

Justice and Compassion

Volume 13

Deep Research Sunday School Lessons

A 24-Volume Comprehensive Series

Volumes in This Series

Forgiveness and Letting Go

Volumes 1 to 4

Loving Difficult People

Volumes 5 to 8

Living in Community

Volumes 9 to 12

Justice and Compassion

Volumes 13 to 16

Managing Anger and Conflict

Volumes 17 to 20

Character and Integrity

Volumes 21 to 24

Deep Research Sunday School Lessons

Justice and Compassion

Volume 13

Published by

1611 Press

www.1611press.com

Deep Research Sunday School Lessons: Justice and Compassion

Copyright 2026 by 1611 Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in critical reviews and certain noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV.

Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

www.zondervan.com

First Edition: 2026

About This Series

Welcome to Deep Research Sunday School Lessons, a meticulously researched collection of Sunday School lessons designed for thoughtful, transformative learning.

Our mission is simple: to return Sunday School to school, a place where deep conversations happen, where difficult questions are welcomed, and where faith and intellect work together.

Each volume is organized around a central biblical theme such as forgiveness, community, justice, anger, or character. Within that theme, you will find multiple lessons, each based on a specific Scripture passage and developed for three age groups.

A Note on Scripture Sources

These lessons draw primarily from the 66 books of the Protestant canon, using the New International Version (NIV) as our primary translation. Occasionally, lessons may reference the Deuterocanonical books (also called the Apocrypha), which are accepted as canonical by Catholic and Orthodox traditions and valued as historical literature by many Protestant scholars.

We include these texts sparingly but intentionally, because we believe they offer valuable historical and theological context for understanding the world of the Bible and the development of Jewish and Christian thought.

Whether or not the Deuterocanonical books are part of your personal faith tradition, we invite you to engage with them as literature that shaped the faith of millions and provides insight into the intertestamental period.

Above all, we believe that Christians should be inclusive of other Christians. The body of Christ is large, and our differences should draw us closer together in mutual respect, not push us apart in division.

How to Use This Book

For Teachers and Group Leaders

Each lesson in this volume is designed to stand alone, allowing you to teach them in any order that fits your curriculum or group needs.

The discussion questions provided at the end of each lesson are starting points, not scripts. Allow your group to explore tangents and raise their own questions as the Spirit leads.

For Individual Study

If you are using this book for personal devotion or self-directed study, we encourage you to take your time with each lesson, journaling your thoughts and prayers as you go.

For Families

These lessons can be adapted for family devotion time. Parents may wish to simplify certain concepts for younger children while using the discussion questions to engage older children and teens.

* * *

*We pray that this volume blesses your study, enriches your teaching,
and draws you ever closer to the heart of God.*

The 1611 Press Team

God's Heart for the Vulnerable

Divine Power Serves the Powerless, How do we defend the cause of the vulnerable in modern systems?

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Instructor Preparation

Read this section before teaching any age group. It provides the theological foundation and shows how the lesson adapts across developmental stages.

The Passage

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

20 Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome

wonders you saw with your own eyes. **22** Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Context

Moses delivers this speech to Israel on the plains of Moab, just before they enter the Promised Land. After forty years of wilderness wandering following the golden calf incident, Moses reminds the people of God's character and their covenant obligations. The Israelites stand at a crucial transition point, from nomadic wanderers to settled nation, and need to understand how God's character should shape their society.

This teaching comes after Moses has recounted God's faithfulness despite Israel's rebellion. The people have just heard about the broken tablets, Moses's intercession, and God's mercy in providing new tablets. Now Moses connects God's cosmic authority directly to His care for society's most vulnerable members, setting the foundation for how Israel should treat outsiders and the powerless in their new land.

The Big Idea

The God who rules the universe demonstrates His character by defending those who cannot defend themselves, and calls His people to imitate this divine pattern of using power to protect the powerless.

This isn't simply about being nice to vulnerable people, it's about understanding that God's cosmic authority manifests specifically in care for those society overlooks. The progression from God's universal lordship to His love for foreigners reveals divine priorities that should reshape human priorities. True godliness means our power, whatever form it takes, serves those who lack power.

Theological Core

- **Divine Impartial Justice.** God shows no favoritism and cannot be bought, making His justice completely reliable and His care for the vulnerable genuine rather than political.
 - **Power Serves Powerlessness.** The God of gods uses His unlimited authority specifically to defend those who have no defender, this is not incidental but central to divine character.
-

- **Memory Shapes Morality.** Israel's obligation to love foreigners stems from remembering their own foreigner status in Egypt, past vulnerability creates present responsibility.
 - **Human Imitation of Divine Character.** The command to love foreigners flows directly from God's character, making it not just law but participation in divine nature.
-

Age Group Overview

What Each Age Group Learns

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

- God's cosmic authority manifests specifically through defending society's most vulnerable members
 - True justice requires impartiality, it cannot be bought, manipulated, or influenced by social status
 - Using whatever power we have to protect the powerless is not optional charity but divine imitation
 - Discerning how to defend vulnerable people in complex systems requires wisdom about root causes and sustainable solutions
-

Grades 4, 6

- God specifically notices and cares about people who get overlooked or treated unfairly by others
 - When we have power to help someone who's being treated badly, we should use that power to help them
 - Sometimes doing the right thing means speaking up even when it's uncomfortable or risky for us
 - Feeling scared about standing up for someone is normal, but we can do the right thing even when we feel nervous
-

Grades 1, 3

- God loves to take care of people who need help and can't help themselves
 - God is very strong and uses His strength to protect people who are weak
 - God wants us to be helpers who look out for people who need friends or help
-

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Reducing this to individual charity.** While personal kindness matters, this passage calls for structural imitation of divine justice. God's defense of the vulnerable operates at systemic levels, not just individual acts of kindness.
 - **Ignoring the power progression.** The text deliberately moves from cosmic authority to care for specific groups. This isn't accidental, it shows that divine priorities should reshape how we understand and use power.
 - **Sentimentalizing vulnerability.** God doesn't defend the fatherless, widows, and foreigners because they're inherently more virtuous, but because they lack structural power to defend themselves. The focus is on justice, not emotional appeal.
 - **Missing the memory component.** Israel's obligation stems from remembering their own vulnerability in Egypt. This isn't abstract moral teaching but concrete application of remembered experience to present responsibility.
-

Handling Hard Questions

"How do we know who really deserves help versus who's just taking advantage?"

This passage focuses on God's character, He shows no partiality and accepts no bribes, rather than on determining worthiness. The question shifts from "Who deserves help?" to "How can I imitate God's impartial care?" This doesn't mean being naive about manipulation, but it does mean starting with God's character rather than our suspicions. Wisdom involves both generous hearts and practical discernment about effective help.

"What if defending someone puts me at risk or gets me in trouble?"

Moses is calling Israel to restructure their entire society around these principles, knowing it would cost them politically and economically. The passage doesn't promise that defending the vulnerable will be safe or easy, but it does ground this calling in God's character. This means seeking wisdom about when and how to act, not whether to act. Sometimes faithful defense requires accepting personal cost.

"Isn't this just political activism disguised as Bible teaching?"

The text itself makes defense of the vulnerable central to faithful response to God's character. This isn't political overlay on scripture, it's direct application of revealed divine priorities. However, there's wisdom in distinguishing between the biblical principle (defend the powerless) and specific policy applications (how to do that effectively). The principle is non-negotiable; the methods require ongoing discernment and often legitimate disagreement among faithful people.

The One Thing to Remember

The God who rules everything shows His character by defending those who cannot defend themselves, and calls us to do the same with whatever power we have.

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

Ages 12, 14+ • 30 Minutes • Student-Centered Discussion

Your Main Job Today

Guide students to discover how God's cosmic authority manifests specifically in defending the vulnerable, then wrestle with what this means for how they use whatever power they have. Help them see the progression from divine character to human responsibility.

The Tension to Frame

How do we defend the cause of vulnerable people in complex systems where we ourselves have limited power and don't always know the best way to help?

Discussion Facilitation Tips

- Validate their experiences of feeling powerless while helping them identify the power they do have
- Honor the complexity of modern systems while maintaining the clarity of the biblical principle
- Let them wrestle with tension between individual action and systemic change rather than providing easy answers

1. Opening Frame (2, 3 minutes)

Think about the last time you saw someone being treated unfairly, maybe someone getting picked on at school, maybe someone being ignored or excluded, maybe someone facing a situation that wasn't their fault but was clearly hurting them. You probably felt that instinct that says "This isn't right. Someone should do something." But then reality kicks in. Who are you to intervene? What if you make things worse? What if helping this person creates problems for you?

Most of us have learned to weigh these situations carefully. We want to help, but we also want to be smart about it. We don't want to be naive, and we don't want to create more problems than we solve. These instincts make sense, wisdom matters when you're trying to help people. But sometimes that caution can become an excuse for not acting at all.

Today we're looking at a passage where God reveals something crucial about His own character, specifically, how the ruler of the universe chooses to use His unlimited power. And then He calls His people to imitate this pattern. The stakes are higher than a school hallway conflict, but the basic tension is the same: What does it mean to use whatever power you have to defend people who can't defend themselves?

As we read this together, pay attention to the progression Moses uses. Notice how he connects God's cosmic authority to God's care for specific vulnerable groups. And notice what he says about Israel's responsibility based on their own experience of vulnerability. This isn't abstract theology, it's a blueprint for how divine character should reshape human communities.

Open your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 10, starting at verse 12. We're going to read Moses's explanation of what God requires from His people, and why.

2. Silent Reading (5 minutes)

Managing Silent Reading: Walk quietly around the room. Help with difficult words like "fatherless" or "partiality." Watch for students who finish early, this passage is dense with meaning, so encourage them to read it twice. Let them feel the weight of connecting God's cosmic authority to His care for specific vulnerable groups.

As You Read, Think About:

- What progression do you notice in verses 14-19? How does Moses connect God's universal authority to His care for specific groups?
- Why do you think Moses mentions that God "accepts no bribes" right before talking about His care for the vulnerable?
- What's the connection between Israel being foreigners in Egypt and their obligation to love foreigners now?
- If you had to explain to someone why this passage matters for how we live today, what would you say?

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

20 Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. 22 Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

3. Discussion (15, 18 minutes)

Oral Reading (2, 3 minutes)

Selecting Readers: Ask for volunteers, but choose confident readers for the cosmic authority sections (verses 14, 17) and someone who can handle the emotional weight of verse 18. Let students pass if they're not comfortable reading aloud.

Reader 1: Verses 12-16 (God's requirements and cosmic authority) **Reader 2:** Verses 17-19 (God's character and care for vulnerable) **Reader 3:** Verses 20-22 (Call to faithful response)

Listen for the progression Moses uses, notice how he builds from God's universal lordship to His specific care for vulnerable people, then connects that to Israel's obligation.

Small Group Question Generation (3, 4 minutes)

Setup: Form groups of 3-4, give exactly 3 minutes. Walk between groups to listen and help stuck groups with "What surprised you most about how God uses His power?" Groups should focus on genuine curiosity, not trying to impress.

Get into groups of three or four. Come up with one or two genuine questions about what we just read, things you're actually curious about or confused by. Good questions might start with "Why does..." or "How do we..." or "What's the connection between..." You're not trying to stump me or show how smart you are. Ask about things you genuinely want to understand better. You have three minutes.

Facilitated Discussion (12, 14 minutes)

Remember: Students drive with THEIR questions. You facilitate and probe deeper. Guide discovery rather than lecture. Write their questions on the board and look for themes.

Collecting Questions: Let's hear your questions. I'll write them up here and we'll start with the ones that seem to connect to what most of you are thinking about.

Probing Questions (to go deeper)

- "What do you notice about the progression from verse 14 to verse 18? Why do you think Moses connects God's cosmic authority to His care for specific vulnerable groups?"
 - "Why does Moses mention that God 'shows no partiality and accepts no bribes' right before talking about His defense of the fatherless and widows?"
 - "What's the connection Moses makes between Israel's experience in Egypt and their obligation to love foreigners? Why does memory matter for morality?"
 - "Moses calls God 'mighty and awesome' and then immediately says He 'defends the cause of the fatherless.' What does this tell us about how divine power works?"
 - "How do we discern the difference between genuine defense of the vulnerable and enabling people to avoid responsibility for their choices?"
 - "What would it look like for teenagers to 'defend the cause' of vulnerable people in your school or community?"
 - "If God had structured His priorities differently, if He focused His power on impressing people rather than defending the powerless, how would that change everything?"
 - "Why does this matter for how we understand justice and power in our society today?"
-

Revealing the Pattern

Do you notice what's happening here? Moses isn't just giving random moral advice. He's showing Israel that God's cosmic authority manifests specifically through care for those who cannot care for themselves. The God who rules everything chooses to reveal His character by defending people who have no other defender. And then Moses says, "This is how you imitate God, you use whatever power you have the same way." This isn't about being nice when it's convenient. This is about aligning your priorities with divine priorities.

4. Application (3, 4 minutes)

Let's get real about your lives. Where do you see this same pattern playing out today? Where do you see vulnerable people who need someone to defend their cause? And more personally, where do you have power, even limited power, that you could use to protect people who can't protect themselves? Think about school, social media, family dynamics, work situations, community issues.

Real Issues This Connects To

- Speaking up when someone's being bullied or excluded, even if it might make you a target
 - Using your social media platform or friend group influence to defend someone being attacked online
 - Advocating for fair treatment of younger siblings or family members who can't advocate for themselves
 - Standing with classmates facing discrimination based on race, sexuality, economic status, or other factors
 - Supporting refugee resettlement, immigration justice, or other responses to modern "foreigners"
 - Making choices about where to spend money or time that either support or ignore vulnerable communities
-

Facilitation: Let students share examples without rushing to provide solutions. Some situations require different responses, and wisdom matters. Help them think through discernment about effective defense rather than giving blanket advice about what they should do.

Discussion Prompts

- "When have you seen someone use their power or influence to protect someone who couldn't protect themselves? What made that effective?"
 - "What would help you have courage to defend someone when you're not sure what the personal cost might be?"
 - "How do you discern between wise caution and self-protective excuses when you're deciding whether to act?"
 - "What's the difference between defending the vulnerable and creating dependency? How do we tell if we're actually helping?"
-

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what I want you to take with you: The God who rules the universe demonstrates His character specifically by defending people who cannot defend themselves. This isn't a side project for God, it's central to who He is. And He calls you to imitate this pattern with whatever power you have. Your power might be limited, your influence might be small, but that doesn't release you from the responsibility to align your priorities with God's priorities.

This week, pay attention to moments when you have the opportunity to defend someone's cause, someone who's being treated unfairly, someone who's being overlooked, someone who doesn't have the power to defend themselves. Don't assume you have to solve every injustice you see, but do ask yourself: How can I use whatever influence I have to reflect God's character? How can my choices support rather than ignore vulnerable people?

You asked really good questions today and wrestled well with complex issues. Keep wrestling with them. The world needs people who understand that true strength serves weakness, and true justice serves those who lack power to demand it for themselves. You can be those people.

Grades 4, 6

Ages 9, 11 • 30 Minutes • Interactive Storytelling + Activity

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that God notices people who get ignored or mistreated, and wants us to stick up for people who can't stick up for themselves, even when it feels scary or risky for us.

If Kids Ask "What if helping someone gets me in trouble?"

Say: "That's a really smart question. Sometimes doing the right thing is scary. Ask a trusted adult for help figuring out the best way to help someone while staying safe yourself."

1. Opening (5 minutes)

Raise your hand if you've ever seen someone being left out, picked on, or treated unfairly when they didn't deserve it. Keep your hands up if you felt like someone should do something to help that person. Now keep your hands up if part of you wanted to help but another part of you felt nervous about getting involved.

Here's a harder question: Imagine you see some older kids being mean to a younger kid on the playground. They're not letting the younger kid play, they're calling him names, and you can see that his feelings are really hurt. Part of you thinks "This isn't fair! Someone should stick up for that kid!" But another part of you thinks "Those older kids might turn on me if I say something. What if they start being mean to me too?"

Those feelings make total sense! Your brain is trying to help you stay safe, and it's also trying to help you do the right thing. Both of those instincts are good, even when they feel like they're fighting with each other. It's normal to feel scared about standing up for someone, and it's also normal to feel like the right thing to do is help them.

This reminds me of movies like "Wonder" where someone has to decide whether to stick up for the kid everyone's being mean to, even though it might cost them their popularity. Or like in "Coco" where Miguel has to defend his family's honor even though it's risky. These stories show us that doing the right thing isn't always easy or safe, but it's still the right thing.

The tricky part is figuring out how to be brave enough to help people who need help, even when we're not sure what might happen to us. How do we find the courage to stick up for people who can't stick up for themselves? And how do we know when and how to help?

Today we're going to hear about what God is like and how He uses His enormous power. God could do anything He wants with His power, He could show off, He could only help people who can pay Him back, He could ignore everyone's problems. But that's not what He does. Let's find out how God chooses to use His power, and what that means for how we should use ours.

What to Expect: Kids will relate to feeling conflicted about helping others. Briefly affirm their responses: "Yes, it can be really confusing when you want to help but you're also worried about yourself," then move toward the story.

2. Bible Story Time (10 minutes)

Picture the nation of Israel camped out in the wilderness, right at the edge of the Promised Land. They've been traveling for forty years, and they're finally almost home. Moses, their leader, is giving them some final instructions before they go in and build their new society.

Moses knows something important: When the Israelites build their new cities and establish their government, they're going to have power. They'll have the power to decide how people get treated. They'll have the power to make laws and choose what matters most to their society. And Moses wants them to understand something crucial about how to use that power.

So Moses reminds them about God's character. He says, "Listen carefully to what God is like, because you need to be like Him." And then Moses tells them something amazing about the God who created the entire universe.

