

Manna and Mercy: An Elementary Curriculum

WEEK 1 THEME: Manna and Mercy

CORE IDEAS: The Bible is our storybook about God, us, and the universe. Love is best understood through story. God loves us and provides for us no matter what we do. This is manna and mercy.

*Difficult but key words are **highlighted** and may need to be explained repeatedly. Underlined words/phrases are also key and crucial to the connections across lessons.*

PRIMARY RESOURCE:

Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend The Entire Universe by Daniel Erlander

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: The whole Bible ☺ but primarily Exodus 16

STORY: Introduce the title of this series by referring to the theme page which should be displayed on a clothesline or on the wall. Explain the concepts of manna and mercy. Begin with the story of God having mercy on the Israelites in the wilderness and providing manna and meat (quail) to them regularly. Explain debate about what manna was/is. Explain that it began to be thought of as the food of the angels since it came from the sky. Because of this story, the word "manna" has come to generally represent God's provision, God's gifts. Emphasize the words Manna and Mercy and make sure the children understand what they mean.

Reminder saying (displayed where all can read it):

(all say together) God loves us (hand on heart)

by providing manna (arms out)

and mending us with mercy (hug self)

no matter what we do (head back and forth).

Give them a few quick, common examples of familiar Bible stories (see Resource Section) and ask them if the story tells about manna, mercy,

or both. For instance, the story of Hannah who longs for a child would be a manna story because God provides. The story of Peter denying Christ would be a mercy story because Peter is forgiven and becomes a leader of the church.

Next emphasize that we know about these two ways that God loves us by reading from the Bible. But there are many different versions of the Bible. Some short/long, some for children/teens/adults, some in different languages...

Explain that in these lessons we are going to view the Bible through special lenses, our Manna and Mercy glasses (clear lensed glasses provided). The lenses will emphasize how much God loves us by giving us manna and mercy.

LESSON: Bible Notes from God, finger puppets, Circle Statements, Sweet Treat

Each child finds a Bible from those that are scattered in the room and finds the message from God that has been placed inside. When all of the children have come back from finding their Bible and have read their special message, have some read their messages to the group. The group decides if it is a manna message or a mercy message. Have them notice what word is in all of the messages (Love). Discuss why? Also, have the children show what their Bible is like and then discuss how Bibles can be different, but they all have the same messages of God's manna and mercy.

Explain that manna and mercy stories are throughout the Bible, human history, and even in our everyday lives. Then tell a personal story or two). After your story is shared, ask which kind of story? Manna? or Mercy? or Both?

Introduce finger puppets: Manna and Mercy (prairie dogs)

Explain how these prairie dogs are going to visit the children some Sundays. They are very shy and only whisper in adult leaders ears. Explain some relative facts about prairie dogs (see below). They will help

us learn more about Manna and Mercy. Choose how you will have the puppets first interact with or be introduced to the children. Be silly and fun. They might ask for the children's names or comment on their pretty clothes, or comment on the room or church.

Relative Facts about Prairie Dogs:

1. They live deep in the ground to keep away from **predators** like humans.
2. They are very shy but brave.
3. They pop in and out of their holes, carefully watching for predators.
4. They are very social beings who live in community, watching out for one another. They take turns being the **sentinels**, (the watchers).
5. They have amazing ways of **communicating** with each other about **predators** that are nearby. Different barks tell about different types of **predators**.
6. They are reminders that God's family and God's future includes all creation. Isn't it glorious that God's future includes all creation and not just humans!

CLOSING (Worship Area): Manna and Mercy circle: Everyone gets in a circle and is given the Manna and Mercy circle sentences (small squares of paper). If you have a large group of good readers, circles of 4 work well. The leader explains that these are the **themes** (messages) that are repeated over and over in the Bible and how they make a sort of circle. Slowly, while the teacher explains, the children say the sentences one by one around the circle, going faster and faster once explanation is no longer needed. Make it fun!

SWEET TREAT: Explain about the symbolism of Angel Food cake. Manna is considered the food of angels and angel food cake looks somewhat like what manna may have looked like.

End with a quick **prayer** of thanksgiving. Then pass out the cake.

ADAPTATIONS: Children's Bibles would be best for younger children. Young children will need help reading the messages. Using pictures representing the Bible stories would be good visual aids as you tell the Bible stories, particularly for younger children.

