

David Helps Mephibosheth



Scripture Reference:

[2 Samuel 9](#)

Suggested Theme:

God is kind. Be kind to others.

Memory Verse: “Don’t ever stop being kind and truthful. Let kindness and truth show in all you do.” [Proverbs 3:3, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

King David remembered his good friend Jonathan. He found out that before Jonathan died, he had had a son named Mephibosheth. David had Mephibosheth brought before him. He gave Mephibosheth all of the land that had belonged to Saul. He also gave him servants and told him he would always care for him. He treated him like a son. David did not wait until Mephibosheth asked for help. He gave kindness freely.

Background Study:

Israel was a United Kingdom under David’s rule. After many years of being divided into many parts, Israel now had a central government and a capital, Jerusalem. The tabernacle containing the Ark of the Covenant was now in Jerusalem, and this city was now the centre of worship for the nation.

Several years had passed since David became the king. David still missed his good friend Jonathan. Jonathan had died in battle with his father, Saul. David had never forgotten his covenant with Jonathan ([1 Samuel 20:15, 42](#)). Though David suffered greatly because of Saul’s jealous wrath, David did not retaliate against Saul’s family. He did not tolerate the abusive treatment of any of the members of Saul’s family. Still, he wished there was something more he could do.

It may seem odd to us that David would try to find out if Jonathan’s descendants were still living. It was a common practice in Bible-time cultures for a new king who was not descended from the previous king to wipe out all the relatives of the previous king. This was done to prevent any of them from trying to reclaim the throne. David did not want Saul’s descendants killed, but he didn’t know what happened to them. As the assassination of Saul’s other son – Ish-Bosheth ([1 Samuel 4](#)) – had shown, some military men may have taken it upon themselves to kill the members of Saul’s family.

David was told that Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan, was alive and living near Jerusalem. David immediately ordered his servants to bring Mephibosheth to the palace. When Mephibosheth arrived, he was probably very nervous because he was uncertain of the king’s intentions. The descendants of the deposed king would not want to be brought before the new king.

David, however, surprised Mephibosheth. David was overjoyed to be able to help his friend Jonathan’s son. David gave Mephibosheth all the lands that had belonged to Saul. This ensured that Mephibosheth and his descendants would always be provided for. In addition, David bestowed a tremendous honour on Mephibosheth – he was to take his meals at the king’s table. David had already ensured that Mephibosheth and his family would not go hungry, so this gesture was not intended to keep Mephibosheth from starving. It symbolized to the

nation that David had accepted the grandson of Saul as if Mephibosheth were a member of his own family!

David was far from perfect, but he was exactly the kind of man God wanted ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)). God is intimately concerned with the weak and disadvantaged in our world. David demonstrated that same concern in his treatment of Mephibosheth. God calls us to share this same spirit of concern for those in need.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Write the word “KINDNESS” in bold letters in the middle of the paper. (Or, if the children cannot read yet, copy a small picture depicting kindness onto the middle of a piece of paper) Pass the paper around to each child and tell them to tear off a piece of the paper without tearing any of the letters. Keep passing it around until someone tears the word or until it becomes too difficult. This is just a fun way to begin talking about the word kindness. “What does kindness mean? Has anyone ever been kind to you?” Share your own stories. “In today’s story we are going to learn about a time when King David was very kind to someone.”

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The Story:

Many years had passed since David became King of all of Israel. He tried to be a very good king. He tried to be kind to everyone. If someone needed help, then David tried to be kind and help them. If someone was sad, David was kind and tried to do things to make them happy.

Mephibosheth was the son of David’s old friend, Jonathan. Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth’s grandfather, King Saul, were both dead. They had died when Mephibosheth was just a little boy. When Mephibosheth was a little boy, he had a nurse take care of him. On the terrible day King Saul and Jonathan died, something bad happened to Mephibosheth. A messenger came and told everyone that Mephibosheth’s father and grandfather were dead. The little boy’s nurse picked him up and started to carry him. Somehow, the nurse dropped little Mephibosheth. When he fell, Mephibosheth’s legs were badly hurt. They were so badly hurt that, for the rest of his life, he could never walk.

Many years had passed, and Mephibosheth was a grown man with his own sons. David did not know about Mephibosheth. He thought all of Jonathan’s sons were dead. Sometimes, David remembered what it was like when he and his good friend, Jonathan, used to do fun things together. Jonathan had loved David, and David had loved Jonathan.