Imagine how powerful God is. He made every star you see at night, and there are more stars than you could count if you spent your whole life counting. He made every ocean, every mountain, every galaxy spinning through space. The whole universe belongs to Him. If God wanted to impress people, He could do incredible cosmic displays of power. He could rearrange constellations to spell out messages or make galaxies dance in formation.

But here's what Moses tells Israel about how God chooses to use His unlimited power: He shows no favoritism. He can't be bribed or bought. Rich people can't pay God extra to get special treatment. Popular people can't get God to ignore their problems and focus on other people instead. God treats everyone fairly, He doesn't play favorites.

And then Moses tells them the most amazing thing about what God does with His power. Listen to this: "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing." Do you hear what that means?

Deuteronomy 10:17-18 (NIV)

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

Think about what this is saying. The fatherless were kids whose dads had died, which in that time meant they had no one to protect them. Widows were women whose husbands had died, which meant they had

no one to provide for them. Foreigners were people from other countries who didn't have family or friends to help them in Israel. These were the people who couldn't stick up for themselves.

And the God who rules the entire universe, who could focus His attention anywhere, chooses to focus His power on defending these vulnerable people. He makes sure they have food. He makes sure they have clothing. He pays attention to them when everyone else ignores them. He sticks up for them when no one else will.

But Moses doesn't stop there. He tells Israel something that should change everything about how they treat people. He says, "And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt."

Deuteronomy 10:19 (NIV)

19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Do you remember Israel's story? They had been slaves in Egypt for four hundred years. They knew exactly what it felt like to be foreigners in a strange land. They knew what it felt like when no one cared about them, when they had no power to change their situation, when they needed someone to defend them but no one would.

Moses is saying, "Remember how that felt. Remember what it was like to need help and have no one to turn to. Now that you have power, use it the way God uses His power, to defend people who can't defend themselves." This isn't just about being nice. This is about imitating God's character.

When the Israelites build their new society, they're supposed to ask themselves: "How would God want us to treat the people who have no power? How would God want us to use our power?" And the answer is clear: Use your power to protect people who can't protect themselves. Pay attention to people everyone else ignores. Stick up for people who can't stick up for themselves.

Sometimes in our lives, we have power too. Maybe we have influence with our friends. Maybe we have a voice when adults are making decisions. Maybe we have strength or skills that could help someone who's struggling. Sometimes we're the ones who need help and protection. But when we do have power, even small power, God wants us to use it the way He uses His.

We learn that God's strength serves people who are weak. God's power defends people who are powerless. God's love reaches people who feel unloved and ignored. And when we imitate God, we use whatever power we have to do the same thing.

The amazing truth is that when people stick up for others who can't stick up for themselves, they're acting exactly like God. They're showing the world what God is like. They're using their power the way the ruler of the universe uses His power.

Pause here. Let the story sink in for 5 seconds before moving on.

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Question 1: The Surprise

God could use His unlimited power to do anything, create amazing cosmic light shows, build incredible monuments to Himself, force everyone to worship Him. But instead, He uses His power to defend kids without parents and take care of people from other countries who don't have anyone else to help them. What do you think about that choice? Does it surprise you that someone with ultimate power would focus on people who have no power?

Listen For: "That's nice," "I didn't expect that," "Why doesn't He do flashy things?", affirm: "It is surprising! It shows us what God really cares about most."

Question 2: The Memory

Moses reminds Israel that they used to be foreigners in Egypt, they know what it feels like to need help and not have anyone to turn to. Think about a time when you felt left out, ignored, or like you needed someone to stick up for you. How should that memory change the way you treat other people who feel that same way?

If They Say: "I'd want someone to help them too", respond: "Exactly! When you remember feeling that way, it helps you understand why it matters to help others who feel that way now."

Question 3: The Challenge

Moses tells Israel to imitate God's character, to use their power the way God uses His power. Think about your life at school or at home. Where do you have some power or influence? How could you use that power to defend someone who can't defend themselves, the way God defends vulnerable people?

Connect: "This is exactly what made God's choice so powerful and what makes our choice to imitate Him so important."

Question 4: The Courage

Sometimes sticking up for someone who's being treated unfairly might be scary or risky for us. We might worry about what other people will think or whether we'll get in trouble. But Moses is asking Israel to do it anyway, because that's what God does with His power. What do you think would help someone be brave enough to defend others even when it feels scary?

If They Say: "Ask for help," "Remember it's the right thing", respond: "Yes! Having wise helpers and remembering God's character can give us courage to do what's right even when it's hard."

You've identified something really important: God could use His power any way He wants, but He chooses to use it to defend people who can't defend themselves. And He wants us to imitate that pattern with whatever power we have. Let's experience what that looks like in action.

4. Activity: Shield Wall Protection (8 minutes)

Zero Props Required , This activity uses only kids' bodies and empty space.

Purpose

This activity reinforces that God's power serves the powerless by having kids physically experience how protection works through cooperation. Success looks like kids discovering that strength is most powerful when it's used to defend those who need defending, and that everyone has a role in creating protection for vulnerable people.

Instructions to Class(3 minutes)

We're going to play Shield Wall Protection. I need three volunteers to be "vulnerable people", you'll stand in the middle of our space. Everyone else, form a circle around them with your arms linked. You are the "shield wall" and your job is to protect the people in the middle.

Here's the challenge: I'm going to try to gently tag the people in the middle. Shield wall, your job is to move together to keep me away from them. You have to stay linked, you can't break the circle. Vulnerable people, you can move around inside the circle, but you have to trust your protectors to keep you safe.

The twist is this: After a minute, we'll rotate so that some of the shield wall people become vulnerable people, and some of the vulnerable people become part of the shield wall. Everyone will experience both needing protection and providing protection.

We're doing this because it's exactly like what Moses told Israel: Sometimes you need someone to defend your cause, and sometimes you have the power to defend others. God wants us to use our strength to protect people who need protection.

During the Activity(4 minutes)

First round: The shield wall learns to move together and coordinate their protection. Let them experience the challenge of working as a team to defend others. Gently try to reach the middle people, but let the shield wall succeed when they coordinate well.

Notice what happens: The shield wall has to communicate, move together, and focus entirely on protecting others rather than themselves. They can't protect the vulnerable people individually, they need each other to create effective defense.

Coaching phrases: "Shield wall, how can you move together?" "What do you need to communicate to protect them effectively?" "Vulnerable people, notice how it feels to have others focused on protecting you."

Second round: After rotation, celebrate how the new shield wall learns from watching the first group. Point out when someone who was just vulnerable becomes a strong protector, and when someone who was protecting experiences needing protection.

During rotation, highlight the moment when roles change: "Look! Now Sarah is protecting the same people who were just protecting her. Now Marcus knows what it feels like to need others to defend

him." This represents the movement from powerless to powerful and back again.

Watch For: The moment when kids realize they need to work together to provide effective protection, this is the physical representation of how God's people create defense for vulnerable community members.

Debrief(1 minute)

What did you notice about how it felt when you were in the middle needing protection versus when you were part of the shield wall providing protection? Both experiences matter! Sometimes we need others to defend us, and sometimes we have the power to defend others. Just like Moses told Israel, we should remember what it feels like to need help so we'll use our power to help others when we can.

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what we learned today: God notices people who get ignored or treated unfairly, and He uses His incredible power to defend them and take care of them. God could use His power any way He wants, but He chooses to use it to protect people who can't protect themselves. And God wants us to imitate Him by using our power the same way.

This doesn't mean you should put yourself in danger or that you have to solve every problem you see. It does mean that when you have the chance to stick up for someone who's being treated unfairly, you can remember that you're acting just like God when you use your power to protect people who need protection.

The amazing result is that when people defend each other this way, everyone feels safer and more loved. Communities become places where vulnerable people are protected instead of ignored. And we get to show the world what God is like by the way we treat people who need our help.

This Week's Challenge

This week, notice when you have power or influence that could help someone who's being left out, treated unfairly, or ignored. It might be including someone at lunch, speaking up when someone's being picked on, or helping a younger kid who's struggling. Ask yourself: "How can I use my power the way God uses His, to defend and protect people who need defending?"

Closing Prayer (Optional)

Dear God, thank you for using Your amazing power to defend and protect people who need help. Help us remember what it feels like when we need someone to stick up for us, and help us be brave enough to stick up for others when they need protection. When we feel scared about doing the right thing, remind us that we're acting just like You. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Grades 1, 3

Ages 6, 8 • 15, 20 Minutes • Animated Storytelling + Songs

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that God uses His big strength to take care of people who need help, and God wants us to be helpers too.

Movement & Formation Plan

- **Opening Song:** Standing in a circle
 - **Bible Story:** Sitting in a horseshoe shape facing the teacher
 - **Small Group Q&A:** Standing in pairs facing each other
 - **Closing Song:** Standing in straight lines
 - **Prayer:** Sitting cross-legged in rows
-

If Kids Don't Understand

Compare God's power to a superhero who chooses to help people who can't help themselves, then ask "What kind of helper do you want to be?"

1. Opening Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in a circle

Select a song about helping others or God's strength. Suggestions: "Be Strong and Courageous," "God is So Good," or "Love One Another." Use movements: flex arms during songs about strength, hug yourself during songs about love, reach out to help others during songs about caring.

Great singing! Now let's sit down in our horseshoe so I can tell you an amazing story about how God uses His super-strong power. This story will help you understand what God is like and what God wants us to be like too!

2. Bible Story Time (5, 7 minutes)

Formation: Kids sitting in a horseshoe shape on the floor facing you. Move around inside the horseshoe as you tell the story.

Animated Delivery: Use big gestures, change your voice for different characters, move around the space. Keep energy high! Sound strong when you're talking about God's power, sound gentle when you're talking about God's care for vulnerable people.

Today we're going to meet Moses! Moses was a leader who helped God's people learn about what God is like.

[Walk to one side of the horseshoe]

Moses told God's people something amazing about God. He said God is the strongest, most powerful person in the whole universe! God made every star and every planet. God is stronger than anything you can imagine!

[Use big arm gestures to show hugeness]

God could use His super-strong power any way He wants. He could make giant fireworks in the sky every night. He could build enormous castles just to show off how strong He is.

[Walk to other side of horseshoe, change tone to gentle]

But do you know what God chooses to do with His amazing power? He uses it to take care of people who need help! He helps kids who don't have daddies. He helps ladies whose husbands died. He helps people from other countries who don't have friends.

[Move to center, speak with warm authority]

Moses told God's people exactly what God does: "God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving them food and clothing."

[Move to side, gesture to the children]

That means when people don't have anyone to stick up for them, God sticks up for them! When people are hungry, God makes sure they get food. When people need clothes, God helps them find clothes.

Deuteronomy 10:18 (NIV)

18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

[Pause and look around at each child]

Isn't that wonderful? The strongest person in the universe uses His strength to help people who are weak! Do you think that's a good way to use power? Yes!

[Move to center, speak with excitement]

But Moses didn't stop there! He told God's people something very important. He said, "You should love people who need help too, because you remember what it was like when you needed help!"

[Walk slowly around the horseshoe]

You see, God's people used to live in a place called Egypt where they were slaves. Nobody was nice to them. Nobody stuck up for them. They knew exactly what it felt like to need help and not have anyone to help them.

[Stop walking and face the children directly]

So Moses said, "Now that you're free and strong, remember how that felt! Use your strength to help people who feel that way now. Be like God, use your power to help people who need help!"

[Speak with excitement]

And do you know what happened when God's people listened to Moses? Their whole community became a place where people took care of each other! Nobody was left out. Nobody was ignored. Everybody helped everybody!

[Pause dramatically]

God can help anyone because He's so strong and powerful! God loves to take care of people who can't take care of themselves. God is the best helper in the whole universe!

[Speak directly to the children]

Sometimes in our lives, we need help too. Maybe someone is being mean to us at school. Maybe our feelings get hurt and we need someone to stick up for us. That's when we can remember that God loves to help people who need help!

[Move closer to the children]

And sometimes, we can be helpers too! When we see someone who's sad or left out or being treated badly, we can remember what God is like. We can use our strength, even if we're just kids, to be kind to them and help them feel better.

[Speak warmly and encouragingly]

When we help people who need help, we're acting just like God! We're showing everyone what God is like by the way we treat people. Isn't that amazing? We get to be God's helpers!

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Formation: Have kids stand up and find a partner. Pairs scatter around the room with space to talk.

Stand up and find a partner! I'm going to give each pair one question to talk about. You'll have about one minute to share your ideas with your partner. There are no wrong answers, just tell your partner what you think!

Teacher Circulation: Walk around to each pair. Listen to their discussions. If a pair is stuck, ask "What do you think?" or rephrase the question more simply. Give them time to think, some kids need extra processing time.

Discussion Questions

Select one question per pair based on class size. Save unused questions for next time.

1. How did you feel when you heard that God uses His super strength to help people who need help?

2. Tell about a time when you needed someone to help you or stick up for you.

3. Why do you think God cares so much about people who don't have anyone else to help them?

4. What would you do if you saw someone being mean to a kid who couldn't defend himself?

5. How do you think it would feel to know that God wants to help you when you need help?

6. What are some ways kids your age can help people who need help?

7. What changed when God's people started helping each other the way God helps people?

8. Tell about someone at school who might need a friend or helper.

9. How can you be kind to someone at home who might need extra help?

10. Who is someone you know who is really good at helping others?

11. Why is it good that the strongest person (God) uses His power to help people who are weak?

12. What would you want someone to do if you were feeling sad or left out?

13. How does it make you feel to know that God notices people who get ignored?

14. What would help you be brave enough to help someone who needs help?

15. How can we remember to be helpers like God is a helper?

16. What did you learn about God from this story?

17. What's one way you want to help someone this week?

18. How can we pray for people who need help?

19. What would happen if everyone helped people who needed help?

20. How can we be like God by the way we treat people?

Great discussions! Let's come back together in our circle. Who wants to share what they talked about with their partner?

4. Closing Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in straight lines facing forward

Choose songs about kindness, helping, or God's love. Include movements like reaching out to help during "helping" lyrics, pointing up during "God" lyrics, hugging motions during "love" lyrics. Suggestions: "Love One Another," "Be Kind," or "Jesus Loves Me."

Beautiful singing! Now let's sit down quietly for our prayer time. Fold your hands and bow your heads so we can talk to God together.

5. Closing Prayer (1, 2 minutes)

Formation: Sitting cross-legged in rows, heads bowed, hands folded

Dear God, thank you for using Your super-strong power to take care of people who need help...

[Pause]

Please help us remember that when people are sad or left out or being treated badly, You want us to be helpers too. Help us be kind and brave when someone needs a friend...

[Pause]

Thank you for being the best helper in the whole universe. Help us be good helpers too, just like You. Thank you for loving everyone so much...

[Pause]

Thank you that You are so strong and powerful, and thank you that You use Your power to help people who need help the most. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Alternative, Popcorn Prayer: If your class is comfortable with it, invite kids to offer short one-sentence prayers about helping others. Examples: "God, help me be nice to kids who are sad" or "Thank you God for helping people who need help."

Remember, God loves to help people who need help, and God wants you to be helpers too! This week, look for ways to be kind to people who might need a friend or someone to stick up for them. Have a wonderful week!

Leaving Room for Others

Deliberate Inefficiency, How do we build access for the poor into our economic choices?

Leviticus 19:9-18

Instructor Preparation

Read this section before teaching any age group. It provides the theological foundation and shows how the lesson adapts across developmental stages.

The Passage

Leviticus 19:9-18 (NIV)

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God. 11 Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. 12 Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. 13 Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. 14 Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord. 15 Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. 16 Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. 17 Do not hate a brother or sister in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. 18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Context

These verses come from the Holiness Code in Leviticus, where God shapes Israel into a holy nation through practical laws. Following the Day of Atonement, God establishes economic, social, and relational patterns that reflect His character. The audience is an agricultural society where harvest time

determines survival for the coming year.

The gleaning laws appear alongside prohibitions against lying, stealing, and exploitation, showing that economic justice isn't separate from personal holiness. God embeds care for the vulnerable into the very structure of economic activity, making provision for the poor not optional charity but required justice.

The Big Idea

God requires His people to limit their economic efficiency in order to create systematic access for the poor and foreigners to work for their food.

This isn't about charity or handouts, it's about justice through deliberate inefficiency. God commands landowners to leave opportunities for the vulnerable to work and earn their sustenance. The repeated phrase "I am the Lord" emphasizes that this economic pattern reflects God's own character and authority.

Theological Core

- **Systematic Provision.** God builds care for the vulnerable into the economic system itself, not as an afterthought. Justice is structural, not just personal.
 - **Deliberate Inefficiency.** Maximum economic efficiency is forbidden when it eliminates poor people's access to resources. Some inefficiency is morally required.
 - **Foreigner Inclusion.** God specifically includes foreigners, those without family land or tribal connections. Economic justice transcends tribal boundaries.
 - **Work Preserves Dignity.** The system allows poor people to work for their food rather than simply receiving handouts. Their labor has value and maintains their dignity.
-

Age Group Overview

What Each Age Group Learns

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

- Economic systems should include systematic ways for poor people to access resources through their own work
- Maximum efficiency becomes morally wrong when it eliminates opportunities for the vulnerable
- Modern applications include employment practices, business models, and community development approaches
- Discerning the difference between enabling dependency and creating dignified opportunities for work

Grades 4, 6

- People who have enough should leave opportunities for people who need more
- It's better to let people work for what they get than just give handouts
- Being slightly less efficient can be the right thing to do if it helps others
- Sometimes we want to keep everything for ourselves, but we can choose to share anyway

Grades 1, 3

- God wants us to share what we have
- God cares about people who don't have enough
- We can help others by not taking everything for ourselves

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Charity versus Justice.** This isn't about voluntary charity but required justice. Don't frame gleaning as "being nice", it's about God-commanded economic structure that ensures vulnerable people can access resources.
- **Enabling Dependency.** The gleaning system requires work from the poor, preserving dignity. Avoid suggesting that any form of help is good, distinguish between systems that maintain dignity through work and those that create dependency.