SUPPLIES:

- Reminder saying on a poster to be used at the beginning of each story
- Theme page displayed on a clothesline or wall
- M and M glasses, the letter M attached at each temple (if you purchase sunglasses, remove the lens so that the children can see when wearing them)
- One Bible per child, as many children's versions and different varieties as you can
- A note from God in each Bible, (See Resource Section). It would be wonderful if these could be pre-selected for the child with their name on the front of the Bible or in a box/bag and new, but that may not be possible.
- Angel Food Cake, broken into small pieces

RESOURCES:

Notes from God to place in Bibles: *The manna or mercy indication is for the teacher only, not a part of the notes the children find inside the Bibles.*

You can't do anything so bad that I won't love you. I will always **love** you!
God (mercy)

I will know when you are afraid and help you feel brave. I **love** you! God
(manna)

When you are lost, I will help you find your way. I **love** you! God (manna)

When you are sad, I will help you feel better. I **love** you! God (manna)

No matter where you go, I will be with you, even if it is a scary place. I **love** you! God (manna)

I have created you as my child and made you good. I **love** you! God (manna)

I will always help you with big problems. Just ask. I **love** you! God (manna)

When you don't love me, I will still love you. I always **love** you! God (mercy)

When you are confused, ask me for help. I **love** you! God (manna)

When you mess up, you can always ask me to forgive you. I **love** you! God (mercy)

I know when you feel far from me, but you are not ever really far from me. I **love** you! God (manna)

No matter what you do, I forgive you. I **love** you! God (mercy)

Even if you do a bad thing, I **love** you and forgive you. God (mercy)

There is no one who **loves** you more than me. God (manna)

This Bible tells you about our story of love, humans and me. It is for you. I **love** you! God (manna)

If you hurt someone, I will still **love** you and forgive you. God (mercy)

You can't wander away from me. I will always be with you hoping you will love me like I **love** you. God (mercy)

Other people in this Bible and in your life will show you and tell you how much I **love** you. God (manna)

Even if you don't love me for a while, I will always **love** you and forgive you. God (mercy)

I made you to do good things. When you don't do good things, I still **love** you. God (mercy)

Examples of Bible Stories representing Manna: (God loves us by providing):

David and Goliath

Good Samaritan

Esther

Hannah

Woman Who Touched Jesus' Robe

Wine at the Wedding

5 loaves and fishes

Examples of Bible Stories representing Mercy: (God loves us by mending):

Joseph and his brothers

Prodigal Son

Year of Jubilee

Peter denying Jesus

Zacheaus

Woman caught in adultery

Paul

Examples of Bible Stories representing both Manna and Mercy:

Noah

Moses

Woman at the Well

Joseph

Manna and Mercy Circle Statements: (duplicate & cut into squares for children to hold)

MANNA & MERCY CIRCLE

1. God provides – MANNA!
2. Humans decide to become BIG DEALS!
3. Humans learn WE NEED GOD!
4. God forgives – MERCY!

Back to # 1

MANNA & MERCY CIRCLE

1. God provides – MANNA!
2. Humans decide to become BIG DEALS!
3. Humans learn WE NEED GOD!
4. God forgives – MERCY!

Back to # 1

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WEEK 8 THEME: The Wilderness School - Part I

CORE IDEAS: After leaving slavery in Egypt, God had a lot to teach the partner people (Israelites). Most of these lessons were taught through God's gift of manna.

*Note: Difficult but key words are **highlighted** and may need to be explained repeatedly. Underlined words/phrases are crucial to the connections across lessons. Note: Sin has been defined as people trying to become BIG DEALS.*

PRIMARY RESOURCE: *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* by Daniel Erlander pgs. 7-9

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: primarily Exodus 16

STORY: Reminder saying (displayed where all can read it):

(all say together) God loves us (hand on heart)
by providing manna (arms out)
and mending us with mercy (hug self)
no matter what we do (head back and forth).

Review last week's teachings and theme particularly how God freed the partner people (Israelites) from slavery in Egypt, **parted the sea** for them to cross, and sent them into the **wilderness**. Refer to theme pages on clothesline. Introduce today's theme: **The Wilderness School** and pick up the Bible on the altar table while explaining that the story can be found in the 16th part of the book of Exodus, the 2nd book in the Bible. Remind them that Exodus means exit.

Begin by talking about what it would be like to live in a wilderness. Emphasize that eventually the food and water would run out. It would be uncomfortable and scary. Even after all that God had done, some of the partner people wanted to go back to being slaves in Egypt.

God led the partner people into the wilderness to teach them how to live in partnership with God. The wilderness would become God's classroom, the place where the people would learn lessons about how to live as partners. Then other nations will learn from them and become partners with God.

God, the teacher, waited for **teachable moments** to arrive, perfect moments when God's partners were ready to listen and learn.

The first moment came when God's partners grumbled to Moses, their leader, about not having water. They complained that they should have just stayed in slavery in Egypt. Moses took these complaints to God. So God showed Moses how to get water from a rock and then a piece of wood. Later God gave them manna in the morning and **quail** (bird) at night. But gathering the manna was tricky. Through manna living, they learned a lot more lessons about being in partnership with God.

First they had to learn that the manna was God's to give, not theirs to own. God wanted them to see manna as symbolic of everything in creation, the water, the land, everything. Everything is a gift from God. Remind them that this lesson series is called Manna and Mercy and that Manna means everything that God gives us. **Lesson 1: God gives Manna. We own nothing. All is God's. All is gift. All is manna.**

Next they had to learn that the manna had to be gathered early every morning, well almost every morning – more about that later, in order for everyone to have enough. **Lesson 2: Work is **dignified** (important). Work helps God **distribute** (give out evenly) manna.**

God taught them that everyone needed a fair amount even those who were small and weak. When they gathered more than they needed, the extra would disappear. When little was left for someone, they would gather what was there and then later measure and find that they had more. They learned that large families should gather more than small families. No one should try to be a BIG DEAL and get more than they need because God would give just enough for everyone. **Lesson 3: God gives enough for all to be shared by all.**

Some people hid extra manna away for later so that they could be BIG DEALS and have more. This is called hoarding. When they hoarded the manna, it grew maggots and smelled nasty! It was embarrassing to fail at this lesson. Lesson 4: Hoarding causes rot. Hoarding stinks!

