

Junior Soldiers

Unit 5 : Lesson 10



Father of Compassion

PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand that God is a Father of compassion and that His love is evident through His interactions with humanity throughout history.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honour your father and mother” - which is the first commandment with a promise - “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Ephesians 6: 1-3

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Psalm 103: 1-19

For some children, Father’s Day may be a difficult day to celebrate so it is really important to know your children and be sensitive to their various home situations when planning your lesson. For the children who have a healthy family life, Father’s Day is an opportunity for them to thank God for their dads and honour them by sharing their love and appreciation. This lesson was created primarily to encourage, support and build up those children who may never have experienced a good example of a father figure.

Through a study of Psalm 103, the children will discover that God’s love is evident through His deeds over the course of history. They will illustrate His compassion through artwork, act out His compassion through a game of charades, and demonstrate His compassion by encouraging others.

What you will need:

For ‘Connecting In’

- Bibles
- A range of Father’s Day cards
- Some blank card folded into a card shape
- A range of ‘traditional’ Father’s Day presents e.g. socks, slippers, chocolates, aftershave, books, DVDs etc.

For ‘The Main Thing’

- Bible
- Chalkboard/whiteboard or large sheet of butchers paper
- Red and white construction paper hearts
- Textas/crayons/coloured pencils
- Compassion art example

For 'Tying In'

- Bright-coloured sticky-notes (*five or more*) in envelopes (*one envelope for each child*)
- If your prep time allows, personalize the envelopes with each student's name and a sticky note that encourages them individually.

For 'Home & Beyond'

- More bright-coloured sticky notes
- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child



Connecting In

Father's Day...

For this activity you will need a range of Father's Day cards, some blank cardboard folded into the shape of a card and some 'traditional' Father's Day presents e.g. socks, slippers, chocolates, aftershave, books, DVDs etc.

Sit the children and leaders in a circle with the cards, blank card and presents laid out in the centre for the children to look at, think about and engage with (*this will give you a window into how some of the children might feel about their dads and opportunity to share*):

- I wonder which of these Father's Day cards you would choose for your dad. Why?
- What might you write on the blank card for your dad for Father's Day?
- I wonder which of these Father's Day presents you would choose for your dad. Why?
- What else might you choose that is not shown here?



Link: Father's Day is a day set aside to honour our dads and show them how much they mean to us. Find and read together Ephesians 6: 1–3.

'It is very important to honour your parents. What do you think honour means? (*Give the children some time to give examples of what this might mean—to honour someone means to love and respect them*). For some of us it is easy to show love and respect for our dads because they are great or they might be great examples of Christianity. However, this is not the same for everyone; for some children it is hard to honour their dad. Some children might have never met their dad or perhaps their dad has left the family home and you don't get to see him. Or maybe some dads have made bad choices and it is hard to respect them.

No matter what, dads are just like the rest of us, they are not perfect because we all make bad choices at different times. Even some famous dads in the Bible made some bad choices that hurt others. For example, in 1 Samuel chapters 18–20 you can read about Saul, the king of Israel, and his jealousy and hatred for David. Even though Saul's son, Jonathan, and David were best friends, Saul tried to kill David and forced him to leave, which made Jonathan and David very sad. Later on, Saul regretted what he had done.

However, there is one 'dad' who is perfect. He is sometimes called our Heavenly Father. He was the dad of Jesus, but He is known as the father of all so He is our dad too. Today we are going to explore this some more.'
(*Find and read 2 Corinthians 1:3.*)

The Main Thing

Activity #1 'Compassion Action'...

Have children listen for what God has done to show His love. Have someone read Psalm 103 in sections (verses 1–6, verses 7–12, and verses 13–19) while somebody else is ready to write up what the children highlight as the ways that God has shown love. (*You might like to use your voice to highlight God's specific deeds.*) Compile the list on a chalkboard/whiteboard or large sheet of butchers paper after each section has been read, briefly explaining each entry on the list. Here is a reference for you:



(Verses 1–6)

- He has forgiven our sins.
- He has healed diseases.
- He has redeemed our lives (saved us!).
- He has crowned us with love and compassion.
- He has satisfied our desires with good things.
- He is righteous.
- He gives justice to the oppressed.