- **Ancient Law Irrelevance.** Don't dismiss this as outdated agricultural law. The principle of deliberate inefficiency to create access applies to modern economic choices, employment practices, and business decisions.
 - **Individual versus Systematic.** While personal generosity matters, this passage addresses systematic provision built into economic activity itself. Don't reduce it to individual charitable giving.
-

Handling Hard Questions

"Wouldn't this hurt the economy if everyone was deliberately inefficient?"

God's economy includes values beyond pure efficiency, justice, dignity, and care for the vulnerable. The question assumes that maximum economic output is the highest good, but God calls for an economy that serves all people, especially the poor. Modern examples like fair trade, living wages, and inclusive hiring practices show that slight inefficiencies can create better overall outcomes when they include those typically excluded.

"How do we know when someone deserves help versus when they're just lazy?"

The gleaning system doesn't sort "deserving" versus "undeserving" poor, it simply provides opportunities for anyone willing to work. The focus isn't on judging worthiness but on creating systemic access. When we create work opportunities rather than handouts, people who want to work can benefit while preserving dignity for everyone involved.

"What are the actual modern equivalents of leaving gleanings?"

Modern equivalents might include hiring practices that prioritize local workers or those with barriers to employment, business models that create entry-level opportunities, supporting local businesses over pure convenience, or choosing slightly less efficient options that benefit community members. The key is identifying where our pursuit of maximum efficiency eliminates opportunities for others to work and thrive.

The One Thing to Remember

God requires us to limit our efficiency when it eliminates others' opportunities to work for what they need, this is justice, not charity.

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

Ages 12, 14+ • 30 Minutes • Student-Centered Discussion

Your Main Job Today

Guide students to wrestle with how God's gleaning laws challenge modern economic thinking. Help them discover that true justice sometimes requires deliberate inefficiency to create opportunities for the vulnerable.

The Tension to Frame

How do we translate ancient agricultural gleaning laws into modern economic systems? What counts as contemporary "gleanings" that we should leave for others?

Discussion Facilitation Tips

- Validate their confusion about applying ancient laws today, this is genuinely complex
 - Honor their questions about economic efficiency versus justice, these tensions are real
 - Let them discover principles rather than lecturing about applications
-

1. Opening Frame (2, 3 minutes)

Imagine you're working a summer job, and your manager tells you to do something slightly less efficiently because it creates opportunities for other people to earn money too. Your first thought might be, "That doesn't make business sense." You want to do your best work, be productive, and maybe even impress your boss with your efficiency.

But then you think about those other people who need work opportunities. Maybe they're new immigrants, or people with disabilities, or just people who've had a hard time finding jobs. The more efficient approach would shut them out completely. The slightly less efficient approach creates space

for them to work and earn what they need.

Today we're looking at a situation where God gives explicit economic instructions to an agricultural society. Except instead of voluntary charity, He commands a specific type of deliberate inefficiency designed to create work opportunities for poor people and foreigners. The stakes aren't just about being nice, they're about survival.

As we read, pay attention to how specific these instructions are and why God might require this particular approach. Notice what this system accomplishes that pure charity or pure efficiency wouldn't achieve.

Turn to Leviticus 19, verse 9, and start reading silently through verse 18.

2. Silent Reading (5 minutes)

Managing Silent Reading: Walk quietly around the room. Help with pronunciation of Hebrew terms. Notice early finishers and encourage them to think about the questions below. Let them feel the weight of God's repeated "I am the Lord" signature.

As You Read, Think About:

- What specific economic practices does God command or forbid?
 - Why might God require farmers to be deliberately less efficient?
 - How does this gleaning system differ from charity or welfare?
 - What does the repeated phrase "I am the Lord" suggest about these laws?
-

Leviticus 19:9-18 (NIV)

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God. 11 Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. 12 Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. 13 Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. 14 Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling

block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord. 15 Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. 16 Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. 17 Do not hate a brother or sister in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. 18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

3. Discussion (15, 18 minutes)

Oral Reading (2, 3 minutes)

Selecting Readers: Ask for volunteers to read different sections. Let students pass if they prefer. Choose confident readers for the command sections to emphasize God's authority.

Reader 1: Verses 9-10 (Gleaning laws) **Reader 2:** Verses 11-14 (Theft and exploitation prohibitions)

Reader 3: Verses 15-18 (Justice and neighbor love)

Listen for how these aren't suggestions but commands, backed by God's authority. Notice the economic principles embedded in what might seem like simple agricultural rules.

Small Group Question Generation (3, 4 minutes)

Setup: Form groups of 3-4 students. Give exactly 3 minutes to generate 1-2 genuine questions about what they just read. Walk between groups to listen for themes. If groups are stuck, prompt with "What surprised you most?"

Get into groups of 3 or 4. Your job is to come up with 1-2 questions about what you just read, things you're actually curious about or confused by. Good questions might start with "Why would God..." or "How does this..." or "What's the difference between..." You have 3 minutes. Ask about what genuinely puzzles you.

Facilitated Discussion (12, 14 minutes)

Remember: Students drive the discussion with THEIR questions. You facilitate and probe deeper. Guide discovery rather than lecturing about ancient agricultural practices.

Collecting Questions: Write student questions on board, look for themes around efficiency, fairness, modern application, and economic justice. Start with questions most students will connect to.

Probing Questions (to go deeper)

- "What specific harvest practices does God command farmers to avoid?"
- "Why might God want landowners to be deliberately less efficient in their harvesting?"
- "How is this gleaning system different from charity or food banks?"
- "Why does God specifically mention foreigners alongside the poor?"
- "What does it mean that poor people have to work for the gleanings rather than just receive them?"
- "Where do you see tension between efficiency and justice in today's economy?"
- "What would happen to this system if most farmers decided not to participate?"
- "Why does God connect economic laws with laws about lying, stealing, and loving neighbors?"

Revealing the Pattern

Do you notice what's happening here? God isn't just commanding charity, He's requiring landowners to build access for the poor directly into their economic activity. The system creates work opportunities for vulnerable people while preserving their dignity. It's justice through deliberate inefficiency, not optional generosity.

4. Application (3, 4 minutes)

Let's get real about your lives and the economy you're growing up in. Where do you see this same tension between maximum efficiency and creating opportunities for vulnerable people? Think about your jobs, your schools, your families' choices, even your social media and entertainment decisions.

Real Issues This Connects To

- Choosing local businesses over purely convenient options
- Family decisions about hiring local workers versus cheapest contractors
- Group projects where you include struggling classmates versus just working with top performers
- Social media algorithms that prioritize efficiency over diverse voices
- Corporate practices that maximize profits by eliminating entry-level positions
- College and job application processes that favor those with existing advantages

Facilitation: Let students share examples without rushing to solutions. Some situations are genuinely complex. Help them think through the principles rather than giving blanket answers about what's always right.

Discussion Prompts

- "When have you seen someone choose a less efficient option because it helped others?"
- "What would help you recognize when your efficiency is shutting others out?"
- "How do you discern between enabling dependency and creating dignified opportunities?"
- "What's the difference between leaving gleanings and just being taken advantage of?"

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what I want you to take with you: God cares so much about justice that He commands His people to limit their economic efficiency when it eliminates opportunities for the poor and vulnerable. This isn't about being nice or charitable, it's about building justice into the very structure of how we work and spend and choose.

This week, pay attention to moments when you could choose the slightly less efficient option because it creates opportunities for others. Maybe it's choosing where to shop, how to do group work, or how your family makes spending decisions. Notice when efficiency serves everyone versus when it shuts vulnerable people out.

You asked really thoughtful questions today about complex economic issues. Keep wrestling with how to apply ancient wisdom to modern situations, that's exactly the kind of thinking our world needs from

people who follow Jesus.

Grades 4, 6

Ages 9, 11 • 30 Minutes • Interactive Storytelling + Activity

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that when we have enough, we should leave opportunities for people who need more, and that it's better to let people work for what they get than to just give handouts.

If Kids Ask "Why didn't God just tell rich people to give money to poor people?"

Say: "Great question! God wanted poor people to be able to work and earn what they needed. That way they could feel proud of what they got instead of just getting charity."

1. Opening (5 minutes)

Raise your hand if you've ever been really hungry and excited about a meal, only to find out there wasn't enough food for everyone. Maybe your family was sharing pizza and there weren't quite enough slices, or you went to a party and the good snacks ran out before you got any.

Now here's a harder question: Raise your hand if you've ever been the person who had to decide whether to take the last of something good or leave it for someone else. Part of you thinks, "I saw it first" or "I'm really hungry too." But another part thinks, "Maybe that other person needs it more than I do."

Those feelings make total sense. It's hard to know what's fair when there isn't quite enough for everyone to get exactly what they want. Your brain wants to make sure you get what you need, but your heart might worry about other people too.

This reminds me of stories like "Stone Soup" or movies like "Moana" where characters have to decide whether to share what they have or keep it all for themselves. The tricky part is figuring out how to share in a way that's actually helpful instead of just making everyone have less.

The really tricky part is figuring out how to help people without making them feel bad about needing help. You want to share, but you also want the other person to feel good about themselves.

Today we're going to hear about a time when God gave very specific instructions about sharing food. But God had a clever plan that made sure poor people could work for their food instead of just getting handouts. Let's find out what happened.

What to Expect: Kids will likely share about times they've been hungry or had to share food. Acknowledge these briefly with "That's exactly the feeling" and keep moving toward the story.

2. Bible Story Time (10 minutes)

Long, long ago, God's people lived in a place where everyone grew their own food. When harvest time came, it was the most important time of the whole year.

Imagine walking through the countryside and seeing endless fields of grain waving in the wind, and vineyards heavy with ripe, juicy grapes hanging from the vines. This was the food that would feed families all winter long.

The farmers worked from sunrise to sunset, cutting grain with sharp tools and picking grapes as fast as they could. Every grain of wheat and every grape mattered because winter was coming, and they needed enough food stored up to last until spring.

But not everyone had their own fields. Some people were poor and didn't own any land. Some people were foreigners who had come from far away and didn't have family farms. When harvest time came, these people got worried. How would they get enough food for winter?

The farmers could have harvested every single grain from every corner of their fields. They could have picked up every grape that fell to the ground. They could have gone through their fields a second and third time to make sure they didn't miss anything.

That would have been the most efficient way to harvest. The farmers would get the most food possible from their land. But God had a different plan.

God looked at the farmers working so hard, and He looked at the poor people and foreigners who were worried about finding enough food. Then God gave some very specific instructions.

Leviticus 19:9-10 (NIV)

"When you harvest your fields, don't harvest all the way to the edges. Don't pick up every grain that falls to the ground. Don't go through your vineyard a second time to get every grape. Leave those things for the poor and the foreigners."

At first, some farmers probably thought, "But God, that's my food! I worked hard to grow it! What if I don't have enough for my own family?" These were good questions, and God understood their concerns.

But God had thought this through very carefully. He wasn't asking the farmers to give away all their food or to go hungry themselves. He was asking them to be a little less efficient so that poor people could come and work for their food.

Picture what this looked like: After the farmers finished their main harvest, poor people and foreigners could come into the fields. They could walk around the edges where grain was still growing. They could pick up the good grain that had fallen on the ground.

Leviticus 19:10 (NIV)

"I am the Lord your God."

When God said "I am the Lord your God," He was reminding everyone that this wasn't just a suggestion, it was a command from the Creator of the universe. God was saying, "This is how I want My people to treat each other."

The brilliant thing about God's plan was that it helped poor people without making them feel bad. They weren't getting charity, they were working! They walked through the fields, bent down to pick up grain, and filled their baskets with food they had gathered with their own hands.

The farmers still got plenty of food from the main part of their fields. The poor people got food too, but they earned it by working. Everyone could feel good about themselves, and everyone had enough to eat.

This system worked because the farmers chose to be slightly less efficient. Instead of squeezing every last grain out of their fields, they left some for others. Instead of keeping absolutely everything, they shared the opportunity to work.

Some years later, there was a woman named Ruth who had to use this gleaning system. She worked hard in the fields, gathering grain that farmers had left behind, and she was able to feed herself and her mother-in-law.

God's plan created a way for people to help each other while everyone kept their dignity. The farmers got to be generous. The poor people got to work and earn their food. And God was honored because His people were taking care of each other.

Sometimes in our lives, we have chances to be like those farmers. We might have opportunities, or abilities, or resources that we could share with others. God's wisdom shows us that the best sharing often means creating opportunities for others to work and succeed.

What we learn is this: When we have enough, God wants us to leave some for people who need it. And it's often better to let people work for what they get than to just give them handouts.

God cares about everyone having enough, and He cares about everyone feeling good about themselves. That's why He designed this special system for sharing.

Pause here. Let the story sink in for 5 seconds before moving on.

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Question 1: The Feelings

Imagine you're a farmer who has worked really hard all season to grow food for your family. Harvest time comes, and you know that every grain you collect could help feed your kids through the winter. But God tells you to leave some behind for poor people. What would you be feeling in your heart?

Listen For: "Scared," "worried about my family," "confused", affirm: "Those feelings make total sense. It would be hard to trust that there would be enough."

Question 2: The Smart Plan

Why do you think God's plan was better than just telling rich people to give money to poor people? What was special about letting poor people work for the food they got?

If They Say: "So they don't feel bad", respond with "Exactly! How do you think it feels different to work for something versus just getting it for free?"

Question 3: The Hard Choice

Think about a time when you had something good and you had to decide whether to share it or keep it all. Maybe it was food, or a toy, or a turn at something fun. What made the choice hard? What helped you decide what to do?

Connect: "This is exactly what made the farmers' choice so hard and so important. They had to trust God's plan even when it felt risky."

Question 4: The Ripple Effect

What do you think happened in the community when farmers followed God's gleaning rules? How did it change the way people treated each other, not just during harvest time but all year long?

If They Say: "People were nicer", ask "What kinds of nice things might have started happening when people knew they could count on each other?"

You've noticed something really important: God designed a system that helped everyone feel good about themselves while making sure everyone had enough. Now let's try an activity that shows how this works in our lives.

4. Activity: Resource Web (8 minutes)

Zero Props Required , This activity uses only kids' bodies and empty space.

Purpose

This activity reinforces the gleaning principle by having kids physically experience how sharing opportunities (rather than just sharing resources) creates connection and dignity for everyone. Success looks like kids discovering that everyone can contribute and everyone can receive when we share opportunities rather than just giving handouts.

Instructions to Class(3 minutes)

We're going to play Resource Web. Everyone stand up and spread out around the room. I'm going to give each person a special "resource", it might be a skill, an opportunity, or something you have to offer. But here's the catch: you can't use your resource all by yourself.

Each person has to find ways to combine their resource with other people's resources to create something helpful for the whole group. The challenge is that you can't just give your resource away, you have to work together with others to use it.

For example, if someone has "good organizing skills" and someone else has "strong muscles," they might team up to organize a community garden where everyone can work. The twist is that everyone has to find a way to contribute AND benefit.

We're doing this because it's exactly like God's gleaning system, instead of just giving things away, we're creating opportunities for everyone to work together and feel good about what they contribute.

During the Activity(4 minutes)

Start by giving each child a "resource" like "great at explaining things," "really good listener," "strong helper," "creative ideas," "good at making people laugh," etc. Give them 1 minute to figure out what they have to offer.

Watch as they initially try to work alone or just trade resources directly. Let them struggle for about a minute, then start coaching: "I wonder if there are ways for multiple people to work together..." "What if your skills could help someone else use their skills better?"

Guide them toward collaborative solutions where people's resources complement each other rather than replace each other. Celebrate moments when someone finds a way to help others shine rather than just doing everything themselves.

The breakthrough comes when kids realize that combining resources creates more value than hoarding them, and that everyone can contribute something meaningful while also receiving help from others.

Once they've formed working groups where everyone contributes and benefits, have them notice how this feels different from charity or competition.

Watch For: The moment when someone chooses to help another person succeed rather than just taking over, this is the physical representation of leaving gleanings rather than harvesting everything yourself.

Debrief(1 minute)

What did you notice about how it felt when you found ways to work together versus when you tried to do everything yourself? This is exactly what God's gleaning system created, ways for people with resources to leave opportunities for others to contribute and succeed. Everyone got to feel useful and everyone got helped.

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what we learned today: When we have enough, God wants us to leave opportunities for people who need more. And it's usually better to let people work for what they get instead of just giving them handouts, because that way everyone feels good about themselves.

This doesn't mean you should never give gifts or help people directly. It means that when possible, the best help creates opportunities for others to succeed and contribute, just like the farmers leaving gleanings for poor people to gather.

The amazing result is that everyone wins, the people with resources get to be generous, the people who need help get to work and feel proud, and God is honored because His people are taking care of each other.

This Week's Challenge

Look for one opportunity to share in a way that lets someone else contribute or work for what they get. Maybe invite someone to help with a project instead of doing it all yourself, or choose to shop somewhere that gives jobs to people who need them.

Closing Prayer (Optional)

Dear God, thank you for caring about everyone having enough food and feeling good about themselves. Help us remember that when we have plenty, we can leave opportunities for others. Help us be wise about sharing in ways that help people feel proud of their work. Amen.

Grades 1, 3

Ages 6, 8 • 15, 20 Minutes • Animated Storytelling + Songs

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that God wants us to share what we have with people who need it.

Movement & Formation Plan

- **Opening Song:** Standing in a circle
- **Bible Story:** Sitting in a horseshoe shape facing the teacher
- **Small Group Q&A:** Standing in pairs facing each other
- **Closing Song:** Standing in straight lines
- **Prayer:** Sitting cross-legged in rows

If Kids Don't Understand

Compare leaving gleanings to saving the last piece of cake for someone else, then ask "How do you think that makes the other person feel?"