Finally, the partner people learned that God wanted them to set aside one day, Saturday, to rest and enjoy their life with God. BUT HOW COULD THEY REST IF THEY HAD TO GATHER MANNA? God showed them by giving them twice as much manna to gather Friday morning. When Friday's manna was set aside, it did not stink! Lesson 5: Sabbath God gives rest so humans can have extra time to enjoy friendship with God, other humans, and creation.

God poured out manna day after day for the many years that it took for the partner people to learn these lessons in the wilderness. Even though God had many teachable moments, the partner people were slow to learn manna living/manna way and forgot many of their lessons.

Even we are still learning these lessons. God hopes that someday humans will learn manna living and practice it every day. Then we would have a world where everyone:

receives from God, thanks God, and shares with others,

where there are no BIG DEALS and everyone gets their fair share,

and where humans live in harmony with all of creation.

This kind of life God calls Shalom, meaning a whole and healthy world.

LESSON: Floor Map Journey

Outside the door: **All take off shoes!** There will be a clipboard for each teacher. It will have your directions. I suggest you set some ground rules before entering (Ideas given below).

On the floor in each classroom will be a map of Eastern Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Promised Land. Stations where the group will stop will be labeled by number and key words. Each station will have a bag of

props in a grocery bag. You simply have them stand with you, listen, and follow your directions. Because of varying group size, you will decide which kids will do what you direct them to do. Others might just watch. Encourage taking turns. Sometimes you will choose only one, sometimes a pair or small group, sometimes all. I want you to be as silly as possible while keeping their bodies under control (i.e. they must stay with you, no running or jumping, etc.). In the Resource Section find your specific instructions. These will be on a clipboard for you outside your closed classroom door.

These activities will need to be quick, but don't go too quickly. **You have 2 lessons to get through all the stations!** When your time is up the first week, finish a station and then close with a prayer. Begin there the next week with a quick overview, pointing to the stations and reviewing what happened.

Stations:

Objects to use or find:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1: Where are we? | Globe |
| 2. Slavery in Egypt | pyramid, bricks |
| Rod of Aaron, 10 Plagues | stick, plastic snake, plastic frogs |
| Passover, Commandment to Remember | cut ribbons |
| 3. Back to Goshen | Home Sweet Home sign,
bag of plastic food, tent,
Promised Land This Way sign, water
bottle, cotton cloud on a stick,
electric lantern |
| 4: Sea is parted | comb |
| Celebrating and Entering the Wilderness | tambourines |
| 5. Out of water | whiner sign, rock |

6. God gives manna whiner sign, Angel Food cake, birds, lessons 1-4 in envelopes each bag of hoarded manna (ammonia on cotton balls in an open baggie)
7. Mt. Sinai (2 chairs with a sign) lightning bolt, 2 sets tablets (painted & cut Styrofoam – 1 flimsy to break easily), Golden calf (spray painted toy), lesson 5 envelope
8. Kadesh Barnea 5 pairs of M and M sunglasses
9. Back into the wilderness

CLOSING: Stay at Station 9 and have the children sit. Talk about a time when they felt lost and tired and discouraged. What helped them? Tie these comments into what the Israelites must have felt and then had to do to survive in the wilderness (i.e. rely on God, family, friends & survival skills that God gives, maps, don't panic, learn to solve problems, rest and try again...). Point out that one of our maps is scripture and then explain how it guides us.

End with a prayer that connects their comments to the Israelites.

ADAPTATIONS: You are the teacher so use your judgment and adapt as you see fit. If children get too rowdy, have them sit.

SUPPLIES: (see **Objects to Use or Find** above), clipboard with instructions outside each room, floor map is made with colored butcher paper and blue painters tape, labels are index cards and are taped on the paper

RESOURCES:

Instructions for the Teacher to the Israelites (children) while in the Wilderness school:

For role-playing, you decide who is who depending on the circumstances: # of children, # of props, & their behavior. Don't worry about gender. Roles may be swapped, shared, and changed as you see fit. They can take

turns carrying things. Try to pretend as much as possible emphasizing the experience of the Israelites. Be dramatic. Have fun being silly while teaching. Keep in mind some know these stories and some have never heard them. Keep them in control, huddled in a group. Tell them:

- they must stay in a tight group or they might get lost in the wilderness ☺
- no grabbing items or opening bags, only you do this unless you tell them to, it might be dangerous since it's the wilderness ☺

ACT = all or those you choose get in character & act out what you are describing.

bold = stations and props.

Green statements are said aloud dramatically.

Green text lists what you transport.

