Lesson

Engaging Introduction

Good morning, everyone! Today, we're going to talk about something really interesting from the Bible. Let’s start with a question. Have any of you ever gotten in trouble for something you didn’t do on purpose? Like maybe you accidentally bumped into someone, and they thought you did it on purpose? How did that feel? It can be kind of scary, right? Because you didn’t mean to hurt anyone, but now you’re worried about getting into trouble.

In the Bible, there's a story about something called the "Cities of Refuge." These were special places God told Joshua to set up so that people who accidentally hurt others could be safe. It's like getting a “pause” where you can explain what happened without anyone rushing to blame you. Don’t you think that sounds fair and kind? God has always been fair and kind, and He wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to be heard.

Our Bible lesson today comes from Joshua chapter 20. This chapter tells us all about these Cities of Refuge and why they were important. We'll learn how God wants us to treat people fairly and make sure everyone is safe. So let's get ready to dive into this story and see what we can learn from Joshua and these special cities!

Main Teaching Points

1. Understanding Justice and Mercy

First, let's talk about two very important words: justice and mercy. Justice means making things right and fair. It’s like when there are rules at school, and everyone follows them so that things are fair for everyone. Mercy is a little different; it’s about being kind and forgiving, even if someone makes a mistake.

In Joshua 20, God showed how important both justice and mercy are. He asked Joshua to set up these cities where someone who had accidentally done something wrong, like hurt another person without intending to, could go. These cities were places where they could explain their side of the story to the leaders and be safe until the truth was known. God wants us to be fair and to give others a chance to explain and be forgiven.

2. The Purpose of the Cities of Refuge

Now, imagine you’re playing on the playground and someone accidentally throws a ball that hits another kid. Oops! They didn’t mean to do it. The Cities of Refuge were kind of like a safe zone for accidents like that. Back in Joshua’s time, if someone hurt another person without meaning to, like if they were chopping wood and the axe slipped and hurt someone, the person could hurry to one of these cities.

These cities were set up all over the land so that they would be easy to reach. It didn’t matter who you were; if you needed help, you could run to these cities and tell the leaders what happened. The leaders would listen carefully and give the person a safe place to stay until things could be figured out. This made sure that everyone was treated fairly and nobody would be punished unfairly.

3. The Role of the High Priest

Here’s another cool part: In these cities, the person had to stay there until the High Priest, who was a kind of leader and helper like your teacher or a guide, had passed away. This may sound a little strange, but the High Priest was an important person who helped decide matters of fairness and peace.

The lesson here is about being patient and following rules until situations are resolved. Just like waiting for a teacher to resolve a disagreement in class, waiting until the High Priest had finished his role meant that the person could finally go home peacefully. This part of the story teaches us that sometimes we have to wait for just the right time when we’ve made a mistake.

4. The Importance of Safety and Support

Another great part is that these cities were a sign that God cared about safety and protecting people. He made sure that everyone had a place to go when they needed help. Think of it like having a safe room in the school where you can go if you need a timeout or a place to feel safe until a teacher can help.

God’s set-up of these refuge cities reminds us that everyone should feel safe, and it’s important to help each other feel protected and supported. When someone’s sad or scared, wouldn’t you want to help them feel better too?

Personal Application for Elementary Students

Now that we understand more about these Cities of Refuge, let’s think about how we can apply this to our own lives.

Imagine you're at school and you see someone who looks like they’ve made a mistake. Maybe they spilled their milk and are standing there, worried that they are going to get into trouble. What could you do? You could offer them a kind word, help them clean up, and make them feel not so alone. Just like the cities, you’re creating a space where they feel safe and understood.

Another way we can apply this lesson is through waiting patiently. Remember how the people had to wait in the cities until it was time to leave? Sometimes at school, maybe during recess or lunch, you have to wait your turn or wait for something to happen. Being patient and understanding that everything happens in its own time is an important lesson this story can teach us.

Finally, being fair to others is something we can practice every day. If someone does something that upsets you, try to listen to what they have to say. Maybe it was an accident, like losing their homework or bumping into you in line. By listening and giving them a chance, you’re being just like the leaders of the Cities of Refuge.

Interactive Discussion Questions

Let's move on to some questions where everyone can share their thoughts!

1. Why do you think it’s important to have a safe place like the Cities of Refuge?

Guide the students by explaining that everyone deserves a second chance when making a mistake. Just like when we play games and sometimes have “do-overs,” these cities allowed for justice and fairness.

2. How can you be like a “safe place” for your friends at school?

Encourage the students to think of helpful, kind actions they can do for others. They could share how listening to a friend when they have a problem or inviting someone to play who might be left out can be ways to support and comfort others.

3. What can we learn about being patient from the story of the Cities of Refuge?

Help students understand the value of waiting and trusting the process. They can share how they might wait for their chance to use the swings or how they follow the rules for taking turns.

4. Can you think of a time when you showed mercy to someone? What happened?

Give the children a chance to reflect on their experiences of forgiveness and kindness. Discuss how offering forgiveness and understanding helps everyone, just like God intended with the Cities of Refuge.

By exploring these questions, the students can connect the biblical lesson to their daily lives, understanding justice, mercy, and kindness in a new and meaningful way.