1. Opening Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in a circle

Select a song about sharing or God's love. Suggestions: "Love One Another," "Jesus Loves the Little Children," or "If I Were a Butterfly." Use movements: pass an imaginary gift around the circle during sharing songs, or make big arms for "God's love is so big."

Great singing! Now let's sit down in our story horseshoe because I have an amazing story to tell you about a time when God taught people how to share in a very special way.

2. Bible Story Time (5, 7 minutes)

Formation: Kids sitting in a horseshoe shape on the floor facing you. Move around inside the horseshoe as you tell the story.

Animated Delivery: Use big gestures, change your voice for different characters, move around the space. Keep energy high! Sound excited when talking about the harvest, sound caring when talking about poor people, and sound strong when speaking as God.

Today we're going to meet some farmers who grew food for their families!

[Walk to one side of the horseshoe]

Long ago, there were farmers who worked very hard to grow food. They grew wheat and corn and yummy grapes! When it was time to pick all the food, everyone was so excited.

[Use excited voice and big arm gestures showing gathering]

The farmers worked from morning until night, picking up all the good food from their fields. They filled up big baskets with wheat and corn and grapes for their families to eat all winter long!

[Walk to other side of horseshoe, change tone to concerned]

But there were some people who didn't have farms of their own. These people were poor, and they were worried. "How will we get food for winter?" they wondered.

[Move to center, speak with strong, loving authority]

God saw the hard-working farmers, and God also saw the people who needed food. So God had a wonderful plan! God told the farmers something very important.

[Move to side, sound like a farmer listening carefully]

God said, "When you pick your food, don't take every single piece. Leave some food on your fields for people who need it!"

Leviticus 19:10 (NIV)

"Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God."

[Pause and look around at each child]

Do you think the farmers were worried about having enough food for their own families? Yes! That's okay to feel worried about!

[Move to center, speak with warmth and confidence]

But God promised to take care of everyone. God's plan was so smart! The farmers would get plenty of food, AND the poor people could come to the fields and pick up the food that was left.

[Walk slowly around the horseshoe]

So the poor people came to the fields after the farmers were done. They walked around and picked up good food that the farmers had left for them. They worked hard and filled their baskets too!

[Stop walking and face the children directly]

The farmers were happy because they had enough food and they got to help others. The poor people were happy because they found food for their families!

[Speak with excitement]

God's plan worked perfectly! Everyone had enough food to eat, and everyone felt good about helping each other!

[Pause dramatically]

God taught the farmers that sharing is very important. When we have enough, we can leave some for people who need it!

[Speak directly to the children]

Sometimes in our lives, we have toys or snacks or opportunities to play. We can remember what the farmers did and share with people who need friends or food or kindness.

[Move closer to the children]

When someone at school doesn't have anyone to play with, you can include them. When your family has extra food, you can share it with neighbors.

[Speak warmly and encouragingly]

God loves it when we share like those farmers did. God will help us have generous hearts and help us take care of each other!

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Formation: Have kids stand up and find a partner. Pairs scatter around the room with space to talk.

Find a partner and stand facing them. I'm going to give you one question to talk about together. There are no wrong answers, just tell your partner what you think!

Teacher Circulation: Walk around to each pair. Listen to their discussions. If a pair is stuck, ask "What do you think?" or rephrase the question more simply. Give them time to think, some kids need extra processing time.

Discussion Questions

Select one question per pair based on class size. Save unused questions for next time.

1. How do you think the farmers felt when God asked them to share?

2. Have you ever shared food with someone who was hungry?

3. What do you think the poor people said when they found the food?

4. What would you do if you were a farmer in this story?

5. What changed when people started sharing?

6. How did God help in this story?

7. Why was everyone happy at the end?

8. When have you shared something at school?

9. When have you shared something at home?

10. Who do you know that likes to share?

11. Why do you think God wanted people to share?

12. How can kids share like the farmers did?

13. What does God want us to remember about sharing?

14. How do you feel when someone shares with you?

15. What would happen if everyone shared like this?

16. What would happen if nobody shared?

17. How can we remember to share?

18. How can we pray about sharing?

19. What if someone doesn't want to share?

20. How can we be like the kind farmers?

Great discussions! Let's come back together in our lines for our song. Who wants to share what they talked about?

4. Closing Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in straight lines facing forward

Select a song about sharing or helping others. Suggestions: "Make Me a Servant," "This Little Light of Mine," or "Love Is Something." Use movements: pretend to give gifts to people on your left and right, or hold hands up high for "sharing light."

Beautiful singing! Now let's sit down criss-cross-applesauce in our rows so we can talk to God together.

5. Closing Prayer (1, 2 minutes)

Formation: Sitting cross-legged in rows, heads bowed, hands folded

Dear God, thank you for the farmers who shared their food...

[Pause]

Help us remember to share our toys and food and kindness with people who need friends. Help us have generous hearts like the farmers did.

[Pause]

Help us remember that when we have enough, we can share with others who don't have enough. Thank you for always giving us what we need.

[Pause]

Thank you for loving us and teaching us how to love other people. Help us be good sharers this week. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Alternative, Popcorn Prayer: If your class is comfortable with it, invite kids to offer short one-sentence prayers about sharing. Examples: "Thank you God for food" or "Help me share my toys."

Remember, God wants us to share what we have with people who need it. Have a wonderful week being generous like those farmers!

Blessed Hearts

Considering the Weak, Is blessing just a reward for good deeds?

Psalm 41:1-13

Instructor Preparation

Read this section before teaching any age group. It provides the theological foundation and shows how the lesson adapts across developmental stages.

The Passage

Psalm 41:1-13 (NIV)

1 Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble. 2 The Lord protects and preserves their lives; they are counted blessed in the land and are not given over to the desire of their foes. 3 The Lord sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.

4 I said, "Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you." 5 My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die and his name perish?" 6 When one of them comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it around.

7 All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, 8 "A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies." 9 Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

10 But you, Lord, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them. 11 I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. 12 Because of my integrity you uphold

me and set me in your presence forever.

13 Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

Context

Psalm 41 is a royal psalm attributed to David, written during a time of serious illness when his enemies circled like vultures, anticipating his death. The psalmist opens with a wisdom principle about blessing those who consider the weak, then pivots to his personal crisis. Even trusted friends have turned against him in his vulnerability.

The structure is striking: David begins by declaring God's protection for those who regard the weak, then immediately places himself in that vulnerable position. He's experiencing precisely the kind of trouble that tests whether God's promised deliverance is real. His enemies see opportunity in his weakness; God sees occasion for faithfulness.

The Big Idea

God's blessing flows to those who have regard for the weak, and this creates a cycle of divine protection that extends even into our own times of vulnerability.

The complexity lies in the apparent transactional nature, do good, get blessed. Yet the psalm suggests something deeper: a way of living that aligns with God's heart creates conditions where divine deliverance naturally flows. It's less about earning protection and more about participating in God's economy of compassion.

Theological Core

- **Regard for the weak reflects God's character.** The Hebrew word "regard" means to consider carefully, to be thoughtful about someone's situation, not just superficial kindness.
- **Divine blessing operates through reciprocity.** God's deliverance comes to those who practice deliverance toward others, creating a cycle of protection and care.

- **Vulnerability is universal.** Even those who help the weak eventually find themselves weak, which is when the principle proves most meaningful.
 - **God's protection extends beyond physical circumstances.** The psalm promises preservation of life, blessing in the land, protection from enemies, and sustenance during illness, comprehensive care.
-

Age Group Overview

What Each Age Group Learns

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

- Considering the weak involves thoughtful attention to vulnerable people, not just occasional charity
 - The relationship between compassion and blessing is complex, it's participation in God's character, not a vending machine transaction
 - Everyone eventually experiences weakness and needs the same kind of regard they've shown to others
 - Discerning the difference between genuine care and performative kindness requires examining our motivations
-

Grades 4, 6

- Caring for people who are struggling or different creates a circle where God cares for us when we struggle
 - Our choices about how we treat vulnerable people matter to God and have consequences
 - Sometimes helping others doesn't feel good immediately, but God promises it leads to blessing
 - It's okay to feel uncomfortable about helping, doing the right thing matters more than feeling good about it
-

Grades 1, 3

- God wants us to be kind to people who need help or are different from us
 - When we are kind to others, God promises to take care of us
 - We can trust God to help us when we need help too
-

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Transactional thinking.** Don't present this as "be nice and God will bless you." The psalm describes a way of living that aligns with God's heart, creating conditions where divine care naturally flows, not a quid pro quo arrangement.
 - **Superficial charity.** "Regard" means thoughtful consideration, not just dropping coins in a cup. Help students understand the difference between performative kindness and genuine attention to vulnerable people.
 - **Minimizing complexity.** David's enemies and even close friends turned against him during his weakness. Don't promise that caring for others guarantees a trouble-free life, the blessing operates within real struggle.
 - **Ignoring reciprocity.** While not transactional, the psalm clearly connects regard for the weak with divine deliverance. Don't spiritualize away the concrete promise that God responds to compassion with protection.
-

Handling Hard Questions

"If God blesses people who help the weak, why do bad things still happen to good people?"

David himself was sick and betrayed even though he cared for the weak. God's blessing doesn't eliminate trouble, it provides deliverance through trouble. The promise isn't that life becomes easy, but that God's presence and protection sustain us when life gets hard. Notice that David still experienced illness and betrayal, but God didn't let his enemies triumph over him ultimately.

"Isn't this just teaching people to be good so they get rewards?"

There's a difference between earning something and participating in something. When we regard the weak, we're joining God's work of caring for vulnerable people. The blessing flows naturally from that alignment with God's character, not as payment for good behavior. It's like saying people who practice honesty tend to have trustworthy relationships, the connection is real but not mechanical.

"What if I help someone and nothing good happens to me?"

The psalm promises God's deliverance "in times of trouble," not the absence of trouble. Sometimes the blessing is strength to endure, protection from worse outcomes, or care that comes in unexpected ways. David experienced real betrayal and illness, but he also experienced God's faithfulness through it. The deliverance might not look like what we expect, but God's presence is reliable.

The One Thing to Remember

Regarding the weak aligns our hearts with God's heart, creating a flow of divine care that sustains us through our own times of vulnerability.

Grades 7, 8 / Adult

Ages 12, 14+ • 30 Minutes • Student-Centered Discussion

Your Main Job Today

Guide students to wrestle with the tension between genuine compassion and transactional thinking. Help them explore what it means to "regard the weak" without reducing it to a formula for getting blessed.

The Tension to Frame

Is God's blessing a reward for good behavior toward the weak, or is there something deeper happening when we align our hearts with God's compassion?

Discussion Facilitation Tips

- Validate their discomfort with anything that sounds like "earn God's favor through good deeds"
-

- Honor the complexity that the psalm clearly connects caring for others with divine deliverance
 - Let them wrestle with the difference between participation and transaction rather than solving it for them
-

1. Opening Frame (2, 3 minutes)

You're scrolling through social media and see a video of someone helping a homeless person. The caption says "God blesses those who bless others" with prayer hands emojis. Part of you feels good watching the kindness, but another part cringes at how it's being presented. Is helping people about getting something back from God?

Or think about that friend who's always posting their volunteer work, hashtagging "blessed" after every good deed. You want to support caring for people who struggle, but something feels off about making it about personal blessing. How do you know if kindness is genuine or just spiritual karma?

Today we're looking at someone who made a bold claim: "Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble." Except he wrote this while he was literally weak, betrayed by friends, and fighting for his life. So either he's delusional or he's discovered something about how God's blessing actually works.

As we read, pay attention to how David connects caring for others with God's care for him. Notice whether it sounds like earning points with God or something deeper. And watch for how his own vulnerability plays into this equation.

Open your Bibles to Psalm 41 and read silently. We'll spend some time wrestling with whether this is beautiful truth or spiritual manipulation.

2. Silent Reading (5 minutes)

Managing Silent Reading: Walk quietly around the room. This psalm has emotional weight, David's vulnerability is raw. Let them feel the tension between the opening blessing and his desperate situation. Some may finish early; let them sit with what they've read.

As You Read, Think About:

- What happens to David despite his apparent regard for the weak?
- Why do his enemies and friends treat him this way during his illness?
- How does David's situation relate to his opening statement about blessing?
- What would you think about God's promises if you were in David's position?

Psalm 41:1-13 (NIV)

1 Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble. 2 The Lord protects and preserves their lives; they are counted blessed in the land and are not given over to the desire of their foes. 3 The Lord sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.

4 I said, "Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you." 5 My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die and his name perish?" 6 When one of them comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it around.

7 All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, 8 "A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies." 9 Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

10 But you, Lord, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them. 11 I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. 12 Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.

13 Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

3. Discussion (15, 18 minutes)

Oral Reading (2, 3 minutes)

Selecting Readers: Ask for volunteers who are comfortable reading with emotion. This psalm moves from confident declaration to desperate plea to triumphant confidence. Choose readers who can capture those shifts.

Reader 1: Verses 1, 3 (The blessing declaration) **Reader 2:** Verses 4, 9 (The crisis and betrayal)
Reader 3: Verses 10, 13 (The plea and confidence)

Listen for how David's tone changes throughout this psalm. This isn't just doctrine, it's a real person working through whether God's promises hold up when life falls apart.

Small Group Question Generation (3, 4 minutes)

Setup: Form groups of 3-4. Give exactly 3 minutes. Walk between groups to listen for their genuine curiosities. If a group is stuck, suggest: "What surprised you most about David's situation?"

Get into groups of 3-4. Come up with 1-2 genuine questions about what you just read, things you're actually curious about, confused by, or want to debate. Good questions might start with "Why does..." or "How can..." or "What if..." You have three minutes to come up with questions that would make for interesting discussion, not questions you already know the answers to.

Facilitated Discussion (12, 14 minutes)

Remember: Students drive with THEIR questions, you facilitate deeper thinking. Don't lecture, guide discovery. Let them wrestle with the tensions rather than resolving everything neatly.

Collecting Questions: Write student questions on the board. Look for themes around blessing, fairness, enemies, and God's promises. Start with questions most students can relate to.

Probing Questions (to go deeper)

- "What evidence do you see that David actually did regard the weak before this crisis?"
- "How do you explain the gap between verse 1's promise and David's actual situation?"
- "What's the difference between regarding someone and just helping them occasionally?"
- "Is David's confidence in verses 11-12 realistic or delusional given what's happening to him?"
- "When have you seen genuine care for vulnerable people versus performative kindness?"

- "How would David's enemies justify their treatment of him during his illness?"
- "What if David had written this psalm before he got sick versus during his illness?"
- "Why does this matter for how we treat people who are struggling today?"

Revealing the Pattern

Do you notice what's happening here? David isn't just teaching about blessing, he's experiencing what it means to be weak and need the same regard he's shown others. The blessing isn't that life gets easy; it's that God's deliverance flows through trouble. David is testing his own principle in the worst possible circumstances and finding that God's faithfulness holds even when everything else fails.

4. Application (3, 4 minutes)

Let's get real about your lives. Where do you see people treating vulnerable others like David's enemies treated him, looking for opportunity in weakness, spreading gossip about struggles, abandoning people when they need support most? And where do you see genuine regard for the weak that reflects God's heart?

Real Issues This Connects To

- Students with learning differences being excluded or mocked rather than supported
- Family members struggling with mental health being treated as burdens rather than beloved
- Friends going through hard times being avoided because their pain makes others uncomfortable
- Social media responses to people sharing struggles, support versus exploitation
- Treatment of homeless individuals, refugees, or other marginalized groups in your community
- How your friend group responds when someone makes mistakes or faces consequences

Facilitation: Let students share examples without rushing to fix everything. Some situations require different responses. Help them think through what "regard" looks like practically rather than giving simplistic answers.

Discussion Prompts

- "When have you seen someone show genuine regard for a struggling person, and how was it different from surface kindness?"
- "What would help you move from occasional charity to thoughtful regard for vulnerable people?"
- "How do you discern whether your care for others is genuine or motivated by hoping for blessing?"
- "What's the difference between participating in God's compassion and trying to earn God's favor?"

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what I want you to take with you: regarding the weak isn't about earning God's blessing like collecting spiritual points. It's about aligning your heart with God's heart, which creates conditions where divine care naturally flows. When you thoughtfully consider vulnerable people, you're participating in how God sees and cares for the world.

This week, pay attention to opportunities for genuine regard, not just quick kindness, but thoughtful attention to someone who's struggling. Notice the difference between helping to feel good about yourself and helping because that person matters to God. Don't expect immediate blessing; expect your heart to change.

You wrestled with hard questions today and didn't settle for easy answers. That kind of thinking honors both God's complexity and human reality. Keep asking the hard questions, that's where real faith grows.

Grades 4, 6

Ages 9, 11 • 30 Minutes • Interactive Storytelling + Activity

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that caring for people who struggle creates a circle of care where God takes care of us too, without making it sound like a simple trade.

If Kids Ask "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Say: "David cared for people but still got sick and hurt by friends. God's blessing doesn't stop all hard things, but God promises to take care of us through them."

1. Opening (5 minutes)

Raise your hand if you've ever felt left out at lunch, picked last for a team, or had people avoid you when you were having a bad day. Keep your hand up if someone noticed and chose to sit with you, include you, or check if you were okay. How did that feel?

Now here's a harder question. You see someone new at school who seems lonely, or a classmate who's struggling with something difficult. Part of you thinks "I should help," but another part thinks "What if my friends think I'm weird? What if it's awkward? What if they don't even want help?" Have you ever felt torn like that?

Those feelings make total sense. It can be risky to reach out to someone who's struggling, especially if other people might judge you for it. Sometimes being kind to someone who's different or having a hard time doesn't feel comfortable or easy.