Station 1: Where are we? Gather the kids around the globe.

1. Explain the modern day globe, names may be different from long ago
2. Find and show your home then drag your finger to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula.
3. Explain that a peninsula is a piece of land that sticks out into water, refer to floor map
4. Have them look at the floor map, point to places on the globe, name them, and find them on the map. Searching for station 2, Egypt. Go to station 2.

Station 2: Slavery in Egypt Gather kids around this station. Point out

1. **pyramid** & describe (square bottom, 4 triangle sides)
2. Israelites were slaves & were forced to build the pyramids
3. had to make the bricks by stomping straw into mud with their bare feet **ACT**

4. **ACT** moving the bricks from one place to another. Talk about how their hands, feet and whole bodies must have hurt. Cry out, **"Help us! Lord have mercy!"**
5. **Rod of Aaron (long stick)**. God gave this to Aaron, Moses brother, to use in front of Pharaoh to show God's power. Choose an Aaron.
6. One time he threw the stick down and it turned into a snake. Then he picked it back up again and it was a rod. **ACT**
7. Explain the 10 plagues briefly. One plague was that the Nile River water turned to blood. Aaron began this change by placing the stick in the Nile. **ACT**
8. Another plague was that many frogs came. Scatter the frogs and talk about how horrible it would be to have frogs everywhere. **ACT**
9. Passover: Israelites suffered through plagues too except for the 10th, the last plague. It was the worst. The first born son of Egyptian families died during the night, but this plague "passed over" the Israelites. They called it the Passover.
10. Commandment to Remember: When pharaoh said they could leave Egypt, God told Moses to tell them to remember Passover every year. At the last supper, Jesus was having the Passover meal. Jews still celebrate Passover. One of the ways people remember things is to tie a string around their finger. Tie ribbons around a finger of one or more kids. Prompt them that later you will ask the kids what the string is for.

Take with you: **STICK**

Station 3: Back to Goshen When Israelites first settled in Egypt, they lived in Goshen.

1. Point out signs: **Home Sweet Home, This Way to the Promised Land, & Promised Land** Goshen was near the land God had promised them. (Point to it.) But God knew they weren't ready to go there yet. They had to take the long way. They went into the wilderness to learn some of God's important lessons at God's wilderness school.

2. Gather their things (tent, bag of food, water bottle). Talk about how the Israelites had to take everything they could carry.
3. Direction? The Lord went in front of them in a cloud by day and a fire by night. From here on, have a kid lead the group from station to station, holding up high either the cotton cloud or the lantern – turn it on first. Give different kids a chance to lead.

ACT

Take with you: STICK, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, CLOUD, and LANTERN

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS

Station 4: Sea is parted At the Red Sea, they stopped and panicked.

1. They were being chased too! Choose a Moses. Moses asked God what to do. God told Moses to stretch out the rod of Aaron over the water and God's breath parted the Red Sea. Explain what the word *parted* means and show them the joke (big comb that can part the sea). Did God really use a big comb? No! Moses ACT.
2. To protect them, God moved between the Israelites and Pharaoh's soldiers (in the cloud at day and in the fire at night). Have those two kids go to the back holding their objects up high.
3. Have all of them cross the sea looking from side to side at the amazing walls of water ACT. Tell them of the soldiers' fate (When they crossed the sea the waters came down and drowned them.).
4. **Celebrating and Entering the Wilderness** Once safe and settled, Miriam, Moses' sister, led them in celebrating and dancing with tambourines. Choose a Miriam. Have her say the line "The Lord has triumphed!" while dancing and all repeat and dance too. ACT

Take with you: STICK, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, CLOUD, and LANTERN

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS

Station 5: Out of water

1. Say you're thirsty and ask the child holding the water bottle for water. There is none. Then you place a whiner sign on one of the kids and s/he whines loudly, "Oh no! We're out of water. We're going to die! It was better in Egypt!"
2. God heard their cry and told Moses to touch the stick to the rock and the water poured out. ACT Moses and kid with the water bottle pretend to fill it up.

Take with you: STICK, CLOUD, LANTERN, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, AND WHINER SIGN ON CHILD

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS What are the ribbons for? (To remember the Passover)

Station 6: God gives manna

1. Pretend to eat the food but put it in the station bag. Choose who will wear 2nd whiner sign; ACT "Oh no! We're out of food. We're going to die! It was better in Egypt!"
2. God heard their cries and gave them bread from heaven each morning. They found it on the ground (Manna = Angel Food cake crumbs) and birds (quail) at night for meat.
3. Then God taught them their first lesson about how God gives manna. Open Lesson One envelope and read to them. Discuss.
4. In order for them to be fed, they had to work for it. They would gather the manna in the morning and at night kill, clean, and cook quail to eat. They did this every morning and night but Saturday. Direct them to pick up and/or eat all of the angel food cake crumbs. God's second lesson was about how important work is. Open Lesson 2 envelope. Read. Discuss.
5. Is all cake gone? If not, direct them to get it all, everyone together. The Israelites had to gather all of the manna that was given because there was just the right amount for everyone. This was God's third lesson. Open the Lesson 3 envelope. Read. Discuss.

