

middle school



Lesson 6 / October 6, 2024

A Merciful and Just God

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1



Lesson 6

Focus:

God is merciful and just.

Lesson 6

Bible Basis:

Genesis 4:1-16

Lesson 6

Memory Verse:

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

—Psalm 103:8

Students will explore the impact of God’s justice and mercy as they watch a courtroom example.

Materials:

- Internet access
- Whiteboard and markers (or screenshared document)

If your class is meeting online, do the following timeline on a screenshared document.

Prior to your group time, draw a straight line on the whiteboard. Write the word “birth” at one end of the line and “death” at the other end of the line. Draw this line as long as you possibly can (you might start at the bottom left hand corner and draw your line diagonally up to the upper right hand corner). Students will be adding events to this line during group time.

As students enter, direct them to the whiteboard and invite them to add a possible/potentially big life event where it might happen along the line. For example: finishing elementary school; starting middle school; graduating from high school, college, or university; marriage; career; kids; graduate school; career change; having children leave the home (empty nest); retirement, etc. Each student should write something different and should try to fit it in where it would logically come in the timeline of life.

After the timeline looks full, have students each come up with one life-changing, difficult scenario based on a big life event on the board (for example if “kids” is written on the timeline, a student might now write, “child born prematurely”). Other examples of what students might write could include: getting diagnosed with a severe illness, failing a class or grade, losing a grandparent, getting a college scholarship, marriage, starting a family, moving because of a job, being laid off or losing a job, severely injured in an accident, losing a loved one due to neglect or a crime, being cheated out of money in a scam, experiencing debt, etc. These events should correspond with the events already written on the line. Invite each student to add a scenario (you might want to write them in the appropriate spot as your students call them out to avoid sprawling entries that take too much space). **DO NOT ERASE THE BOARD!** (If your class is meeting online, you can stop sharing the document until Step 4.) This timeline will be used again in Step 4.

Life is filled with all kinds of twists and turns—some of them expected, and others not. Sometimes really bad things happen in life—take this man who lost his brother due to a young man’s violence. Let’s watch to see how the brother interacts with the man who killed his brother.

Share this video with your students [3:51; start at 0:25; stop at 2:51]:

Murder victim's brother to share story of forgiveness for convicted killer on world stage

<https://www.wbaltv.com/article/murder-victims-brother-to-share-story-of-forgiveness-for-convicted-killer-on-world-stage/42710743>

After watching the video, invite students to answer the following questions.

- **How would you feel if you experienced the pain this man experienced—of knowing his brother was forever gone from this earth?** (Answer will vary. Most students will feel sadness and some anger at the person who took this man’s brother from him.)
- **What do you think went through Kimyon’s mind when Darryl spoke forgiveness instead of hate to him?** (Answers will vary. Most students will say she was probably shocked and overwhelmed.)
- **Has there ever been a time when you displayed mercy toward someone who wronged you, or when someone extended mercy toward you? Tell us about it.**
- **Have you or someone you have known ever been shown mercy when justice was deserved?** (Invite students who want to share about this instance to do so.)

Justice was served, and Kimyon served a sentence for this mistake. However, mercy also was shown by the victim’s brother, Darryl Green. Is it possible for mercy and justice to co-exist? God is merciful and just. That is what today’s lesson is all about. Dig in to find out more.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher’s guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

A Merciful and Just God

for use as
STEP 4 

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Bible Basis:

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Lesson 6

Memory Verse:

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Materials:

- Index cards
- Pens/pencils

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

People often wonder how mercy and justice can co-exist. If the punishment fits the crime, then how can there be mercy? The description found in Genesis 4 of Cain and Abel is the first account of murder taking place in the Bible. It is interesting to note that a phrase used way back then—“Am I my brother’s keeper?”—in Genesis 4:9 is still used commonly today when people don’t want to be held responsible for another person.

God used this instance to demonstrate how justice and mercy can be found together. Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him. God knew immediately of this injustice, “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:11b). God had no choice but to serve up justice by putting Cain under a curse. Yet when Cain worried he would die as a result, God intervened by placing a mark on Cain so he would not be killed. It is an interesting way that God handled this situation, and it can teach us today about justice and mercy.

Redirect students to the timeline used at the beginning of today’s group time. Have volunteers add ways a person could show “mercy” or “justice” in some of the life scenarios listed. For example, if “lost a job” was the life event, how might a person act showing both justice and mercy? (Answers might include: Talk with human resources about the cause of the job loss [justice], not badmouth the company even if it seemed an unfair job loss [mercy]). This level of thinking is complex, so if even a few scenarios are found where students see where mercy can be applied found, praise your students on thinking through these concepts well. Let them know that this is a difficult topic that is being covered today.

Have your students take a few moments and think about some injustice they feel has been done to them. Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home) and encourage them to think and write about a way they can show mercy regarding the incident they thought of silently. After students have done so, ask:

➤ **How do you resolve issues of justice and mercy?** (Answers should include by praying about the situation and also by forgiving people who may have done injustice to you.)

Invite students to ponder these answers on their own. Encourage each person in the room to consider working at resolving conflict this week and how they will do so by showing God's mercy.

Conclude the class time in prayer, asking for wisdom to know when to demand justice and how to show mercy in the midst of it. Remind students as they leave that God asks us to pray for wisdom and that not all of life's problems have simple solutions. Note that the Bible has been given to us to help us with life and that we can always count on God's justice and mercy in our lives.

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