This reminds me of characters in movies like Moana choosing to help someone even when it's scary, or in Inside Out when Joy finally understands that Sadness needed compassion, not fixing. The characters had to choose between what felt safe and what was right.

The tricky part is figuring out when to step toward someone who needs help, even when it doesn't feel good or easy. Sometimes doing the right thing is uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it.

Today we're going to hear about someone who made caring for struggling people a way of life, then faced his own time of really needing help. Let's find out what happened and whether the care he'd shown others made any difference when he needed it most.

What to Expect: Kids will readily share about feeling left out but may be more hesitant about times they helped others. Affirm all responses briefly. Keep building toward the story.

2. Bible Story Time (10 minutes)

Long ago, there was a king named David who was known for something special: he really cared about people who were struggling or weak.

David wasn't just someone who occasionally dropped coins for poor people or said a quick "I'll pray for you." When David met someone who was sick, lonely, poor, or in trouble, he would stop and really think about their situation. He would ask himself, "What do they actually need? How can I really help?"

David had learned something important about God: God's heart breaks for people who are hurting. So David tried to see people the way God saw them, not as problems to avoid, but as people who mattered deeply.

Imagine what it would feel like to know that if you were ever in trouble, David would care about your situation and try to help. That's the kind of person he was becoming, someone you could count on to notice when you needed help.

Because of this, David was confident about something amazing. He believed that God had made a promise: when people really care for those who are weak or struggling, God notices and cares for them in return.

One day, David wrote these words: "Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble." He was saying, "When you thoughtfully care for vulnerable people, God will thoughtfully care for you when you're in trouble."

David believed this promise so strongly that he wrote it like a song, celebrating how God protects and takes care of people who show compassion to others. It felt like a beautiful truth about how God's world works.

But then something hard happened to David. He got very sick, so sick that he couldn't get out of bed, couldn't do his job as king, and needed others to take care of him for the first time in a long time.

Instead of people caring for David the way he had cared for others, something terrible happened. His enemies saw that he was weak and began to whisper, "Maybe David will die! Maybe we can get rid of him now that he can't fight back!"

Even worse, people he thought were friends came to visit him, but not to help. They came to gather gossip about how sick he was, then left and spread rumors about him, saying cruel things like "He'll never get better" and "Good riddance."

Psalm 41:9 (NIV)

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

Imagine how David felt. Here he was, sick and vulnerable, needing the kind of care he had shown others his whole life. But instead of receiving compassion, people were treating him the way he had never treated anyone else, as a problem to get rid of.

David could have gotten angry at God and said, "This promise doesn't work! I cared for weak people my whole life, and now that I'm weak, no one cares for me!" He could have decided to stop trusting God's promises about blessing.

But David made a choice that changed everything. Even though people were failing him, even though he was scared and hurt, he decided to trust that God would keep His promise.

Psalm 41:10-11 (NIV)

But you, Lord, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them. I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me.

David was saying, "God, even though people aren't caring for me the way I cared for them, I still believe you care about me. I still trust your promise to deliver people who have regard for the weak."

And do you know what happened? David was right to trust God. God didn't abandon him just because people did. God's care was bigger and more reliable than human care, and God kept His promise.

David got better. His enemies didn't triumph over him. God sustained him through his illness and brought him through the hardest time of his life. The promise was true, even when it was hardest to believe.

David learned that when we care for people who are struggling, we're joining God's work in the world. And God takes care of people who join His work, not because we earn it, but because that's who God is.

Sometimes in our lives, we have chances to care for people who are having a hard time. It might be someone who's new, someone who's different, someone who's sad, or someone others avoid. When we choose to really care, to think about what they need and how we can help, we're doing what God loves.

What we learn from David is that caring for others creates a circle of care. When we thoughtfully help people who are weak or struggling, God promises to thoughtfully help us when we need it. It's not magic, but it's how God's love flows in the world.

The amazing thing is that God's care is more reliable than people's care. Even when people let us down, like they let David down, God keeps His promises to those who care for others.

Pause here. Let the story sink in for 5 seconds before moving on.

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Question 1: The Hard Feelings

Think about how David must have felt when he was sick and people he had helped before were now gossiping about him instead of helping him. If you were David, lying sick in bed and hearing that even your close friends were spreading rumors about you, what would you be feeling? What would be going through your mind?

Listen For: "Angry," "Sad," "Betrayed," "Like quitting being nice", affirm: "Those feelings make perfect sense. Anyone would feel hurt and angry about that kind of betrayal."

Question 2: The Choice

David had a choice to make: he could either get angry at God and stop caring about weak people, or he could keep trusting that God would take care of him even if people didn't. That's a really hard choice when you're hurting. Why do you think David chose to keep trusting God instead of giving up?

If They Say: If they say "Because he had to" or "Because he was supposed to", respond "What do you think gave him the strength to do what he was supposed to do when it felt so hard?"

Question 3: The Pattern

David discovered something about how God's world works: when we really care for people who are struggling, God really cares for us when we're struggling. It's like a circle of care. Can you think of a time when you've seen this happen, either when someone cared for you because they knew how it felt to

need help, or when you helped someone and later received help you needed?

Connect: "This is exactly what David experienced, he had shown care to others, and God made sure he received the care he needed."

Question 4: The Difference

What if David's enemies had chosen to care for him during his illness the way he had cared for weak people throughout his life? How might that have changed the whole situation? What do you think would have happened differently if people had chosen compassion instead of cruelty?

If They Say: If they focus only on David feeling better, guide them to think about how his enemies' hearts might have changed too if they'd chosen kindness.

David learned that caring for others isn't just good for the people we help, it creates a way of life where God's love can flow through us and back to us. Even when people fail us, God doesn't. Now let's experience what this circle of care looks like when we work together.

4. Activity: The Circle of Care (8 minutes)

Zero Props Required , This activity uses only kids' bodies and empty space.

Purpose

This activity reinforces the principle of regard for the weak by having kids physically experience how caring for struggling group members creates conditions where everyone receives the care they need. Success looks like kids discovering that helping others who struggle makes the whole group stronger and more capable.

Instructions to Class(3 minutes)

We're going to do the Circle of Care challenge. I need you to form one large circle, standing up with your arms at your sides. Everyone will get a different "struggle" that makes this challenge harder for you specifically.

Your challenge is for the entire circle to sit down at the exact same time, then stand back up at the exact same time, without anyone falling over or anyone being left behind. But here's the twist: some of you will have limitations that make this much harder.

I'm going to whisper to each of you what your limitation is, things like "you can only use one arm," "you have to keep your eyes closed," "you can't bend your knees," or "you can't speak." Your job is to figure out how to make sure everyone succeeds, even the people who are struggling with their limitation.

We're doing this because it's exactly like David's situation, some people in every group are stronger and some are weaker at any given time, and we have to choose whether to help each other or leave the struggling people behind.

During the Activity(4 minutes)

Let them try the first attempt without much coaching. Most groups will focus on the people who can do it easily and leave behind those with limitations. Let this happen so they can feel the problem.

After the first failed attempt, point out who got left behind or who struggled. Don't solve it for them, but ask questions like "I noticed some people couldn't keep up, what might help them?" Watch for kids who start paying attention to the strugglers.

Offer gentle coaching: "I wonder if the people who find this easy could use their strength to help the people who find this hard?" "What if you paid attention to who needs extra support?" Guide them toward the insight without giving the solution.

Celebrate the breakthrough moment when stronger kids start actively supporting struggling kids, helping them balance, communicate, or coordinate. Say something like "Now I see people caring for those who are struggling!"

Once they succeed together, have them notice the difference between the first attempt (focusing only on those who could do it easily) and the successful attempt (making sure everyone was supported).

Watch For: The moment when kids stop trying to succeed individually and start making sure struggling group members can participate, this is the physical representation of "regard for the weak."

Debrief(1 minute)

What did you notice about how it felt when stronger people left struggling people behind versus when everyone made sure the struggling people were supported? How did it change what the whole group could accomplish? This is exactly what David learned, when we pay attention to people who are having a hard time and make sure they're cared for, everyone becomes stronger and God's promises flow through the whole community.

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what we learned today: when we really care about people who are struggling or different, we create a circle of care where God takes care of us too. It's not about earning God's love by being nice, it's about joining God's work of caring for everyone, especially those who need extra help.

This doesn't mean that if you're kind to others, nothing bad will ever happen to you. Remember, David still got sick and was betrayed by friends. But God promises to be with us and take care of us through hard times, especially when we've shown that same kind of care to others.

The amazing result is that we become part of how God's love spreads in the world. When we notice people who need help and thoughtfully care about their situation, we're doing exactly what God loves, and God promises to do the same for us when we need it.

This Week's Challenge

Look for one person this week who seems to be struggling, left out, or different, and find a way to show them thoughtful care, not just a quick smile, but really thinking about what would help them feel seen and valued. Notice how it feels to be part of God's circle of care.

Closing Prayer (Optional)

Dear God, thank you for caring about people who struggle and for inviting us to join that work. Help us notice when others need extra care and give us courage to help even when it feels hard. Thank you for your promise to take care of us too. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Grades 1, 3

Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that God loves it when we are kind to people who need help, and He promises to take care of us too.

Movement & Formation Plan

- **Opening Song:** Standing in a circle
 - **Bible Story:** Sitting in a horseshoe shape facing the teacher
 - **Small Group Q&A:** Standing in pairs facing each other
 - **Closing Song:** Standing in straight lines
 - **Prayer:** Sitting cross-legged in rows
-

If Kids Don't Understand

Compare God's care to a parent who notices when you help your little brother, then ask "How does that make your parent feel about you?"

1. Opening Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in a circle

Select a song about kindness and God's care. Suggestions: "Be Kind to One Another," "God Loves Me and You," or "Love One Another." Use movements: point to others during verses about kindness, hug yourself during verses about God's love, raise hands during praise sections.

Great singing everyone! I love how you pointed to your friends during that song. Now let's sit down to hear a special story about being kind to people who need help. Make a horseshoe shape on the floor so everyone can see me while I tell you about King David.

2. Bible Story Time (5, 7 minutes)

Formation: Kids sitting in a horseshoe shape on the floor facing you. Move around inside the horseshoe as you tell the story.

Animated Delivery: Use big gestures, change your voice for different characters, move around the space. Keep energy high! Sound worried when David is sick, sound mean when you're the enemies, sound strong and loving when you're God.

Today we're going to meet a king named David who loved to help people!

[Walk to one side of the horseshoe]

David was special because when he saw someone who was sad, sick, or needed help, he didn't walk away. He would stop and say, "How can I help you feel better?"

[Use a kind, caring voice]

If someone was hungry, David would give them food. If someone was lonely, David would be their friend. If someone was hurt, David would take care of them. David's heart was like God's heart, full of love for people who needed help.

[Walk to other side of horseshoe, speak with excitement]

Because David was so kind, he believed something wonderful. He believed that God had made a special promise: "If you are kind to people who need help, I will take care of you when you need help."

[Move to center, speak with authority and warmth]

David loved this promise so much that he wrote it down like a song: "God blesses people who care about weak people. When those people have trouble, God helps them."

[Move to side, change to a worried voice]

But then something hard happened. David got very sick and had to stay in bed. He felt weak and scared and needed someone to take care of him.

Psalm 41:1 (NIV)

Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.

[Pause and look around at each child]

Do you think David was worried? Yes! He was sick and needed help, just like the people he had helped before. He probably wondered, "Will God really take care of me like I took care of others?"

[Move to center, speak with sadness]

Some mean people heard that David was sick. Instead of being kind to him, they whispered mean things. They said, "Maybe David will never get better! Maybe he'll die!" They were not kind at all.

[Walk slowly around the horseshoe]

Even some people David thought were his friends started saying mean things about him. Instead of helping him feel better, they made him feel worse. That made David very sad.

[Stop walking and face the children directly]

But David made a brave choice. Even though people were being mean, he decided to trust God's promise. He said, "God, I believe you will take care of me because I took care of others."

[Speak with excitement]

And guess what? God kept His promise! David got better and stronger. The mean people could not hurt him because God was protecting him. God took care of David just like David had taken care of others!

[Pause dramatically]

David learned that God loves it when we help people who need help. When we are kind to people who are sad, different, or struggling, it makes God very happy!

[Speak directly to the children]

Sometimes at school or in your family, you might see someone who needs help. Maybe they're new, maybe they're sad, maybe they dropped their lunch, or maybe other kids are being mean to them.

[Move closer to the children]

When you choose to be kind and help them, when you sit with someone who's alone, share with someone who needs something, or stand up for someone who's being picked on, you're doing exactly what God loves!

[Speak warmly and encouragingly]

And God promises that when you need help, He will take care of you too. Just like He took care of David, God will take care of you because you take care of others!

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Formation: Have kids stand up and find a partner. Pairs scatter around the room with space to talk.

Stand up and find a partner, someone sitting close to you is perfect! I'm going to give each pair one question to talk about for about one minute. There are no wrong answers, and I want to hear what you think!

Teacher Circulation: Walk around to each pair. Listen to their discussions. If a pair is stuck, ask "What do you think?" or rephrase the question more simply. Give them time to think, some kids need extra processing time.

Discussion Questions

Select one question per pair based on class size. Save unused questions for next time.

1. How do you think David felt when he was sick and people were saying mean things about him?
2. What's something nice David might have done for people before he got sick?
3. Why do you think the mean people said bad things instead of helping David?
4. If you were David's friend, what would you have done when he was sick?
5. What changed when God took care of David?
6. Why does God like it when we help people who need help?
7. What happened because David trusted God's promise?

8. Who at school might need someone to be kind to them?

9. How can you help someone in your family who's having a hard day?

10. Who do you know who is really good at helping others?

11. Why is it sometimes hard to help people who are different?

12. What can you do if someone needs help but you feel scared?

13. How does God help people who help others?

14. What does it mean to trust God like David did?

15. When have you helped someone who was sad or hurt?

16. What should you remember from David's story?

17. How can you be like David this week?

18. What can you pray for about helping others?

19. What would happen if everyone helped people who needed it?

20. How can you show kindness like God wants?

Great discussions! Let's come back together in our circle. Who wants to share what they talked about with their partner?

4. Closing Song (2, 3 minutes)

Formation: Standing in straight lines facing forward

Select a song about helping others and God's care. Suggestions: "Jesus Loves the Little Children," "Love is Something You Do," or "The Helper Song." Include movements: reach out hands during helping verses, point up to God during verses about God's care, march in place during active verses.

Beautiful singing! Now let's sit down quietly for prayer time. Make rows on the floor, sit crisscross, fold your hands, and bow your heads. We're going to talk to God about helping others.

5. Closing Prayer (1, 2 minutes)

Formation: Sitting cross-legged in rows, heads bowed, hands folded

Dear God, thank you for King David's story and for showing us how much you love kindness.

[Pause]

Please help us notice when someone needs help this week. Give us brave hearts to be kind even when it feels hard or scary.

[Pause]

Help us remember that when we help others, you promise to help us too. Thank you for always taking care of us.

[Pause]

Thank you for loving us so much and for making helping others something that makes you happy. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Alternative, Popcorn Prayer: If your class is comfortable with it, invite kids to offer short one-sentence prayers about helping others. Examples: "God, help me be nice to new kids" or "Thank you that you take care of us."