6. Some Israelites wanted to be BIG DEALS and wanted more food for themselves and their families. So they hid it away to be eaten later. This is **hoarding**. But God showed them! Manna that had been hoarded would quickly rot and stink. **Bag of hoarded manna**. Have them smell the manna (ammonia). Don't have them look at it. God's fourth lesson was about stinky manna. Open the **Lesson 4 envelope**. Discuss. **Take with you: STICK, CLOUD, LANTERN, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, WHINER SIGNS on 2 Kids**

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS

Ask what the ribbon is for. Have whiners do some whining because they are soooo tired!

Station 7: Mt. Sinai They reached large Mount Sinai. God told them to camp there.

1. God showed might by creating a lightning storm, blowing harsh winds, and making trumpet sounds. All **ACT**. Pick up a **lightning bolt**, shake it, lean in the wind, and make trumpet sounds.
2. God asked Moses and Joshua, a young leader, to come to the top of the mountain **ACT** (stand on the chairs) while the people waited. God gave Moses the law written on **tablets of stone** (give the flimsy set only to Moses), written with the finger of God.
3. The Israelites below became impatient and whined. Choose an Aaron. 2 whiners to say to him, **"It's taking too long! We need another God. Aaron, make us a golden cow to worship."** And Aaron melted their jewelry **ACT** and made a **golden cow** for them to worship, an **idol** that was not the one true God. Talk briefly about idols, defining them and giving examples.
4. Moses and Joshua came down from the mountain carrying the tablets, Moses got so angry about the idol that he threw the tablets and they shattered **ACT may need to break them over knee**. Then he threw the golden cow and jewelry into a fire **ACT**. Next he went back up the mountain to ask the Lord to forgive the people **ACT**.

5. The Lord agreed. The Lord created another set of tablets with the law written on it. Give 2nd set to Moses. These tablets then traveled with them wherever they went. Have someone carry them.
6. An important part of God's law was the 10 Commandments. One of these commandments was God's 5th lesson. It is all about the importance of Sabbath. Open Lesson 5 envelope, read, and discuss.

Take with you: STICK, CLOUD, LANTERN, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, WHINER SIGNS ON 2 KIDS, and 1 SET OF TABLETS

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS Ribbons for? Whining!

8: Kadesh Barnea

After many months of traveling, God led them close to The Promised Land to a place called Kadesh Barnea. They decided to check out The Promised Land before trying to enter so they sent 12 spies to check out the land and the people while everyone else waited for the spies.

ACT 5 kids put on sunglasses and sneak over.

1. Spies returned, but only Joshua and Caleb, his friend, wanted to go into The Promised Land. They believed God would protect them. The other spies were too scared. Have all but 2 kids say: "No way should we go into the Promised Land. There are giants!". Then have Joshua & Caleb say, "God will protect us even if there are giants." Let them continue the argument for a moment then vote.
2. The cowards won the argument so they refused to go into The Promised Land so God led them back out into the wilderness. It was obvious to God that the Israelites had not learned to trust God. The lessons on manna living had to continue so they wandered in the wilderness for more 40 years!

Take with you: STICK, CLOUD, LANTERN, TENT, BAG OF FOOD, WATER BOTTLE, WHINER SIGNS ON 2 KIDS, and SET OF TABLETS

CLOUD OR LANTERN LEADS

Station 9: Back into the wilderness Have them all sit and begin the closing. If little time simply do a thanksgiving prayer.

CLOSING: Stay at Station 9 and have the children sit. Talk about a time when they felt lost and tired and discouraged. What helped them? Tie these comments into what the Israelites must have felt and then had to do to survive in the wilderness (i.e. rely on God, family, friends & survival skills that God gives, maps, don't panic, learn to solve problems, rest and try again...). Point out that one of our maps is scripture and then explain how it guides us.

End with a prayer that connects their comments to the Israelites.

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WEEK 18 THEME: The People Want a King

CORE IDEAS: The early days of Israel were mostly days of equality for all, but a debate arose as to whether the Partner People should have a king. Eventually a king was chosen and as the lineage of royalty began, equality lessened so that the power structure in Israel began to resemble Pharaoh's Egypt.

Note: Difficult but key words are **highlighted** and may need to be defined repeatedly. Underlined words/phrases are crucial to the connections across lessons. Note: Sin has been defined as being when people try to become BIG DEALS.

PRIMARY RESOURCE: *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* by Daniel Erlander p. 21-22

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Deuteronomy 17: 14-20; 1st Samuel 7, 8, 10: 17-27, 15, 16: 1-13; 2nd Samuel 11:1-12:15, 1 Kings 10:14-11:13; 1 Chronicles 18: 14

STORY: Review last week's teachings and over all theme particularly that Israel/the Partner People are in the Promised Land sometimes living as God would have them and sometimes not, but God would always show mercy and guide them back to manna living. Introduce today's theme: **The People Want a King**. Refer to theme pages on clothesline. Pick up a Bible and explain that the story today is from Deuteronomy, 1st Samuel, 2nd Samuel, 1 Kings, and Chronicles.