(Verses 7–12)

- He has led people throughout history.
- He shows compassion and grace.
- He is slow to anger.
- He is love.
- He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

(Verses 13–19)

- He has compassion on his children.
- He made us.
- He is eternal.
- His love is always with those who fear him.
- His kingdom rules over all.

Activity #2 'Compassion Art Hearts'...

You will need some red and white construction paper hearts (using up most of the sheet of an A4 sheet of paper), textas or other drawing utensils, the lists of how God has shown love and compassion and some Bibles.

Emphasise with the children that what God has done for us throughout history—like some of the things on the compassion lists—shows His love for us. Distribute red and white paper hearts and drawing implements. Have the children choose one of God's deeds that have been listed and draw a picture to represent this. (*You might like to have an example to share with the children.*) When they have finished with their drawing it would be good to get them to write the statement that they chose from the list on the bottom of the heart and the reference (Psalm 103). (*You might like to collect these hearts and display them somewhere in the church to share with others.*)

Activity #3 'Compassion Charades'...

Divide the students into groups of three or four. Have each group choose one of God's deeds (*or you might like to assign them*). Give them 3–5 minutes to come up with a charade that acts out and demonstrates that specific statement that shows how God showed love or compassion. It would be good to share an example with the children to help them. Have them act out the deed for the other groups to guess.

'God shows His love for us through the things that He does. Another word like love is compassion. Compassion is 'love in action'. It means that if you can see or know that someone is sad and hurting, you respond by doing something about it.

Our Heavenly Father is a father of compassion. He knows that life can be difficult and challenging and, sometimes, sad, but as we learnt today, God has shown His love through the things that He has done for us and continues to do for us.

Have you accepted that God loves you? Have you let Him love others through you? The Bible verses that we read out from Ephesians talked about doing what is right, honouring others and enjoying life. You know: they apply to our relationship to God, as much as they do to our relationship with our parents. If we seek to live as God wants us to (doing what is right), and we honour God (as the Bible instructs us to), then we will enjoy life so much more.

This doesn't mean we won't face hard times and bad days, but it will mean the God of compassion is with us, loving us and comforting us.'



Tying In

Activity #4 'Kids of Compassion'...

'We have talked about how God shows His love and compassion to us, but God wants us too to show love and compassion to others, too (*find and read together Mark 12:30–31*). God wants us to love others as much as we love ourselves and to treat others the way that we would want them to treat us. As a group, brainstorm ways that God can show His love through us: through the things that we say, the things that we think and the things that we do, e.g. doing chores at home without complaining, helping a younger sibling, visiting someone who is ill, praying for people, asking how you can help, etc.'

'I am sure that you all love to get messages that encourage you or that make you smile—sometimes they may be letters or little notes left for you, text messages, emails etc. One way to show love in action to others is through an encouraging note.'

(Distribute five or more bright-coloured sticky notes to each child in an envelope. If your prep time allows, personalize the envelopes with each student's name and a sticky note that encourages them individually. On each sticky note, have them write or draw an encouraging note to a friend, parent, church leader, sibling, whomever. Give them examples like 'Dad: I love how you make me laugh', or 'Mom, I love spending time with you', or 'Brother, you are really good at basketball'. For some of the younger children you might like to get them to draw a picture and dictate to you their notes to add.)

Close in prayer...

Thank God that He is a father of compassion, and that He shows us how much He loves us through the things He has done and the things that He is still going to do, and pray that each of the children and leaders will know God's love for them and show it to others through the things that they do and say.

It would be good to have the children pray for their dads and for each other.

Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Show Love & Compassion...

- Give the children an extra five sticky notes that they can take home and, as a family, can decide on compassionate acts that they can show to each other and/or to neighbours.

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