This week, remember that God loves it when you help people who need it, and He promises to take care of you too. Look for ways to be kind like David! Have a wonderful week, everyone.

```html html

---

# Helping with Honor

---

*Giving Respectfully, How do we grieve the hungry beyond denying help?*

---

**Sirach 4:1-10**

---

## Instructor Preparation

---

Read this section before teaching any age group. It provides the theological foundation and shows how the lesson adapts across developmental stages.

---

## The Passage

---

**Sirach 4:1-10 (NIV)**

---

*1 My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. 2 Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. 3 Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy. 4 Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. 5 Do not avert your eyes from the needy, and give no one reason to curse you; 6 for if in bitterness of soul some should curse you, their Creator will hear their prayer. 7 Endear yourself to the congregation; bow your head low to the great. 8 Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely. 9 Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor; and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict. 10 Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than your mother does.*

## Context

---

This passage comes from the book of Sirach, a wisdom text written by Ben Sira around 180 BCE. Sometimes called Ecclesiasticus, this book was written to preserve Jewish wisdom traditions for young men living under Greek cultural influence. Ben Sira teaches practical ethics for faithful living in a complex world.

---

These verses sit within a larger section about social responsibility and character formation. The author addresses readers as "my child," taking the voice of a father or teacher giving essential life guidance. The context is urban Jewish life where economic disparity was real and daily encounters with poverty required thoughtful response.

---

## The Big Idea

---

**Helping the poor isn't just about giving, it's about giving promptly and respectfully, avoiding four specific ways we can wound those we claim to help.**

---

The complexity lies in recognizing that our manner of helping can actually harm. Even when we give, we can cheat through unfair exchanges, delay when immediacy is needed, grieve through our attitude, or anger through our approach. Right helping requires both generosity and dignity.

---

## Theological Core

---

- **Economic Justice.** Poor people deserve fair treatment in economic transactions, not exploitation disguised as charity.
  - **Dignified Assistance.** The needy should not be made to wait unnecessarily or endure demeaning treatment while seeking help.
  - **Emotional Sensitivity.** Our response to hunger and need should not add grief or anger to existing suffering.
  - **Relational Respect.** God hears the prayers of those we wound through disrespectful helping, making our approach a matter of divine accountability.
- 

## Age Group Overview

---

### What Each Age Group Learns

---

#### Grades 7, 8 / Adult

---

- Helping can actually harm when done with poor timing, attitude, or conditions
-

- Economic justice means fair exchanges, not just charitable giving
- God hears the prayers of those wounded by disrespectful help
- True compassion requires examining our motives and methods, not just our generosity

### Grades 4, 6

- When we help people, our attitude matters as much as our action
- Making someone wait when we could help right away isn't kind
- People who need help deserve to be treated with respect and dignity
- Sometimes we feel annoyed when asked for help, but we can choose kindness anyway

### Grades 1, 3

- God wants us to help people with happy hearts
- When someone needs help, we can use kind hands and kind words
- God is happy when we share nicely

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Assuming any help is good help.** This passage specifically warns against ways our helping can wound. Don't let students think good intentions automatically produce good outcomes. Instead, explore how attitude and approach matter deeply.
- **Spiritualizing away practical concerns.** These aren't abstract principles but concrete behaviors: cheating, delaying, grieving, angering. Address the real economic and social dynamics at play rather than retreating to generic kindness.
- **Ignoring the power dynamics.** The text assumes helpers have resources and choices while recipients are vulnerable. Acknowledge this imbalance and how it affects the interaction rather than treating all parties as equals.

- **Missing the accountability element.** Verse 6 indicates God hears the curses of those we wrong. This isn't just about human kindness but divine justice. Honor this theological weight without becoming legalistic.
- 

## Handling Hard Questions

---

### **"What if people take advantage of our kindness or don't really need help?"**

---

This passage doesn't address screening recipients but focuses on our approach when we do help. The wisdom here is about how to help, not whom to help. Sometimes people abuse generosity, but this text suggests that our response should prioritize dignity and respect when we choose to assist. The discernment about whom to help is a separate question from how to help well.

---

### **"Doesn't making people wait sometimes teach them patience or help them appreciate the gift?"**

---

The text specifically prohibits keeping "needy eyes waiting" when we're able to help immediately. This isn't about building character but about unnecessary delay that adds suffering. There's a difference between waiting because resources aren't available and making someone wait when help could be given promptly. The latter appears to be what the passage condemns.

---

### **"How can giving to someone make them angry if we're trying to help?"**

---

Our manner of giving can communicate judgment, superiority, or condescension. We might give grudgingly, with lectures about personal responsibility, or with conditions that shame the recipient. The anger comes not from receiving help but from being treated poorly while receiving it. Even generous actions can wound when delivered without respect.

---

## The One Thing to Remember

---

**True compassion cares as much about how we help as whether we help, because dignity matters to God and should matter to us.**

---

## Grades 7, 8 / Adult

---

## Your Main Job Today

---

Guide students to wrestle with the uncomfortable truth that helping can hurt when done without attention to dignity, timing, and respect. Help them examine their own attitudes toward giving and receiving help.

---

## The Tension to Frame

---

How do we grieve the hungry or anger the needy beyond simply denying help? What does it look like when the manner of our helping actually wounds?

---

## Discussion Facilitation Tips

---

- Validate their experiences of both giving and receiving help, most students have been on both sides
  - Honor the complexity that good intentions don't automatically produce good outcomes
  - Let students discover the patterns rather than lecturing about correct charitable behavior
- 

## 1. Opening Frame (2, 3 minutes)

---

Picture this: You're walking past someone who's clearly struggling, maybe they're asking for money, or carrying too much stuff and dropping things, or looking lost and confused. Part of you wants to help, but another part of you feels annoyed or suspicious. Maybe you're in a hurry, or you're worried they're trying to scam you, or you just don't want to get involved.

---

So you decide to help anyway, because helping is good, right?, but you do it quickly, maybe a little impatiently. You toss some change without making eye contact, or you help them pick up their stuff while sighing loudly, or you give directions while checking your phone. You helped. You're a good person. Problem solved.

---

Except maybe the person you helped walks away feeling worse than before you showed up. Maybe your body language communicated judgment or superiority. Maybe your rush to get it over with made them feel like a burden. Maybe your way of helping actually added to their shame instead of relieving their

---

need.

Today we're looking at an ancient wisdom teacher who noticed this same problem, that helping can actually harm when we don't pay attention to how we help. He identifies four specific ways we can wound the people we claim to assist. Notice what these are and why they matter.

Open your Bibles to Sirach chapter 4. We're going to read verses 1 through 10, but focus especially on the first two verses. See what patterns you notice.

## 2. Silent Reading (5 minutes)

**Managing Silent Reading:** Walk quietly around the room. Help with pronunciation of "Sirach" if needed. Watch for students who finish early, let them reread and think deeper. The weight of this passage builds with reflection.

### As You Read, Think About:

- What specific actions does the author prohibit in verses 1-2?
- What do you notice about the progression from cheating to grieving to angering?
- How might someone "grieve the hungry" beyond simply not feeding them?
- What would it feel like to be on the receiving end of these behaviors?

### Sirach 4:1-10 (NIV)

*1 My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. 2 Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. 3 Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy. 4 Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. 5 Do not avert your eyes from the needy, and give no one reason to curse you; 6 for if in bitterness of soul some should curse you, their Creator will hear their prayer. 7 Endear yourself to the congregation; bow your head low to the great. 8 Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely. 9 Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor; and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict. 10 Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than your mother does.*

### 3. Discussion (15, 18 minutes)

---

#### Oral Reading (2, 3 minutes)

---

**Selecting Readers:** Ask for volunteers who can read with expression. The prohibitions in verses 1-6 need gravity, while verses 7-10 should sound hopeful and encouraging.

**Reader 1:** Verses 1-3 (The four prohibitions and their expansion) **Reader 2:** Verses 4-6 (Consequences and divine accountability) **Reader 3:** Verses 7-10 (Positive examples and promised outcome)

---

Listen for the emotional tone here, this isn't abstract ethics but passionate concern for human dignity in vulnerable moments.

---

#### Small Group Question Generation (3, 4 minutes)

---

**Setup:** Form groups of 3-4 students. Give exactly 3 minutes to generate 1-2 genuine questions about the passage. Walk between groups, listening for insights. Help stuck groups with "What surprised you most about how the author describes helping?"

Get into groups of 3 or 4. Your job is to come up with 1 or 2 questions that you're genuinely curious about from this passage. Not questions you already know the answer to, but things that actually puzzle or surprise you. For example, "How exactly do you grieve someone who's hungry?" or "Why does the author focus on timing and attitude instead of just whether you help?" You have 3 minutes.

---

#### Facilitated Discussion (12, 14 minutes)

---

**Remember:** Let students drive with THEIR questions. Your job is to facilitate and probe deeper, guiding discovery rather than lecturing about correct charitable behavior.

**Collecting Questions:** Write student questions on the board. Look for themes around dignity, timing, attitude, and power dynamics. Start with questions most students can relate to from their own experience.

---

#### Probing Questions (to go deeper)

---

- "What's the difference between 'cheating the poor of their living' and simply not helping them?"
-

- "Why does the author specifically mention 'needy eyes waiting', what's wrong with making people wait?"
- "How can you grieve someone who's hungry without being mean to them?"
- "What kind of help might actually anger someone who needs assistance?"
- "Why does verse 6 say God will hear the prayers of people we wrong while helping them?"
- "What's the connection between verses 1-6 (what not to do) and verses 7-10 (what to do)?"
- "What if someone changed one thing in verses 1-2, what would happen differently?"
- "Why does this matter for how we think about charity, volunteering, or helping classmates today?"

### **Revealing the Pattern**

Do you notice what's happening here? The author isn't just saying "help people." He's saying "help people in a way that preserves their dignity." Each prohibition addresses a different way our helping can wound, through unfairness, delay, emotional harm, or disrespect. The pattern is that manner matters as much as generosity.

### **4. Application (3, 4 minutes)**

Let's get real about your lives. Where do you see this same tension playing out? Think about school group projects, helping family members, volunteering, giving to homeless people, or even how people help you when you're struggling. When has someone's way of helping actually made things worse?

### **Real Issues This Connects To**

- Group projects where someone takes over "to help" but makes others feel incompetent
- Parents who help with homework but communicate frustration or disappointment
- Friends who offer advice when you just wanted someone to listen
- Charity that requires recipients to sit through lectures or jump through hoops
- Volunteer work that's more about the volunteer feeling good than actually helping
- Social media activism that prioritizes being seen as helpful over actually addressing problems

**Facilitation:** Let students share examples without rushing to fix them. Some situations are genuinely complex. Help them think through principles rather than giving blanket rules about charitable behavior.

## Discussion Prompts

- "When have you experienced help that preserved your dignity versus help that wounded it?"
- "What would change if you paid attention to timing and attitude when you help others?"
- "How do you discern between helping that empowers and helping that diminishes?"
- "What's the difference between genuine compassion and charity that serves the giver's ego?"

## 5. Closing (2 minutes)

Here's what I want you to take with you: True compassion isn't just about generous impulses, it's about generous impulses expressed with dignity and respect. The ancient wisdom here is that God cares not only whether we help but how we help. Our manner of giving can either honor or wound the people we claim to serve.

This week, pay attention to how people help you and how you help others. Notice timing, attitude, body language, and unspoken messages. Experiment with helping in ways that preserve dignity rather than just solving problems. See what you discover about the difference between charity and justice.

The good thinking you did today gives me confidence that you can wrestle with these complexities and find ways to help that truly serve rather than harm. Keep asking the hard questions about how our good intentions translate into good outcomes.

## Grades 4, 6

Ages 9, 11 • 30 Minutes • Interactive Storytelling + Activity

## Your Main Job Today

Help kids understand that when we help people, our attitude and approach matter just as much as our actions. Teach them that helping should make people feel better, not worse.

---

### **If Kids Ask "What if someone is just pretending to need help?"**

---

Say: "This passage is about how to help when we choose to help. We can still be wise about when to help, but when we do help, we should do it with kindness and respect."

---

#### **1. Opening (5 minutes)**

---

Raise your hand if you've ever asked someone for help with something, maybe homework, or reaching something high up, or understanding directions when you were lost. Most of us have needed help at some point, right?

---

Now here's a harder question: Have you ever asked for help and the person who helped you made you feel bad about asking? Maybe they rolled their eyes, or sighed really loudly, or said something like "You should know this already" or "Fine, but I don't have all day." They still helped you, but somehow you felt worse afterward.

---

That feeling is confusing, isn't it? Part of you is grateful because they solved your problem, but another part feels embarrassed or stupid or like you're a bother. You might even think "I wish I hadn't asked" even though you got the help you needed.

---

This is like when Moana asks her grandmother for help understanding her calling, and her grandmother could have said "Figure it out yourself, you're old enough." Instead, she takes time to tell Moana the story with love and patience. The help is the same, sharing information, but the attitude makes Moana feel confident instead of ashamed.

---

The tricky part is figuring out how to help people in a way that makes them feel valued and respected, not embarrassed or rushed. Sometimes we're in a hurry or feeling annoyed, but we can still choose to help kindly.

---

Today we're going to hear about some ancient wisdom that teaches exactly this, how to help people in a way that honors their dignity and makes them feel better, not worse. Let's find out what we can learn.

---

**What to Expect:** Kids will relate to feeling embarrassed when asking for help. Acknowledge these feelings briefly, "That makes sense" or "Lots of people feel that way", then keep moving toward the story.

## 2. Bible Story Time (10 minutes)

---

A long time ago, there was a very wise teacher who cared deeply about how people treated each other, especially when someone needed help.

---

This teacher lived in a big city where there were rich people and poor people, people with plenty to eat and people who were hungry, people with good jobs and people who couldn't find work.

---

Every day, the wise teacher would watch how people interacted. He saw generous people helping others, but he also noticed something that worried him. Sometimes the people who were trying to help actually made things worse for the people they were helping.

---

Imagine you're watching someone drop their groceries in the parking lot. You want to help, so you run over and start picking things up. But while you're helping, you're also saying things like "Why didn't you use a cart?" or "You should have asked for help sooner" or "Be more careful next time."

---

You helped, the groceries got picked up, but the person probably felt embarrassed and criticized. Your help came with a side of judgment that made them feel bad about themselves.

---

The wise teacher saw this happening all the time. People would help, but they would help in ways that hurt feelings, damaged pride, or made the needy person feel like a burden.

---

So the teacher decided to write down some specific things that people should never do when helping others. He wanted to make sure that help actually helped, body, feelings, and dignity all together.

---

### **Sirach 4:1-2 (NIV)**

---

*My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need.*

---

The teacher said there are four things we should never do. First, don't cheat poor people when you're doing business with them. If someone doesn't have much money, don't take advantage of them by charging unfair prices or giving them broken things.

---

Second, don't keep needy people waiting when you could help them right away. If someone asks for help and you can help them now, don't make them wait just because you can. Their time matters too.

---

Third, don't grieve the hungry. This means don't make hungry people feel sad or ashamed when they ask for food. Don't look at them like they're doing something wrong by being hungry.

---

Fourth, don't anger people who are in need. Don't help them in a way that makes them mad, like being rude or impatient or acting like they're bothering you.

---

The teacher understood that when people are already struggling, they're often feeling vulnerable and maybe embarrassed. If someone who's supposed to help them treats them badly, it makes everything worse.

---

But the teacher didn't just say what not to do. He also explained what good helping looks like.

---

**Sirach 4:8-10 (NIV)**

---

*Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely. Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor; and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict. Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than your mother does.*

Good helping, the teacher said, means listening to people respectfully, greeting them politely, and standing up for people who are being treated unfairly. It means caring for people who don't have anyone else to care for them.

---

When we help this way, with respect and kindness and patience, we're acting like God's own children. And God loves it when we treat people with dignity, especially when they're in vulnerable situations.

---

The teacher's wisdom was simple but powerful: Don't just help, help in a way that makes people feel valued and respected. Don't add shame to their struggle. Don't make their problems worse by being unkind while you solve them.

---

Sometimes in our lives, we have chances to help friends, family members, or even strangers. Maybe someone needs help with schoolwork, or carrying something heavy, or understanding directions, or feeling better when they're sad.

---

What we learn from this ancient wisdom is that our attitude while helping matters just as much as our action. We can choose to help in ways that build people up instead of tearing them down, that make them feel grateful instead of ashamed.

---

God cares about how we treat each other, especially when someone is in a tough spot. When we help with kindness, respect, and patience, we're showing love the way God shows love, generously and gently.

**Pause here.** Let the story sink in for 5 seconds before moving on.

### 3. Discussion (5 minutes)

#### Question 1: The Feelings

Think about a time when you needed help with something, maybe you were lost, or confused about homework, or dropped something and couldn't pick it all up by yourself. How would you want the person helping you to act? What would make you feel good about asking for help instead of embarrassed?

**Listen For:** "Be patient," "Don't make fun of me," "Smile", affirm: "Those are exactly the things that make help feel good instead of shameful."

#### Question 2: The Waiting

The wise teacher said don't keep needy people waiting when you could help right away. Why do you think making someone wait when you don't have to is unkind? How does it feel when someone makes you wait for help that they could give immediately?

**If They Say:** "It makes you feel unimportant", respond "Exactly! Like your problem doesn't matter to them, even though it matters to you."

#### Question 3: The Attitude

How could someone help a hungry person but still "grieve" them or make them angry? What's the difference between giving food with a kind heart and giving food with an annoyed heart?

**Connect:** "This is exactly what the wise teacher was worried about, help that helps the problem but hurts the person."

## Question 4: The Result

---

What do you think happens when we help people with respect and kindness instead of irritation or impatience? How might it change both the person being helped and the person doing the helping?

---

**If They Say:** "Everyone feels better", respond "And that's what God wants, helping that makes everyone more joyful, not just solves problems."

You've shared some really wise insights about how attitude affects helping. Now let's experience this in action through an activity that shows the difference between helpful help and harmful help.

---

### 4. Activity: The Dignity Bridge (8 minutes)

---

**Zero Props Required** , This activity uses only kids' bodies and empty space.

#### Purpose

---

This activity reinforces respectful helping by having kids physically experience the difference between help that preserves dignity and help that wounds it. Success looks like kids discovering that how we help affects how people feel about themselves and about asking for help in the future.

---

#### Instructions to Class(3 minutes)

---

We're going to play The Dignity Bridge. Half of you will be Bridge Builders and half will be River Crossers. Bridge Builders, your job is to help River Crossers get safely from one side of the room to the other by making bridges with your bodies.

---

River Crossers, you need to cross the river but you can't touch the floor, you need the Bridge Builders to help you. But here's the twist: Some Bridge Builders will help with good attitudes and some will help with annoyed attitudes.