Reminder saying (displayed where all can read it):

(All say together) God loves us (hand on heart)
by providing manna (arms out)
and mending us with mercy (hug self)
no matter what we do (head back and forth).

Introduce yourself as Samuel:

- My mother, Hannah, asked for a baby and promised me to God
- grew up living with the priests and serving with them at the tabernacle (where we worship God)
- last of the judges who helped Israel/the Partner people understand how they could please God
- first of the prophets who warned Israel/the Partner people when they were not pleasing God
- most remember me for anointing the first two kings
- explain about the king debate (see arguments in resource section emphasizing God's desire that there were no rich and poor, powerful and powerless)
- the primary reason for the debate was because people from the nations nearby were stealing, attacking and influencing Israel/the Partner People especially about how and who they should worship - The people were afraid and wanted to be like other nations
- I believed that God did not want us to have a king because it didn't seem to fit with manna living, we should rely on God, not a human leader and a king would encourage some people to become BIG DEALS which is sinful
- The Pro-king people argued so well and for so long that that I finally gave in
- a new possibility – God will help me choose the right man to be king, a man who is faithful and committed to righteousness and mercy
- God and I hoped it would work

1st King: Saul

- God helped me choose a man named Saul
- Saul was handsome, the tallest man I have ever seen, and a dutiful son
- I anointed him king, that means I poured perfumed oil over his head symbolizing God's spirit being put on him (Call up a tall child. Pick up bottle of oil. Have child kneel. Pretend to pour the oil on their head by draping your fingers along their scalp. It will feel like oil.)

- Saul did not become too powerful
- Israel/The Partner People did not become a divided society of rich and poor
- BUT Saul had a lot of problems being king and did not please God so another king was to be found

2nd King, most famous king, David

- God told me to find a new king in the house of Jesse, but it was to be a secret.
- Jesse had 8 sons and lived in Bethlehem. Have you heard of that town before? Yes, that's where Jesus is born. The king that God led me to choose would be an ancestor of Jesus. (If time allows: Do you remember hearing about Rahab, the woman who lived in Jericho who helped Joshua and the Partner People bring the wall down? She joined the Partner people and Jesse was one of her descendants. Rahab - Ruth - they hear about later - Jesse - Mary - Jesus)
- Back to Jesse's sons. Call up 8 children of different sizes. He had many grown sons, but when I saw all his sons, God told me to anoint the youngest, smallest son. Pretend to anoint like before.
- David served King Saul for many years. He became a best friend to King Saul's son, Jonathan.
- David became a great military leader which was great training for a king!
- Eventually David became a great king. God loved him and he loved God. Even when he sinned, he cried for God's mercy. This is a difficult thing for kings to do. God granted him mercy - as God always does, and helped David be a great king all his life.

3rd King, Solomon

- I did not anoint King Solomon; he was King David's son. I was dead by then.
- Though Solomon was known for being very wise, he turned from the manna way

- He gathered riches and made his friends rich with land and money, he had 700 wives and many more hundreds of servants, built a huge temple (contrast with the tabernacle – a tent where they worshiped God). He tried to be a BIG DEAL. That is sinful!
- God was disappointed for Israel/the Partner People had become like Egypt with a king like a pharaoh, a few with most of the wealth, and many who were poor and living like slaves.

LESSON: Decorating crowns (for younger groups) and **Mock King Debate** (for older groups)

Decorating crowns (younger group):

Begin by reminding them in simple terms how the Partner People argued about whether or not they should have a king. Explain some of the reasons on both sides (see arguments in resource section below). Then explain that the side of choosing a king won the debate. God wanted them to have a godly or good king, not a BIG DEAL king that would be sinful so the children are going to decorate crowns that would encourage a godly and good king.

Give the children each a white crown. In the middle of the table put the collection of words and tape (don't put the art supplies yet). Some words will be godly characteristics and some will be characteristic of BIG DEALS or sin (see word list in resource section). Read the words aloud to them, explain the concepts in concrete terms (i.e. "A king who was like this would...") and help them decide if that is a godly/good characteristic that they would want their king to have or if it is a BIG DEAL/sinful characteristic. All godly/good words are then taped to the inside of their crown so that when the king wears the crown, those good characteristics can influence him (seep into his brain ☺). Once the words are chosen and taped inside, then put out the art supplies for decorating the crown.

Refer to the directions for the closing described below but put in simple terms for the young children.

King Debate (older groups):

You will find 2 lecterns/podiums in the room. Each will have a sign representing either wanting a king (pro-king: a crown) or not wanting a king (no-king: a crown with a line through it). The teacher sits to the side apart from the children. On either side of the teacher on the floor will be containers each with the pro-king or no-king symbols. Each container will have folded sentence strips arguing that position. The teacher begins by reminding them that the Partner People argued for years about whether or not to have a king. Emphasize God's desires in this process (the story above & the arguments listed in the resource section will help you summarize).

