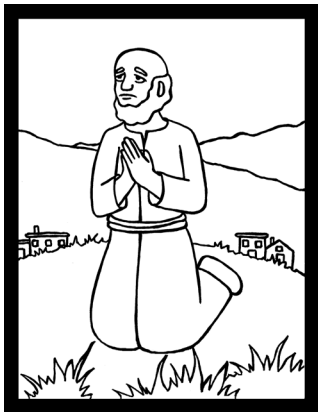




LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Genesis 18:13-33

Ephesians 2:1-9

Session Theme:

Mercy

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: One in a Minyan

Ask for a volunteer to count to ten, and then to count backwards from ten, as quickly as possible. Next, ask if anyone can count to ten in a different language, and let them demonstrate. People all over the world teach their kids to count, and the number ten, itself, is a significant number in many cultures. In fact, in Jewish worship to this day, they have a special word for 10 adults who pray together: a minyan. Can ten faithful people who honor God make a difference in this world?

In today's Bible story, we will learn about a man who prayed to God, and did a lot of counting backwards in his prayer. His final number? Ten. God wanted to see ten righteous people. Why? What was going on? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, you are a God of justice and of mercy. Please help our world. We need you. Guide us, and make our actions pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever" (hymn)
- "Great is Thy Faithfulness" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Ancestors

God gave his promise to a family of wandering herdsmen, which included Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebekah; Jacob, Rachel and Leah; and Joseph and his brothers.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Genesis 18:17-33

1. Years prior to today's story, Abraham and his nephew Lot parted ways (see Genesis 13:8-13). Why did they do that? To what land did Lot choose to go, and why? Where did Abraham go?

As their flocks and herds became larger, they didn't want their shepherds and animals to compete for resources. Abraham allowed Lot to choose where he wanted to settle; Abraham promised to go the other way.

Lot chose to go to the green Jordan valley where there were existing cities. Abraham then went the other direction, into the hilly country of Canaan.

2. Today's story from Genesis 18 takes place directly after God promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son in their old age (Genesis 17). How was God's wrath against Sodom and Gomorrah the flip side of his gracious promise to Abraham? What did God promise to do through Isaac (v. 17:19)?

God had promised, "I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" (v. 17:8). The wicked people of Canaan would have prevented that from happening (as we see actually happen in the history of the Bible).

Through Isaac, the child promised to Abraham and Sarah, God said he would make an everlasting covenant (v. 17:19), and a whole nation of people. Jesus Christ would be born through this same family and people almost 2000 years later.

3. The Bible has already said several times the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked and that their sin was "very grave" (v. 18:20). Why do you think that Abraham was so concerned about them when he heard of God's plan?

God was justified in his condemnation of these cities for their sin. Abraham knew God holds the guilty accountable. But he also knew that his relatives lived in Sodom. He worried that if all of Sodom was destroyed, Lot and his family would be swept away with everyone else.

4. In his appeal to the Lord, how would you describe Abraham's mood or attitude? Do you ever feel this way toward God? When or why? Or why not?

Abraham appears very hesitant and tentative; clearly he did not want to provoke God to more anger by asking questions that might appear to express doubt. Sometimes we may think we are doing something wrong if we express our doubts to God, or ask hard questions. But God wants us to bring our worries and concerns to him. (See 1 Peter 5:7: "cast all your anxieties on him ...").

5. What do you make of Abraham's countdown in verses 24-32? Was he stalling for time, hoping that God would change his mind? Or was he hoping for something else?

It seems like Abraham was afraid to ask what he wanted to know. He slowly built up to his real question. He probably knew that Lot and his family were the only good people in Sodom. Maybe he wanted to have God specifically promise to save his relatives.

6. From what you know of how this story plays out in Genesis 19, did God remain true to his word? Did God end up sparing anyone in Sodom?

Genesis 19 describes how God sent his angels into the city of Sodom to rescue Lot and his family (husband, wife, and two daughters) to spare them from destruction. God was true to his word, since there were not even ten good people to be found in the city. But the faithful people he did find were spared.

7. Read Ephesians 2:1-9. In what way do all of us deserve the same fate as Sodom? What is our problem? What motivated God to spare us in Jesus? How does this fulfill God's promise in Genesis 17:19?

Paul's words here are directed at the reader: "You were dead in your trespasses" He says, "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh" and "we were by nature children of wrath." Paul is telling us that, on our own, we are no better than anyone else. We all deserve punishment for our sins and disobedience.

This is what makes God's promise to us in Jesus so great. Because of his love and grace, God spares and saves us. This is his kindness and grace. It was God's plan all along to send Jesus to save us, and it all began with that promise of Isaac's offspring in Genesis 17:19.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Prayer Plaques Craft

Materials Needed:

- 6-inch square ceramic tiles*
- Pencils
- Colored permanent markers
- Hot glue gun
- Picture hanging hooks or large paper clips



Instructions:

The Lord heard the outcry about Sodom and was not happy about what was happening there. But Abraham's plea for mercy made a difference. God promised not to destroy Sodom if ten righteous people were still there. When even that number was not reached, God still saved Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family.

To remind the class of God's mercy and willingness to listen to our intercessions, invite them to design and create their own reminder plaques.

Before class, collect a few short phrases about the power of prayer, such as "God hears our prayers," "Pray, and trust the Lord," or "Prayer changes things."

Give each person a pencil and a ceramic tile. Have them write one of the phrases in pencil on their tile, pressing lightly in case they need to erase anything.