---

Round one, half the Bridge Builders should act slightly impatient or annoyed while helping, roll your eyes, sigh, make the River Crossers feel like they're bothering you. The other half should be encouraging and kind.

---

We're doing this because it's exactly like what the wise teacher was talking about, help that works but makes people feel bad versus help that works and makes people feel good.

---

### **During the Activity(4 minutes)**

---

Round one: Let River Crossers experience both types of help. Watch their body language and facial expressions as they interact with impatient helpers versus kind helpers. Let this run for about 2 minutes.

---

Round two: Switch roles so everyone experiences both sides. Notice the difference in how it feels to help with annoyance versus helping with joy. Also let them notice how it feels to receive annoyed help versus grateful help.

---

Coaching phrases to use: "River Crossers, notice how different helpers make you feel." "Bridge Builders, notice how your attitude affects the people you're helping." "What difference do you see between these two types of help?"

---

Celebrate when someone demonstrates particularly kind or encouraging helping. Say things like "Look how [name] made [name] feel confident while helping!" or "Notice how much easier it is to ask for help from someone who seems happy to give it."

---

At completion, have everyone notice how the experience of asking for help changed depending on the helper's attitude. Point out that the physical help was the same, but the emotional result was completely different.

---

**Watch For:** The moment when kids realize that identical physical help feels completely different based on attitude, this is the physical representation of the wisdom teacher's insight.

### **Debrief(1 minute)**

---

What did you notice about how it felt when Bridge Builders were impatient versus when they were encouraging? The help worked either way, you got across the river, but one way made you feel confident and grateful while the other way made you feel like a burden. That's exactly what the wise teacher was teaching us about helping with honor.

---

## **5. Closing (2 minutes)**

---

Here's what we learned today: When we help people, our attitude matters just as much as our actions. We can solve someone's problem but still hurt their feelings if we help with impatience, annoyance, or judgment. God wants us to help in ways that make people feel valued and respected.

---

This doesn't mean we have to feel happy every time someone asks for help, sometimes we might feel tired or busy. But we can choose to help kindly anyway, because how we help affects how people feel about themselves and whether they'll feel safe asking for help again.

---

The amazing result is that when we help with genuine kindness and respect, everyone ends up feeling better, the person being helped feels valued instead of ashamed, and we feel joy instead of irritation.

---

### **This Week's Challenge**

---

Pay attention to how people help you and how you help others. When someone asks for your help this week, with schoolwork, chores, or anything else, try helping with a kind attitude even if you feel a little annoyed. Notice how it changes the experience for both of you.

---

### **Closing Prayer (Optional)**

---

*Dear God, thank you for teaching us how to help others with kindness and respect. Help us remember that our attitude matters when we're helping people. When we feel impatient or annoyed, help us choose kindness anyway. Amen.*

---

## **Grades 1, 3**

---

Ages 6, 8 • 15, 20 Minutes • Animated Storytelling + Songs

---

### **Your Main Job Today**

---

Help children understand that God wants us to help people with happy hearts and kind hands.

---

### **Movement & Formation Plan**

---

- **Opening Song:** Standing in a circle
  - **Bible Story:** Sitting in a horseshoe shape facing the teacher
-

- **Small Group Q&A:** Standing in pairs facing each other
- **Closing Song:** Standing in straight lines
- **Prayer:** Sitting cross-legged in rows

---

## If Kids Don't Understand

---

Compare helping with a grumpy face to helping with a happy face, then ask "Which one makes you feel better?"

---

### 1. Opening Song (2, 3 minutes)

---

**Formation:** Standing in a circle

---

Select a song about helping others or God's love. Suggestions: "Jesus Loves Me," "If You're Happy and You Know It," or "The Helper Song." Use movements: clap hands during "happy" lyrics, reach out arms during "help" lyrics, point up during "God" lyrics.

---

Great singing, everyone! Now let's sit down in our story shape because we have a special story about helping people with happy hearts. I can't wait to tell you what we're going to learn!

---

### 2. Bible Story Time (5, 7 minutes)

---

**Formation:** Kids sitting in a horseshoe shape on the floor facing you. Move around inside the horseshoe as you tell the story.

---

**Animated Delivery:** Use big gestures, change your voice for different characters, move around the space. Keep energy high! Sound sad when talking about grumpy helping, sound happy when talking about kind helping.

---

Today we're going to meet a very wise teacher who loved God and cared about people!

---

*[Walk to one side of the horseshoe]*

---

This wise teacher lived in a big city where lots of people lived together. Some people had plenty of food and some people were hungry. Some people had warm clothes and some people were cold.

---

*[Look sad and concerned]*

---

The wise teacher watched people helping each other, and that made him happy! But sometimes he saw something that made him sad. Sometimes people would help, but they would help with grumpy faces and annoyed voices.

---

*[Walk to other side of horseshoe, make a grumpy face]*

---

Like when someone would give food to a hungry person but say "Here, take this" with a grumpy voice and roll their eyes. Or when someone would help carry heavy things but sigh really loudly like they were annoyed.

---

*[Move to center, speak with wisdom and authority]*

---

So the wise teacher decided to teach people the right way to help. He said God wants us to use kind hands and happy hearts when we help people.

---

*[Move to side, speak gently]*

---

The teacher said never make hungry people feel sad when you give them food. Never make people who need help feel bad for asking. Always be kind and patient when someone needs you.

---

**Sirach 4:2 (NIV)**

---

*Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need.*

---

*[Pause and look around at each child]*

---

Do you think people who are already sad or hungry or cold need someone to be mean to them? No! They need someone to be extra kind and gentle!

---

*[Move to center, speak with joy and warmth]*

---

But then the wise teacher taught people the beautiful way to help! He said when someone needs help, greet them with a smile. Listen to them with kind ears. Help them with gentle hands.

---

*[Walk slowly around the horseshoe]*

---

When we help people this way, with happy hearts and kind voices, it makes God so happy! It makes the person we help feel loved instead of embarrassed.

---

*[Stop walking and face the children directly]*

---

So the wise teacher told everyone: When you help, do it with joy! Make people feel good about asking for help. Show them God's love through your kind hands and happy heart.

---

*[Speak with excitement]*

---

And you know what happened? When people started helping with kind hearts, everyone felt better! The people getting help felt loved, and the people giving help felt joy!

---

*[Pause dramatically]*

---

The big truth is this: God loves it when we help people with happy hearts and gentle hands. Our smiles and kind words make help feel like love!

---

*[Speak directly to the children]*

---

Sometimes in our lives, people ask us for help. Maybe a friend drops their crayons, or a grown-up needs help carrying something, or someone can't reach something high up.

---

*[Move closer to the children]*

---

When someone asks for your help, you can choose to help with a kind voice and a happy face. You can make them feel glad they asked you instead of sorry they bothered you.

---

*[Speak warmly and encouragingly]*

---

God gives us chances to show His love by helping with joy and kindness. When we do that, we make God smile and we make people feel loved!

---

### **3. Discussion (5 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Have kids stand up and find a partner. Pairs scatter around the room with space to talk.

---

Find a partner and stand facing each other. I'm going to give each pair a question to talk about. There are no wrong answers, just share what you think! You'll have about one minute to talk together.

---

**Teacher Circulation:** Walk around to each pair. Listen to their discussions. If a pair is stuck, ask "What do you think?" or rephrase the question more simply. Give them time to think, some kids need extra processing time.

## Discussion Questions

*Select one question per pair based on class size. Save unused questions for next time.*

1. How do you feel when someone helps you with a grumpy face?
2. How do you feel when someone helps you with a happy face?
3. What does it look like to help someone with kind hands?
4. What would you do if someone asked you to help them pick up toys?
5. Why do you think God wants us to help with happy hearts?
6. How can you help someone at school this week?
7. What makes helping feel good instead of bad?
8. How can you use a kind voice when helping someone?
9. What would happen if everyone helped with grumpy faces?
10. What would happen if everyone helped with happy faces?
11. How do you know when someone needs help?
12. What can you do to make your face look kind?
13. How does God help us?
14. Why is it important to be patient when helping?
15. What's your favorite way to help people?
16. How can helping someone make you feel happy too?
17. What would you want someone to do if you needed help?

18. How can we practice helping with kind hearts?

---

19. What makes you want to help someone?

---

20. How can we be like the wise teacher in our story?

---

Great discussions! Let's come back together in our lines for our closing song. Who wants to share one thing you talked about with your partner?

---

#### **4. Closing Song (2, 3 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Standing in straight lines facing forward

---

Select a song about kindness or helping. Suggestions: "The Helping Song," "Love One Another," or "Kindness is a Choice." Use movements: reach out arms during helping lyrics, put hands on heart during love lyrics, clap during happy lyrics.

---

Beautiful singing! Now let's sit down for our prayer time. Remember what we learned about helping with happy hearts and kind hands.

---

#### **5. Closing Prayer (1, 2 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Sitting cross-legged in rows, heads bowed, hands folded

---

*Dear God, thank you for the wise teacher who taught us about helping with happy hearts.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Help us remember to use kind hands and happy faces when someone asks us for help. When we feel grumpy, help us choose to be kind anyway.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Help us remember that you love it when we help people with joy and gentleness. Help us show your love through our helping.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Thank you for loving us and for giving us chances to help others. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

---

**Alternative, Popcorn Prayer:** If your class is comfortable with it, invite kids to offer short one-sentence prayers about helping with kind hearts. Examples: "Help me be kind when I help" or "Thank you for people who help me."

Remember this week to help people with happy hearts and kind hands, just like God wants us to do. Have a wonderful week showing God's love to everyone you meet!

---

# Justice and Mercy Together

---

*God's Vision for Community, How do we protect the vulnerable without becoming victims ourselves?*

---

**Zechariah 7:8-14**

---

## Instructor Preparation

---

Read this section before teaching any age group. It provides the theological foundation and shows how the lesson adapts across developmental stages.

---

## The Passage

---

**Zechariah 7:8-14 (NIV)**

---

*8 And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: 9 "This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.' 11 But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. 12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry. 13 'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty. 14 'I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land they left behind them was so desolate that no one traveled through it. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.'"*

## Context

---

Zechariah is prophesying to the Jewish community that has returned from Babylonian exile and is rebuilding Jerusalem. They have asked about whether to continue fasting to mourn the destruction of the temple, now that it's being rebuilt. God's response through Zechariah cuts deeper than ritual observance, He reveals what actually matters to Him in community life.

---

The immediate context is a community wrestling with religious identity after trauma. They want to know about proper worship practices, but God redirects their attention to social ethics. The categories He names, widow, fatherless, foreigner, poor, represent those most vulnerable in ancient society, and significantly, "foreigner" includes the very peoples they might blame for their suffering.

---

## The Big Idea

---

**Justice and mercy are not competing values but complementary expressions of God's character that must operate together, especially toward vulnerable populations.**

---

This integration challenges our tendency to pit justice against mercy or to limit protection only to those we consider "deserving." The inclusion of "foreigner" alongside widow, fatherless, and poor suggests God's protection extends even to those who might be viewed with suspicion or fear.

---

## Theological Core

---

- **Justice-Mercy Integration.** True justice includes mercy and compassion; they strengthen rather than undermine each other when properly understood and applied.
  - **Vulnerable Category Protection.** God specifically names those most at risk of exploitation and demands their protection as a measure of community faithfulness.
  - **Enemy-Making Prohibition.** The command against "plotting evil" directly addresses the human tendency to create enemies and plan harm against others.
  - **Prophetic Social Ethics.** God's concern for worship practices is inseparable from His concern for social justice and community treatment of the marginalized.
- 

## Age Group Overview

---

### What Each Age Group Learns

---

#### Grades 7, 8 / Adult

---

- Justice requires mercy and compassion working together, not competing against each other
-

- Protecting vulnerable people includes those we might naturally view with suspicion or fear
- Mental "plotting" against others is as problematic as outward oppression
- Wisdom means learning to discern when protection empowers versus when it enables dependency

### Grades 4, 6

- Being fair means being extra kind to people who need help
- We should help people even when they're different from us or we don't understand them
- God notices when we're mean to people who can't defend themselves
- It's normal to feel uncertain about helping, but we should do what's right anyway

### Grades 1, 3

- God wants us to help people who need help
- God is happy when we're kind to everyone
- We should be nice even to people who are different from us

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **False Either/Or Thinking.** Avoid presenting justice and mercy as opposites that require choosing between them. They work together in God's design and should inform each other in our responses.
- **Earned Protection Mentality.** Don't suggest that vulnerable people must prove their worthiness for help. The categories named represent inherent vulnerability, not moral evaluation.
- **Selective Compassion.** Avoid implying that protection applies only to people like us or those we find sympathetic. The "foreigner" inclusion specifically challenges this natural limitation.
- **Naive Enabling.** Don't oversimplify protection to mean uncritical assistance that might create dependency or ignore genuine concerns about safety and sustainability.

## Handling Hard Questions

---

### **"How do we help people without being taken advantage of or putting ourselves at risk?"**

---

This question honors both the command to protect and legitimate concerns about wisdom and safety. Help students see that the passage doesn't eliminate discernment but redirects our default assumptions. We can learn to assess need and risk without automatically treating difference as threat. Community-based responses often provide both protection for the vulnerable and safety for the helpers.

---

### **"What if the 'foreigners' or outsiders actually are dangerous or have bad intentions?"**

---

Acknowledge that real dangers exist while noting that God's command here specifically counters our tendency to assume danger based on category rather than evidence. The passage prohibits both oppression and plotting evil, it calls for wisdom that doesn't automatically equate difference with threat. We can take reasonable precautions while still extending protection to those who genuinely need it.

---

### **"Why should we have to take care of people who should be taking care of themselves?"**

---

This question reveals important assumptions about deservingness and responsibility. Point out that the categories named, widow, fatherless, foreigner, poor, often represent circumstances beyond personal control. Help students consider how systems and circumstances create vulnerability, and how community strength actually depends on care for its most vulnerable members.

---

## **The One Thing to Remember**

---

**God's justice always includes mercy, especially toward those society treats as threats or burdens rather than neighbors worthy of protection.**

---

## **Grades 7, 8 / Adult**

---

Ages 12, 14+ • 30 Minutes • Student-Centered Discussion

## Your Main Job Today

---

Guide students to wrestle with the real tension between protecting vulnerable people and protecting themselves from potential exploitation or harm. Help them discover that justice and mercy working together provide better solutions than either approach alone.

---

## The Tension to Frame

---

How do we hold justice and mercy together when they seem to conflict, and who decides which vulnerable groups receive protection?

---

## Discussion Facilitation Tips

---

- Validate their concerns about safety and being taken advantage of, these are real issues that need thoughtful responses
  - Honor the complexity of determining who is truly vulnerable versus who might be manipulating the system
  - Let students wrestle with difficult scenarios rather than providing quick answers that minimize real challenges
- 

## 1. Opening Frame (2, 3 minutes)

---

You're walking to school and you see someone you don't recognize sitting outside the building with a backpack that looks like it has everything they own in it. They're clearly not from around here, different clothes, different accent when they ask for directions. Part of you wants to help because they look lost and maybe hungry. But another part of you is thinking about all the warnings you've heard about strangers, about people who might be dangerous, about scams where someone pretends to need help.

---

So you hesitate. You're genuinely torn between wanting to be a good person and wanting to be a smart person. Your gut says this person probably really needs help, but your brain says you could be putting yourself at risk. Both instincts make sense. Your compassion is real, and your caution is real.

---

Today we're looking at a biblical passage where God addresses this exact tension. Except the stakes are higher, it's about entire communities and how they treat vulnerable populations. God gives commands that seem to require both justice and mercy, protection and discernment, at the same time.

---

As we read, notice how God doesn't resolve the tension by choosing one side. Instead, He does something more complex. Pay attention to the specific groups He names for protection, and ask yourself why these particular categories might have been controversial or challenging for the original audience.

Let's open to Zechariah chapter 7, starting with verse 8, and read this silently first.

## 2. Silent Reading (5 minutes)

**Managing Silent Reading:** Move quietly around the room. Help with pronunciation of names if needed. Watch for students who finish early, let them reread verses 9-10 specifically. Allow the weight of the consequences in verses 11-14 to sink in.

### As You Read, Think About:

- What specific groups does God name for protection, and what do they have in common?
- Why might the original audience have found these commands challenging or risky?
- What's the connection between "plotting evil" and the other commands?
- How do you imagine the community responded to these expectations, and why?

### Zechariah 7:8-14 (NIV)

*8 And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: 9 "This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.' 11 But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. 12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry. 13 'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty. 14 'I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land they left behind them was so desolate that no one traveled through it. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.'"*

## 3. Discussion (15, 18 minutes)

## Oral Reading (2, 3 minutes)

---

**Selecting Readers:** Ask for volunteers for each section. Let students pass if uncomfortable. Choose confident readers for the dramatic consequences section in verses 11-14.

**Reader 1:** Verses 8-10 (God's commands) **Reader 2:** Verses 11-12 (The people's response) **Reader 3:** Verses 13-14 (The consequences)

---

Listen for the tone shift as we move from commands to consequences. This isn't just information, it's drama about a community that couldn't figure out how to be both just and merciful.

---

## Small Group Question Generation (3, 4 minutes)

---

**Setup:** Form groups of 3-4 students. Give exactly 3 minutes. Walk between groups to listen to their discussions. If a group is stuck, prompt with "What surprised you most about what you just read?"

Get into groups of 3-4. Your job is to come up with 1-2 genuine questions about what we just read, things you're actually curious or confused about. Good questions might start with "Why does..." or "How do you..." or "What if..." Don't worry about having answers; focus on asking what you really want to know. You have 3 minutes.

---

## Facilitated Discussion (12, 14 minutes)

---

**Remember:** Students drive with THEIR questions while you facilitate and probe deeper. Guide discovery rather than lecturing. Let them wrestle with the genuine difficulty of these commands.

**Collecting Questions:** Write student questions on the board. Look for themes around fairness, safety, and practicality. Start with questions most students will relate to.

---

## Probing Questions (to go deeper)

---

- "What do you notice about the specific groups God names for protection?"
  - "Why do you think God puts 'administer true justice' and 'show mercy and compassion' in the same sentence?"
-

- "What's the connection between oppressing vulnerable people and 'plotting evil against each other'?"
- "Why might protecting 'foreigners' have been especially controversial for people who had been traumatized by foreign invasion?"
- "How do you think the people justified their refusal to follow these commands?"
- "What would it look like in our context to treat these groups with both justice and mercy?"
- "What if the community had responded differently, how might their story have changed?"
- "Why does this passage matter for how we treat vulnerable populations today?"

---

### Revealing the Pattern

Do you notice what's happening here? God isn't asking them to choose between being just and being merciful. He's saying that true justice includes mercy and compassion, they're supposed to work together. And notice who gets special protection: not just people like them, but specifically foreigners, people who might seem threatening or different. God's justice expands their circle of concern rather than shrinking it.

---