Explain the concept of a debate (i.e. a verbal contest, 2 groups on opposite sides of an issue, trying to convince people of their position through good verbal reasoning and passionate speaking). You might mention the movie "The Great Debaters," a movie about African American college debates. In debates, what the speaker really believes is less important than being able to communicate their side of the argument. So the children may have to argue something that goes against what they really believe.

The teacher explains that the kids will be engaging in a staged debate, a mock debate. They will pick a folded strip of paper, alternating from one container to another. They will show the strip of paper to the teacher, and then read the statement from the correct lectern/podium. Each strip will contain an argument (see sentence strips in resource section). Their job is to speak clearly, dramatically and passionately. The teacher will need to explain and demonstrate how they might do this (raised voice, use of hands, etc.). They show the sentence to the teacher to make sure they can read it. Whisper while you explain words. The teacher then prompts them to go to the correct podium and act dramatically, passionately and speak clearly. Be silly with this. Over-dramatize. If they don't dramatize well, encourage them to try it again.

There are more arguments in favor of a king so if you get through all of the arguments, you will run out of the No-king arguments first. When all arguments are read, stop the debate and explain that those who wanted a king won the argument and King Saul was selected and **anointed** by Samuel. This word would have been defined earlier in the story but explain it again.

CLOSING (Worship area): Gather the children at the worship center in your room (small table). Talk about God's role in this debate. This aspect will have been emphasized in the story. Have them list characteristics that they would want in a king (wise, fair, godly...) and characteristics that they would not want in a king (proud, mean, arrogant...). Then remind them that we do not have a king in the USA but we do have a president. Talk about how a president is different from a king. When we have a presidential election, talking about the candidate's characteristics might be important for choosing a president. If time allows, mention the role of God in this process for you.

Then end with a prayer that ties together the story of the Partner People and our presidential election. Don't get into political issues or allow the children to do this.

ADAPTATIONS: Younger children will be doing a different activity as described above. Conversation should be at their level. Abstract terms should be used, but their concepts should be communicated in concrete terms as much as possible. Because of the many abstract terms in the Manna and Mercy series, it helps if teachers explain what an abstract term looks like, noting that much of the manna way is like the culture of an early elementary classroom i.e. sharing – not hoarding, following the rules (law) etc.

For the older children, it is important to keep in mind that some of them will still be concrete thinkers so relating abstract terms to behavior is still very important.

SUPPLIES: The storyteller will need a bottle of oil. A costume is optional.

The younger groups will have set aside the following supplies:

- multiple copies of words that are positive and negative characteristics of a king
- clear tape dispensers
- white crowns
- sticker jewels
- crayons

The older groups will have

- two lecterns/podiums with a sign on each indicating one position of the king argument
- labeled containers with the folded sentence strips inside on both sides of the teacher's chair

RESOURCES: Sentence Strips & King Characteristic Words

King Characteristic Words:

Godly words:

Loving

Kind

Fair

Forgiving

Merciful

Generous

Humble

Devout

BIG DEAL Words:

Proud

Selfish

Mean

Hateful

Pushy

Rich

Powerful

Arrogant

Sentence Strips

Pro-king Arguments: (total of 12)

A king will represent us when other nations want to relate to us or trade with us.

A king will have an army who will keep us safe from neighbors who want to hurt us. He will protect us!

A king will be our link to God. He will be the one who can help us understand how to worship God rightly and be a godly people.

A king will settle fights among us. He will be wise and know God's ways.

Our king will be the best partner with God. He will lead us in the ways of God. He will not hurt us.

A king will be a leader like Abraham and Moses and give honor to God.

We will not be afraid of our king. He will be a wise and godly king who loves us.

Our king will be a godly king who is one of us and loves God and manna living!

A king will be like God in human form that we can understand and follow.

A king will teach his sons the right ways to lead us in the future so that all of our generations of children will be led by a godly king.

A strong and wise king will increase our power and influence in all the land. Other nations will admire us.

A handsome, strong, and godly king will be a grand symbol of our people and our nation.

No king Arguments: (total of 8)

God should be our only king!

If we feel unsafe, then we should cry out to God for help and leadership, not a king!

Kings are too powerful. They can change the way we worship God. They will ask us to bow down to them.

God wants us to live as equals. No one should be a BIG DEAL. That is sinful!

A king will become rich and have more land and surround himself with others who he will make rich and give land to. We will no longer all be equal.

A king will charge taxes to pay for his castle and rich ways. We will become poor!

Other nations have kings. God wants us to be a nation different from other nations and show them how to be a nation of equal people.

We will be become like Egypt. A king is just another name for Pharaoh! We will become slaves again, doing labor for the king.

Manna and Mercy: An Elementary Curriculum

WEEK 29 THEME: Parables and Gospel Accounts

Part 1 (Fed, Forgiven, & Found)

CORE IDEAS: Jesus continued the tradition of teaching about manna living through storytelling and his interactions with others. There are connections between the stories Jesus told (parables) and the stories we have about Jesus (gospel accounts).

Note: Difficult but key words are **highlighted** and may need to be defined repeatedly. Underlined words/phrases are also key and crucial to the connections across lessons. Note: Sin has been defined as being when people try to become BIG DEALS.