David remembered the last time he had seen Jonathan. Jonathan had saved David’s life. David remembered a promise he had made to Jonathan. If anything happened to Jonathan, David had promised that he would take care of Jonathan’s family.

The more David thought about Jonathan, the more he wanted to keep his promise. David had an idea. He decided to ask Saul’s old servant, Ziba, about Jonathan’s family.

“Ziba, you were Saul’s servant. You knew Jonathan and his family. Does Jonathan have any children that are still alive,” he asked.

Saul’s servant, Ziba, answered, “There is one son, King David. His name is Mephibosheth. Something very sad happened to Mephibosheth when he was little. He cannot walk.”

“Ziba, I command you to find Mephibosheth and bring him to me.”

Then Ziba went quickly and found Mephibosheth. At first, Mephibosheth was afraid to meet David. He was worried that David might try to hurt him. Sometimes, new kings do that to the children and grandchildren of the old king.

But that is not what David did. King David welcomed Mephibosheth. He told him about how Jonathan had been his good friend. The king probably told him how Jonathan used to give him many gifts. King David also told

Mephibosheth about the special promise that he had made to Jonathan. The king wanted to do something special for his friend's son.

Mephibosheth could hardly believe what he was hearing! "Oh no, King David, I am not worthy of this honour," exclaimed Mephibosheth.

"No, Mephibosheth, I promised your father that I would always take care of you. Other people have taken the land that belonged to Saul and Jonathan and your family. I will now give all of it back to you. Also, I would like to make a special place at my table for you. Anytime you want to come and eat with me or visit me at the palace you can come. You will never have to worry about anything because I will always take care of you," said David.

Mephibosheth went away happily to tell his family the good news. He told everyone about the kind king. David kept his promise to Mephibosheth and took care of him for the rest of his life.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

Review:

1. Who was Jonathan's son? (Mephibosheth)
2. Why was Mephibosheth unable to walk? (His nurse had dropped him when he was little)
3. Why did David take care of Mephibosheth? (Because he had promised Jonathan to care for his family)
4. Why did new kings often get rid of the old king's family? (In case the family members tried to be the king instead)
5. What did King David do for Mephibosheth? (Gave him all of Saul's land, invited him to come to the palace and eat whenever he wanted, and said he would always take care of him.)
6. God chose David to be king because of his heart. What does this story show you about David's heart?
7. God cares very much for people who have struggles like Mephibosheth, who couldn't walk and whose dad had died (Jonathan). What other groups of people does God care very much about? (God loves everyone, but God also cares very much for those who are sick, hurting, poor, hungry, sad, etc.)
8. What did this story teach you about God?

Reflection:

1. What is something you wonder about in this story?
2. Mephibosheth couldn't walk. What do you think he did or used to help him go where he needed to?
3. How do you think Mephibosheth felt when David's soldiers took him to King David? Why?
4. How do you think David felt when he saw Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son?

5. If you were David, what would you have said to Mephibosheth when you saw him?
6. When has someone been kind to you?
7. Who can you be kind to today? What about this week?
8. When has God been kind to people in the Bible? What other stories of people in the Bible being kind, do you know?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Happy all the Time \(Inright, outright\) Song](#)
- [I've Got Something in My Pocket Song](#)
- [L-O-V-E Song](#)
- [Love is Something If You Give It Away Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Make a collage. Use old magazines to find pictures of people being kind. Cut the pictures out and glue them to a poster. Children could make individual ones, or the group could do one together.
- Encourage children to act out situations in which people are kind.
- Let volunteers try doing basic tasks (getting around the room, opening a door, carrying something, etc.) without using their legs. Discuss what life must have been like for Mephibosheth.
- Use separate pieces of paper to write each of the letters in Mephibosheth's name. Mix them up and have the children put them in the correct order. You could make two sets of cards and let two teams see who can put them in order first.
- If an adult group is meeting at the same time as you teach the children, you could arrange a visit. Make arrangements with the adult leader so the children can visit and quiz them. The children can come in and pass out papers and pencils to the adults. One child can ask them to write the name of Jonathan's lame son on the paper. They should then collect all the papers and bring them back to your session to see how many knew his name. Kids think it's great to stump the adults!



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable

reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Craft: Kindness wreath \(Christianity cove\)](#)
- [Lesson plan \(Storage Clover\)](#)

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