

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of God's mercy. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: God is Merciful

Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

1 God's compassion is shown through mercy (Ps. 145:8; Heb. 4:16).

Invite students to list situations where they are tempted not to show mercy.

- ▶ *What may be the long-term effects on our witness if we don't show mercy to others?*

Read Psalm 145.8.

- ▶ *How does this passage describe the action of mercy?*
Not only does the Bible say God exhibits these attitudes, it also describes them as His character attributes.
- ▶ *What would your life look like if mercy wasn't only a behavior, but an attribute of your character?*

Read Hebrews 4.16.

The Bible assumes those who approach God in faith for mercy will always find it.

- ▶ *How have you ever been tempted to question God's compassion and mercy?*
- ▶ *What does it say about the nature of God that He always offers mercy for those who repent?*

2 God's mercy is often shown by withholding something (Eph. 2:4-6).

Option: Ask students to remember a time that they did something wrong and their parents forgave them instead of giving a punishment, or a teacher gave them a second chance to find the correct answers to a test they failed. Explain that, in those situations, the parents and teachers showed mercy—they didn't give the students the punishment (or grade) they deserved. Instead, they gave the students a second chance.

- ▶ *How does God show His mercy by withholding something from us?*
Blessings are not always in getting something—they are also in not getting what we do deserve. Mercy is an example of God's blessing.

Read Ephesians 2:4-6.

- ▶ *According to this passage, what is the ultimate reason God shows compassion?*
- ▶ *When God has mercy on us, what does the passage say He does with those who believe in Him?*

There are numerous situations in Scripture where God blesses by giving, but there are just as many examples of mercy of God blessing by withholding. Sometimes the Bible refers to withholding with the word *relenting*.

- ▶ *How have you seen the hand of God blessing you with mercy in His relenting to give you what you deserve? How does God's relenting mercy reveal His love?*

3 God's mercy is undeserved (Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:9).

Read 1 John 1:9 and Titus 3:5.

There are a lot of words associated with the word *undeserved*: *inadequate, coming up short, missing the mark, incapable*, and so on. When it comes to God's mercy, all of these words apply to us. We don't deserve God's mercy—however, He gives it to us abundantly.

- ▶ *Why would we say God's mercy is undeserved? If it's undeserved, how could we ever receive it?*
Through Christ we find a mediator, the only One who is truly deserving of God's love. It's through Christ's sacrifice that we are also counted worthy.
- ▶ *What should be our consistent attitude toward Christ in light of His mercy toward us?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways does God's mercy impact your thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behavior?*
- ▶ *What does God's mercy teach us about the truth of the gospel?*
Challenge students to remember that both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace.