovingkindness not just by what he said, but by what he did.

Explanation:

Jeremiah was in a nasty, uncomfortable, degrading and life-threatening situation. It was through no fault of his own, since he had preached the messages God gave him, but the king and especially the princes did not like or accept his messages. The hearts of the princes were filled with hateful meanness. They got permission from the king to have Jeremiah thrown into a mud-filled dungeon, where he would surely die. Ebed-Melech was working in the king’s palace, and realized that Jeremiah’s life was in danger. He did not just say, “That’s too bad.” He showed love by acting on Jeremiah’s behalf. He boldly went to the king and begged him to reverse the order that had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, even though if the king had rejected his plea, he might have been subject to the same fate. The king did listen, so Ebed-Melech pulled Jeremiah out of the muddy dungeon and saved his life. We have the book of Jeremiah in our Bibles today because of his bravery and the loving kindness he showed to Jeremiah.

Discussion:

- ◆ What do you think it was like to sink down into a muddy dungeon?
- ◆ Why was Jeremiah’s life in danger in the muddy dungeon?
- ◆ Why do you think the princes did such a mean, hateful thing?
- ◆ Why do you think the king let them do it?
- ◆ What two ways did Ebed-Melech show loving kindness to Jeremiah?

Activity—

Choose two students. Give one a sign saying “Hateful meanness,” and send him to one side of the room (in front). Give the other a sign saying “Loving kindness,” and send him

to the opposite side of the room (in front). Then ask for three groups of two to volunteer to act out either hateful meanness or loving kindness. Give each group a card to show which they are to act out. After each group acts, call on a student to decide which character trait they have shown, and to escort them to the side of the room bearing that sign.

Application--Step of Growth for the Saved Child:

Assignment: God loves us, so He wants us to love one another. Is there someone you have not shown much love to? Would you ask God to help you show love to that person in the next few days? When we see you again, we will ask some of you to tell us how God enabled you to show love to that person.

Invitation--Giving the Unsaved Child an Opportunity to Receive Christ

God loves you very much. He loves you so much that He sent His unique Son to be your Savior. Let's read John 3:16 together, but instead of "the world", let's put our own names in. After all, we are part of the world! ("For God so loved LORELLA that he gave his only begotten Son, that if LORELLA believes in him, LORELLA should not perish, but have everlasting life." God sent Jesus for YOU. Have you received Him as your Savior, or are you still thinking about it? Don't turn away from God's love. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, but today you would like to do so, pray this prayer in your heart right now. (Teacher, lead in the sinner's prayer, found in the preface to these lessons. Then ask those who prayed to raise their hands briefly. You pray for God's blessing on them.)

Lesson 4

JESUS SHOWED HIS LOVE BY FORGIVING THOSE WHO CRUCIFIED HIM.

Luke 23:32-47

Review for Older Students:

- ◆ Tell two ways that Ebed-Melech showed loving kindness to Jeremiah.
- ◆ Who are some people in your country or your culture who are facing terrible circumstances like Jeremiah was?
- ◆ How can you show loving kindness to them?

For Younger Students:

- ◆ Who showed loving kindness to the prophet Jeremiah?
- ◆ How did he show loving kindness to him?

Follow up from lesson 3--Ask who tried to show love to someone this week. Let the children share their experiences.

Beginning the Lesson:

In Class 3 (or whatever class you are teaching), there was a boy who could not walk right. One leg was short and weak, so Kweku walked with a hobble. Some of the other children were very mean to him. They laughed at Kweku and called him names. They imitated the way he walked and laughed at their imitation. Some of them sometimes put out their foot to make Kweku trip and fall down. Why did the children do such mean, hateful things to Kweku?

Transition to the Lesson:

Today's Bible story shows us how Jesus acted when people did and said mean, hateful things to Him. Let's see how Jesus acted in Luke chapter 23.

Lesson Scripture-- Luke 23:32-47

32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,

37 And saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us."

Note that Jesus does not respond in a mean or hateful way to all their ridicule or even their blasphemy. He says nothing in return.

40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.

47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”

Main Points to Emphasize:

- ◆ When they put Jesus on the cross to crucify Him, He prayed that His Father might forgive them.
- ◆ When the rulers and soldiers sneered and mocked at Him, He did not answer them with one hateful or mean word. He kept quiet.
- ◆ When one of the thieves being crucified with Him blasphemed or cursed, He did not answer one hateful or mean word. He kept quiet.
- ◆ Jesus showed loving kindness to those who crucified Him and to us, by dying to pay the penalty for our sins.

Activity:

Have two large flannelboards at the front of the room. Place the words LOVING KINDNESS on one, and the words, HATEFUL MEANNESS on the other. Show the children a series of flannel-backed pictures of people showing either kindness or meanness. Call on a child to tell what each picture shows and to place it on the correct board. Ask for a volunteer to pray that God will help us to show loving kindness to others. (If two flannelboards are not available, make two large signs with the words LOVING KINDNESS and HATEFUL MEANNESS. Let a child hold each sign on opposite sides of the room. As a child tells about each picture, he takes the picture to the appropriate side of the room and stands there holding it.

Application--Step of Growth for the Saved Child:

Assignment--Because you know that God loves you, you can share His love with others. Let's think of some kind, loving things you could do for your family this week. (Let the children share ideas, then encourage them to choose one and do it very soon.)

Invitation--Giving the Unsaved Child an Opportunity to Receive Christ:

God loves you so much. He has done everything He can to provide for your salvation. He wants you to be saved. The Bible says "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9b). God would love to have you as His child in His family forever. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, but today you would like to do so, pray this prayer in your heart right now. (Teacher, lead in the sinner's prayer, found in the preface to these lessons. Then ask those who prayed to raise their hands briefly. You pray for God's blessing on them.)