### 4. Application (3, 4 minutes)

Let's get real about your lives and our world. Where do you see this same tension playing out? Where are people struggling between wanting to help vulnerable populations and worrying about being taken advantage of or put at risk? Think about school, social media, family dynamics, community issues, even national politics.

---

### Real Issues This Connects To

- New students at school who seem different or are struggling socially or academically
- Family decisions about giving money to homeless people or supporting refugees
- Friend groups where someone is being excluded or bullied, especially if they're "weird" or different
- Online responses to people asking for help, when you can't tell if they're genuine or scamming
- Community debates about helping immigrants, homeless populations, or other vulnerable groups

- Personal decisions about getting involved when you see injustice but worry about the cost to yourself
- 

**Facilitation:** Let students share examples without rushing to solutions. Some situations are genuinely complex and call for different responses. Help them think through discernment rather than giving blanket advice.

### Discussion Prompts

---

- "When have you seen justice and mercy work well together rather than against each other?"
  - "What would help you discern when someone genuinely needs protection versus when you might be enabling or putting yourself at risk?"
  - "How do you decide who counts as 'vulnerable' in your community, and who makes those decisions?"
  - "What's the difference between wise caution and prejudiced suspicion?"
- 

### 5. Closing (2 minutes)

---

Here's what I want you to take with you: God's vision for community doesn't eliminate the tension between protection and caution, but it does challenge our automatic assumptions. True justice includes mercy, especially toward people we might naturally view with suspicion. The goal isn't naive vulnerability, but expanded wisdom that doesn't mistake difference for danger.

---

This week, pay attention to how you respond to people who need help, especially those who are different from you in some way. Notice your gut reactions, both the compassionate ones and the cautious ones. Ask yourself: What would justice with mercy look like in this specific situation?

---

You did good thinking today. These questions don't have easy answers, and anyone who pretends they do probably isn't taking the complexity seriously. Keep wrestling with how to be both wise and compassionate, our world needs people who refuse to choose between them.

---

### Grades 4, 6

---

## Your Main Job Today

---

Help kids understand that being fair means being kind to people who need extra help, even when those people are different from us or we don't understand them.

---

### If Kids Ask "What if helping someone gets us in trouble or they're not really nice people?"

---

Say: "That's a really smart question. God wants us to be wise and safe, but He also wants us to help people who need help. Sometimes we can ask grown-ups to help us figure out how to help safely."

---

#### 1. Opening (5 minutes)

---

Raise your hand if you've ever been the new kid at school, or if someone in your family was new to a neighborhood, or if you've ever felt like you didn't quite fit in somewhere. Most of us have felt that way sometimes, right? It can be pretty lonely and scary when you're new or different.

---

Now here's a harder question: Raise your hand if you've ever seen someone who needed help, but you weren't sure if you should help them or not. Maybe they looked different from you, or you didn't know them very well, or your parents had told you to be careful around strangers. Part of you wanted to help, but another part wasn't sure if it was safe or smart.

---

Those feelings totally make sense. It's normal to want to help people and also to want to be safe and smart. Sometimes it's hard to know what to do when both of those feelings are happening at the same time. Your heart says "help them" but your brain says "be careful."

---

This reminds me of the movie "Coco," where Miguel is scared of his family's music rule, but he also wants to help his great-great-grandfather. Or in "Encanto," when the family has to decide whether to trust the vision they don't understand. Sometimes doing the right thing feels risky.

---

The tricky part is figuring out how to be kind and helpful while also being wise and safe. How do you know when someone really needs help? How do you know when it's okay to help them? And what if they're different from you in ways that make you feel unsure?

---

Today we're going to hear about a time when God told His people exactly how He wanted them to treat people who needed help, including people who were different from them. It was harder than they

---

thought it would be. Let's find out what happened.

**What to Expect:** Kids will share examples of feeling left out or unsure about helping. Acknowledge these briefly with "That sounds hard" or "I bet that felt confusing," then keep momentum toward the story.

## 2. Bible Story Time (10 minutes)

A long time ago, God's people had been through something really hard. Their enemies had destroyed their city and taken them far away from their homes. But now they were back, and they were trying to rebuild everything, their houses, their temple, their whole life.

They were probably feeling pretty worried about trusting people who weren't like them. After all, it was foreigners, people from other places, who had hurt them before. So they were being extra careful about who they let into their community.

The people came to God with a question about how to worship properly. They wanted to make sure they were doing religious things the right way. But God surprised them. Instead of talking about religious ceremonies, God started talking about how they treated people.

Imagine how they felt when God's answer wasn't what they expected. They're asking about fasting and worship, and God starts talking about widows and orphans and foreigners and poor people. They probably thought, "Wait, what does that have to do with anything?"

But God had something really important to tell them. He knew that how we treat people who need help shows what we really believe about Him.

### **Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)**

*9 "This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'"*

God said, "I want you to be fair, but I also want you to be kind and caring. And here are the people I especially want you to take care of." Then He listed four kinds of people: widows (women whose husbands had died), orphans (kids whose parents had died), foreigners (people from other places), and poor people.

Do you notice what all these people had in common? They were all in situations where they couldn't easily take care of themselves. They needed other people to help them. And here's the challenging part, some of these people might have seemed scary or different to God's people, especially the foreigners.

---

God was saying, "Don't just be fair to people like you. Be kind and fair to people who are different from you, too. And don't sit around thinking mean thoughts about each other or planning ways to hurt people."

---

But here's what happened next. The people didn't like this message very much.

---

### **Zechariah 7:11-12 (NIV)**

---

*11 But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears.*

*12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen...*

Can you picture this? It's like when someone is telling you something you don't want to hear, so you stick your fingers in your ears and go "La la la la la!" That's basically what God's people did. They turned away from God and refused to listen.

---

Maybe they thought, "This is too hard. What if those foreigners hurt us again? What if the poor people take advantage of us? What if we give away everything and have nothing left for ourselves?" Those might have seemed like good reasons to them.

---

But God knew that when communities stop caring for people who need help, especially people who are different or vulnerable, something important breaks down. Communities become hard and mean instead of strong and kind.

---

Because the people refused to listen, some really sad things happened. God allowed them to experience being scattered and becoming foreigners themselves in other countries. They learned what it felt like to be the vulnerable ones who needed help from people who might not understand them.

---

The land became empty and broken because when people stop caring for those who need help, everything falls apart. It's like when a family stops taking care of each other, the whole family becomes weak and sad.

---

Sometimes in our lives, we face the same choice God gave His people. We can choose to be fair and kind to people who need help, even when they're different from us. Or we can turn away and only care

---

about people like us.

---

God wants us to learn that being fair doesn't just mean treating everyone exactly the same. Sometimes being fair means being extra kind to people who need extra help. And that includes people who might look different, talk different, or come from different places than we do.

---

When we choose to be both fair and kind, especially to people who need help, we make our communities stronger and more like the way God wants them to be. We show that God's love is big enough for everyone.

---

**Pause here.** Let the story sink in for 5 seconds before moving on.

### 3. Discussion (5 minutes)

---

#### Question 1: The Hard Feelings

---

Think about how God's people might have felt when He told them to help foreigners, the same kinds of people who had hurt them before. If someone from a group that had been mean to your family needed help, how do you think you would feel? What would be going through your mind?

---

**Listen For:** "Scared," "angry," "confused", affirm: "Those feelings make total sense. Your brain would be trying to protect you and your family."

#### Question 2: The Big Choice

---

God told His people to be both fair and kind at the same time. What do you think is the difference between just being fair and being fair AND kind? Can you think of examples where those might be different?

---

**If They Say:** If they struggle with this, offer: "What's the difference between giving someone exactly what they deserve versus giving someone what they need?"

#### Question 3: The Special List

---

God made a special list of people to help: widows, orphans, foreigners, and poor people. What do you think these people all had in common? Why do you think God wanted His people to pay special attention to them?

**Connect:** "You're noticing that these were all people who couldn't easily help themselves, just like the situation in our story."

#### Question 4: The Results

When God's people refused to help vulnerable people, their whole community fell apart. Why do you think that happened? What do you think would have been different if they had chosen to help instead?

**If They Say:** If they suggest it was unfair punishment, respond: "What if it wasn't punishment, but just what naturally happens when people stop caring for each other?"

You're all thinking really deeply about this. What I'm hearing is that you understand it's normal to feel nervous about helping people who are different from us, but that God wants us to be brave enough to help anyway. Let's do an activity that shows us what this looks like.

#### 4. Activity: The Community Bridge (8 minutes)

**Zero Props Required** , This activity uses only kids' bodies and empty space.

##### Purpose

This activity reinforces justice-with-mercy by having kids physically experience how communities become stronger when they actively help vulnerable members. Success looks like kids discovering that helping others actually strengthens the whole group rather than weakening it.

##### Instructions to Class(3 minutes)

We're going to build a Community Bridge. I need everyone to spread out in the room. I'm going to give some of you special challenges that make it harder for you to move around easily. Your job as a community is to help everyone get from one side of the room to the other.

Here's the challenge: some people will have to hop on one foot (these represent people who need extra physical help), some will have to close their eyes and be guided (these represent people who need extra guidance), and some will be "foreigners" who can only speak in gibberish but still need to cross safely.

---

Everyone else are "community members" who start out thinking it will be easier to just help people like yourselves. But here's the twist: you can only succeed if EVERYONE gets across safely together. You literally cannot win unless you help the people who are different from you.

---

We're doing this because it's exactly like what God told His people, real community means helping everyone, especially those who need extra help.

---

### **During the Activity(4 minutes)**

---

Start by letting kids try to get across on their own. Let the community members start helping people like themselves first. Watch for about one minute as they realize some people are getting left behind.

---

As they start to struggle with the people who need different kinds of help, let them experience the frustration for about a minute. Some will start to understand they need to help everyone.

---

Coach with questions like: "I notice some people aren't making it across. I wonder what would happen if you tried helping them instead of just the easy ones." Don't give solutions, but guide them toward discovery.

---

Celebrate when someone makes the breakthrough choice to help a "foreign speaker" or guide a person with closed eyes. Highlight this moment: "Look what's happening now! Did you see how helping that person actually made the whole group stronger?"

---

Once they've succeeded in getting everyone across, have them notice how it felt different when they were working together versus when they were only helping some people.

---

**Watch For:** The moment when someone chooses to help a "difficult" group member, this is the physical representation of choosing justice with mercy.

---

### **Debrief(1 minute)**

---

What did you notice about how it felt when you were only helping some people versus when you helped everyone? Did helping the people who needed extra help make your community weaker or stronger?

---

You just experienced what God was trying to teach His people, that real community strength comes from helping everyone, especially those who need extra help.

---

## 5. Closing (2 minutes)

---

Here's what we learned today: God wants us to be fair AND kind, especially to people who need extra help. This includes people who might be different from us, kids who are new, kids who look different, kids who need help with things that are easy for us.

---

This doesn't mean we have to be unsafe or give away everything we have. It means we look for ways to help that make our whole community stronger, just like in our activity. We can ask adults to help us figure out how to help safely.

---

The amazing result is that when communities take care of everyone, especially people who are vulnerable or different, they become stronger and happier places for everyone to live.

---

### **This Week's Challenge**

---

This week, look for one person who might need extra help or kindness, maybe someone who's new, or different from you in some way, or just having a hard time. Ask an adult how you can help them safely, and then try one small act of kindness.

---

### **Closing Prayer (Optional)**

---

*Dear God, thank you for teaching us that being fair means being kind to everyone, especially people who need extra help. Help us be brave enough to help people who are different from us. Help us make our communities stronger by caring for everyone. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

---

## **Grades 1, 3**

---

Ages 6, 8 • 15, 20 Minutes • Animated Storytelling + Songs

### **Your Main Job Today**

---

Help kids understand that God wants us to be helpful and kind to people who need help, even if they're different from us.

---

### **Movement & Formation Plan**

---

- **Opening Song:** Standing in a circle
  - **Bible Story:** Sitting in a horseshoe shape facing the teacher
  - **Small Group Q&A:** Standing in pairs facing each other
  - **Closing Song:** Standing in straight lines
  - **Prayer:** Sitting cross-legged in rows
- 

### **If Kids Don't Understand**

---

Compare helping people who need help to sharing toys with friends who don't have any, then ask "How does it feel when someone shares with you?"

---

### **1. Opening Song (2, 3 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Standing in a circle

---

Select a song about God's love or helping others. Suggestions: "Jesus Loves the Little Children," "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy," or "The B-I-B-L-E." Use movements: point to others during "little children," march in place during "joy," or hold hands up like a book during "B-I-B-L-E."

---

Great singing, everyone! Now let's sit down in our special horseshoe shape so we can hear a story about how God wants us to help people. Come sit crisscross on the floor facing me, and get ready to hear about something very important that God told His people.

---

### **2. Bible Story Time (5, 7 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Kids sitting in a horseshoe shape on the floor facing you. Move around inside the horseshoe as you tell the story.

---

**Animated Delivery:** Use big gestures, change your voice for different characters, move around the space. Keep energy high! Sound excited when talking about God's love, sound sad when people make wrong choices.

Today we're going to meet God's people who had to learn something very important about helping others.

*[Walk to one side of the horseshoe]*

A long time ago, God's people had been very sad. Mean people had broken their city and taken them far away from their homes. But now they were back home and trying to fix everything.

*[Use worried facial expression]*

They were feeling scared about trusting people who weren't like them. They thought, "What if those different people hurt us again? What if we help them and they're not nice to us?"

*[Walk to other side of horseshoe, change to hopeful tone]*

So the people went to ask God about how to worship Him the right way. They wanted to make sure they were doing things God liked.

*[Move to center, speak with strong, loving authority]*

But God surprised them! Instead of talking about singing or praying, God started talking about helping people. God said something really important to them.

*[Move to side, speak gently but firmly]*

God told them, "I want you to be fair to everyone. But I also want you to be kind and caring. Help people who need help!"

**Zechariah 7:10 (NIV)**

*"Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor."*

*[Pause and look around at each child]*

God named four kinds of people who especially needed help. Do you know what they all had in common? They were all people who couldn't help themselves very easily!

---

*[Move to center, speak with authority and warmth]*

---

God said, "Help people whose families have died. Help people who don't have enough money. Help people who come from different places. Help ALL of them, even if they're different from you!"

---

*[Walk slowly around the horseshoe]*

---

God was saying, "Don't just be nice to people who are like you. Be nice to people who are different from you too. Don't think mean thoughts about other people."

---

*[Stop walking and face the children directly]*

---

But do you know what God's people did? They didn't want to listen! They turned away from God and covered their ears like this. *[Cover your ears]* They said, "No, we don't want to help those people!"

---

*[Speak with sadness]*

---

This made God very sad. When people stop helping others who need help, everything becomes broken and sad. The people's community fell apart because they stopped caring for each other.

---

*[Pause dramatically]*

---

God's people learned that when you only help people like yourself and ignore people who are different or need help, everyone becomes lonely and sad.

---

*[Speak directly to the children]*

---

Sometimes in our lives, we meet people who need help too. Maybe they're new at school, or they look different from us, or they don't have as much as we do. God wants us to be kind and helpful to them!

---

*[Move closer to the children]*

---

When someone needs help, you can be kind to them. When someone is new or different, you can be their friend. When someone is sad, you can share with them or play with them.

---

*[Speak warmly and encouragingly]*

---

God loves it when we help people who need help. He wants us to be kind to everyone, not just people who are like us. That makes God very happy!

---

### 3. Discussion (5 minutes)

---

**Formation:** Have kids stand up and find a partner. Pairs scatter around the room with space to talk.

---

Find a partner and stand next to them. I'm going to give each pair one question to talk about. Talk to your partner for about one minute. There are no wrong answers, just tell your partner what you think!

---

**Teacher Circulation:** Walk around to each pair. Listen to their discussions. If a pair is stuck, ask "What do you think?" or rephrase the question more simply. Give them time to think, some kids need extra processing time.

---

### Discussion Questions

---

*Select one question per pair based on class size. Save unused questions for next time.*

---

1. How do you think the people felt when God asked them to help different people?
  2. What would you do if someone new came to your class who looked different?
  3. Why do you think God cares about helping people who need help?
  4. How does it feel when someone helps you when you need it?
  5. What happened when God's people said no to helping others?
  6. Who are some people at your school who might need extra kindness?
  7. What's one way you can help someone who is different from you?
  8. How do you think God feels when we help others?
  9. What would happen if everyone in our class helped each other?
  10. Why is it sometimes hard to help people who are different?
  11. What does it mean to be fair AND kind?
-

12. How can we know when someone needs help?

---

13. What makes God happy about the way we treat people?

---

14. How do you feel when someone is kind to you?

---

15. What if someone looks scary but really just needs a friend?

---

16. How can we be brave when helping others feels hard?

---

17. What's the difference between being mean and being helpful?

---

18. How do you think God wants us to treat new kids?

---

19. What would Jesus do if He saw someone who needed help?

---

20. How can we remember to help people like God wants us to?

---

Great discussions! Let's come back together in our circle. Who wants to share what they talked about with their partner?

---

#### **4. Closing Song (2, 3 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Standing in straight lines facing forward

---

Select a song about loving others or God's love. Suggestions: "Jesus Loves Me," "If You're Happy and You Know It," or "This Little Light of Mine." Include movements: hug yourself during "loves me," clap and stomp during "if you're happy," or hold up finger like a candle during "little light."

---

Wonderful singing! Now let's sit down quietly for our prayer time. Sit crisscross on the floor in rows, fold your hands, and let's talk to God together.

---

#### **5. Closing Prayer (1, 2 minutes)**

---

**Formation:** Sitting cross-legged in rows, heads bowed, hands folded

---

*Dear God, thank you for loving everyone and wanting us to help people.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Help us be kind to people who need help, even when they're different from us. Help us share and be good friends to everyone.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Help us remember that you love all people and you want us to help each other. Thank you for loving us so much.*

---

*[Pause]*

---

*Thank you for helping us learn how to be kind like Jesus. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

---

**Alternative, Popcorn Prayer:** If your class is comfortable with it, invite kids to offer short one-sentence prayers about helping others. Examples: "Help me be kind to new kids" or "Thank you for loving everyone."

Remember, God wants us to help people who need help and be kind to everyone, especially people who are different from us. Have a wonderful week, and look for ways to be helpful and kind!

---