Using markers, let them trace over their penciled words in color and add other graphic elements as well.

When kids have finished decorating their plaques, the teacher can use a hot glue gun to put a large drop of glue on the back of the tile. Then, help kids press the bottom of a picture hanging hook or large paperclip into the glue.

When the glue dries and the hook is secure, they can hang their plaques on the wall at home as a reminder that God hears their prayers — and he cares for them.

** If needed, substitute squares of card stock for tiles. Then, regular markers would work in place of permanent ones, and tape and a loop of yarn could be used as the hanger on back, instead of hot glue and a picture hanger/paper clip.*

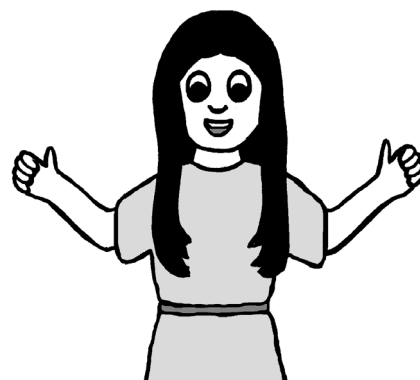
Activity 2: Collective Counting Game

Materials Needed:

- Timer (optional)

Instructions:

To play this game, tell kids that as a class, they are going to count to 50 as quickly as possible. But there is a twist: Only one person at a time can say one number at a time.



Explain that when you say, "Start," any person in the class can stand up and say "One." Then any other person can stand up and say "Two," and so on. However, if two people (or more) stand up (or move to stand up) at the same time, those people are out.

If you want to make this game more challenging, set a timer and tell kids they have to get to the final number as a class before the timer sounds. Speed will make the game more difficult — and fun!

After counting to 50, challenge the remaining kids to play the same game and get to 40. Once that round has finished, challenge any remaining kids to count to 30, and then 20. Continue playing until only one person is left or until the remaining students have made it to 10. After the round of 10 is reached, the game will end.

Imagine how upsetting it must have been for Abraham to know that his nephew, Lot, lived in a community that was doing evil things. He worried that the righteous would be punished along with the wicked, and interceded with the Lord on their behalf.

Interestingly, Abraham's plea was heard. The Lord told him that if even ten faithful people could be found in Sodom, the place would be spared from destruction.

Later, when it became clear that there were not even ten left there, God allowed Lot and his family to escape before Sodom was destroyed. God heard Abraham's prayer and had mercy.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the solution and answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Prayer Examples:

- a) Friends: "I pray that we have fun together"
- b) Family: "I pray that everyone would be healthy"
- c) Cousins: "I pray that we would have time together"
- d) Teachers: "I pray that I can learn from them"
- d) Classmates: "I pray that we all get good grades"
- d) Neighbors: "I pray that we would get along together"
- e) Enemies: "I pray that we might become friends"

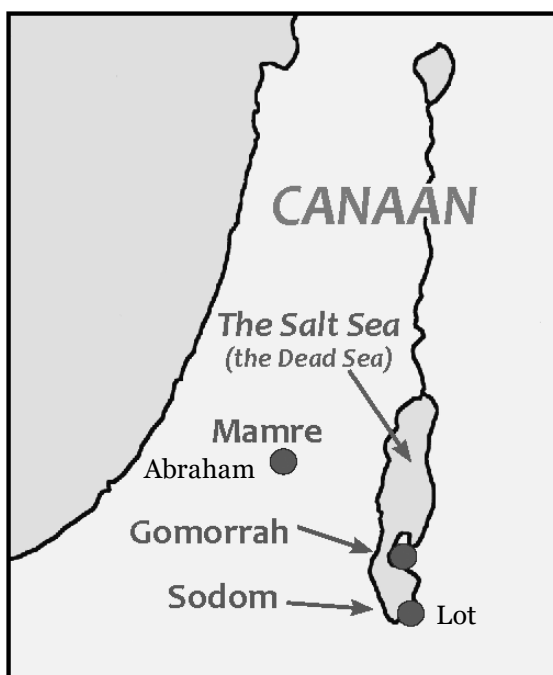
From Martin Luther's Small Catechism:

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father would not hold our sins against us and deny our prayers because of them. We know we have not earned, nor do we deserve, those things for which we pray. But we ask that he would grant us all things through grace, even though we sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment. And so we, too, will heartily forgive, and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Story Map:



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Mercy

when God does not punish us, even when we deserve it, but is kind instead

Abraham asked God to show mercy: he was worried about his nephew Lot.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

It's hard when we hear about people doing bad things. Sometimes stories on the news can really shake us. We wonder, "What does God think of this? What will happen next?"



Abraham felt this way too. He knew that terrible things were being done in the town where his nephew lived. He knew the people there would be punished for their sins. And he worried that his nephew, who was a faithful man, would suffer along with everyone else. So Abraham asked God to consider those who were good and decent. And God assured him that he would have mercy even if only ten people in that big, wicked place were faithful.

When we hear of evil things happening around us, we may feel powerless. But there is always something we can do, no matter what. We can be faithful, ourselves. And we can pray. God hears our prayers, and cares.

What are some situations that we should pray about, right now? What are some ways we can be faithful to God, even if bad things are happening around us?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer asking for God's forgiveness. Ask for the Holy Spirit to be at work on your heart, turning you away from sin to live a life of faithfulness and obedience.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.