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## How could I discipline a child who *already felt* ostracized and punished?

### Inspire (for parents)

The day had finally come ... Carnival Day at our after-school Bible club. Children arrived with great anticipation and pockets full of hard-earned "Kingdom Coins." Weeks of Bible memorization, lessons, and mission activities earned them special coins, and they were eager to spend them on prizes in the Kingdom Store. What a joy it was to watch the children purchase prizes for each other and their families.

Midway through the carnival Nick arrived. It was his first time. His mother pulled this reluctant second grader over to us, saying, "He needs God," and then left. This was a tough one. We did our best to make Nick feel welcome, supplying him with coins and engaging him in games. He wanted none of it. It wasn't long before Nick thought of his own game—stealing from others.

Annie was the first to "lose" her prize bag ... then Marcus and David. In the midst of upset children and carnival chaos, Nick went missing. I finally found him hiding under a table. I was angry. This boy deserved to be punished and sent home. As I knelt down to remove Nick, he looked up at me with tear-filled eyes. The Holy Spirit convicted me. How could I discipline a

child who already felt ostracized and punished? It was mercy that he needed.

I've heard that mercy means "sorrowful at heart." Mercy shows compassion and enters into another's suffering. Showing mercy attempts to relieve that suffering. God changed my heart. I wanted to show mercy to Nick.

We all survived that day. Nick returned to become a leader among his peers. But I will never forget that first day when a frightened child was forced upon us with the statement, "He needs God." Yes, Nick needed God, the source of all mercy. We all do.

by Sue Funkhouser

## Getting Started

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19  
(Healing of Ten Lepers)

Main Point: Jesus Is Merciful

This resource is designed to allow your family to have time in God's Word **before your children attend church**. Because God's plan is for parents to be the primary spiritual nurturers of their children's faith, we know that as you grow spiritually, your children will grow spiritually as well.

### Equip (for parents)

Jesus showed mercy in light of the Old Testament Levitical law which stated that all who suffered from leprosy or any infectious skin disease were considered unclean. Those suffering from such ailments were to be isolated from the community. They were to cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" as a way to warn others and mark themselves as shunned. People were sent to live in a lazaretto, by themselves or with other lepers. (Lazarettos are hospitals for people with infectious diseases, primarily leprosy.)

Those in biblical times believed leprosy to be a personal plague rather than a disease. In Luke chapter 17, the cry of the 10 lepers was not only a plea for physical healing, but also for social restoration. They had been ostracized because of the infectious nature of their illness, but also because of the belief that their sickness was the result of some devious sin they harbored. Jesus directly responded to the men's cry for mercy. Out of love He showed the lepers mercy and healed them. While initially seeking only physical and social healing, the Samaritan man returned to worship Jesus and glorify God. Because of his faith the Samaritan man received spiritual cleansing and salvation—a complete restoration.

It was out of love that God took pity on us in our sin and died for us. In Romans 5:8 Paul says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Although our sin separates us from a holy God, God's mercy makes it possible for us to be in relationship with Him. Like the lepers, we once stood at a distance from Jesus. But through His mercy, we are now able to draw near and worship Him at His feet. ☺

### REMEMBER VERSE

Love one another.  
You must love one another, just as I have loved you.

John 13:34 (NIRV)

### Support (for parents & kids)

This week **JUST FOR FUN**, surprise your family and stop to read this part of The Big God Story right after you've traveled somewhere—maybe when you arrive home from school or sports practice. Share with your children that you're going to read about a time when Jesus and His disciples were traveling and an amazing thing happened. Then together, read the account of Jesus healing the 10 lepers in **Luke 17:11-19**.

Explain a little about leprosy to your children. Share with them that these men were left out because of their disease. They were not allowed to be around other people, even their families. Discuss how Jesus showed love to these men and explain that mercy is one way God shows us love, even when we don't deserve it. Ask them, "How many lepers were healed?" Then ask, "How many came back to praise Jesus?" After they answer, discuss together what kind of a heart Jesus would like to see in each of us when He shows us His love and mercy.

Tell your children that what they just heard from the Bible is true and a part of The Big God Story. Tell them they'll learn more about how Jesus is merciful to us in church this week. ☺