PRIMARY RESOURCE: *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* by Daniel Erlander pgs. 43-50

SCRIPTURES (beginning verses): Matthew 9:18; Luke 5:27, 13:6, 14:15, 15:4, 18:9; John 6:3, 8:3

STORY: Reminder saying: (displayed where all can read it)

(all say together) God loves us (hand on heart)

by providing manna (arms out)

and mending us with mercy (hug self)

no matter what we do (head back and forth).

Review last week's teachings and over all theme (see squares on clothesline) particularly who John the Baptist was. Explain that over the next 3 weeks the children will be hearing a variety of Jesus' parables and connecting them with gospel accounts of Jesus. Pick up a Bible and explain that these stories come from the 4 gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Introduce today's theme: **Parables and Gospel Accounts Pt. 1 (Fed, Forgiven, & Found)**. Refer to theme pages on clothesline.

Begin by emphasizing that Jesus continued the tradition of teaching about manna living but he did this through his actions (**gospel accounts**) and his stories (**parables**).

- Explain the difference between gospel accounts in the Bible (what Jesus did) and Jesus' parables in the Bible (stories Jesus told to explain).
- Beside each parable below is a word that you will emphasize while telling the parable. This is the key word that the children will use to connect the parable to the gospel account during their lesson time. There will be word signs within reach for you to hold up while talking about each of these key concepts in the parables.
- Tell the 3 parables. Use your own words. Don't read them. Define difficult words like those that are highlighted.

Key Words:

Fed

Forgiven

Found

Parables:

great **banquet** - Luke 14:15

tax collector & **Pharisee** - Luke 18:9

Lost coin or sheep - Luke 15:4

LESSON: Shamrock Connections

The lesson will work the same for this week and the next 2 weeks. The storyteller will tell 3 parables. In your rooms there will be 3 tables set up with foam pages cut into pieces that, when put together, will make an object. The object for this week is shamrocks/clovers. **You decide if you want to connect all three shamrocks at the same time or do one shamrock at a time.** Answers are in the resource section.

After you have talked about the symbolic meaning of shamrocks (see below), you will go to the table labeled **parables**. You will find 3 clover leaves that have a summary of the parables attached to them. The children would have just heard the 3 parables, but go over them again briefly. Have a child/ren hold each piece and then move to the table labeled *key words*. Find the key words that go with each parable. Once the parable/s and key word/s are in the same child's hands, have the child/ren bring the two pieces that they

are now holding to the table labeled *gospel accounts*. There you will find 3 more leaves with 3 different gospel accounts attached to them. These stories will be new to some. Read/tell these stories while encouraging the children to listen for connections. Then have them choose which parable and key word goes with which gospel account thus having all 3 pieces of the puzzle.

Once all three pieces are chosen, add the stem and have the children put the puzzle together. Once all three puzzles are done, consider your time. If you have time, you can pull out the extra shamrock puzzle (in a zip lock bag) or you can go straight to the closing.

Begin by talking about shamrocks/clovers: (show photo)

- Symbol of: Irish/Ireland, St. Patrick who brought Christianity to that island, St. Patrick's Day
- Thought to be a tool St. Patrick used to explain and represent the trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
- They sometimes have 4 leaves. These are considered lucky!

Then move to the parables and follow the directions described above.

CLOSING (Worship area): Have the children bring the shamrock puzzles to the worship center in your room (small table). Placing them on the floor is fine. Begin discussing modern applications of these ideas. How might new stories of these 3 (or 4) concepts be seen in today's world?

Say a prayer thanking God for the opportunity to hear Bible stories, learn from them, and make them meaningful in our own lives.

ADAPTATIONS: Teachers will decide whether their groups can handle talking about all the key concepts at once or whether they should do one shamrock at a time. If the children cannot read, then the stories may be told.

For younger children, conversation should be at their level. Abstract terms should be used, but their concepts should be communicated in concrete terms as much as possible.

For the older children, it is important to keep in mind that some of them will still be concrete thinkers so relating abstract terms to behavior is still very important but encourage abstract thinking. Give examples when applicable to help with understanding.

Always, encourage the children and provide answers or ask for help from other children when you think a child needs help.

SUPPLIES: For the story teller: signs of key words will be available to hold up while telling the stories

For the lesson:

- photo of shamrocks
- 3 tables with 3 leaves of 3 shamrocks divided into 3 groups: parables, key words, and gospel accounts
- labels will be on the tables
- 3 stems to add
- in a bag you will have an additional shamrock with all its parts to use if time allows

RESOURCES: (The last line is the extra shamrock)

Key Words:

Fed

Forgiven

Found

Given hope

Gospel Accounts:

loaves & fishes John 6:3

adulterous woman John 8:3

recruits/eats w/ Matthew Luke 5:27

Jairus' daughter raised Matt. 9:18

Parables:

great banquet Luke 14:15

tax collector & Pharisee Luke 18:9

Lost coin or sheep Luke 15:4

Barren fig tree Luke 13:6