

Manna and Mercy: A Curriculum for Elementary Children

Based on Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe by Daniel Erlander

GRADE APPROPRIATENESS: These lessons are for grades kindergarten through 6th grades with the understanding that adaptations, some of which are provided in the Adaptation Sections in each lesson, often are crucial for appropriate teaching to younger children depending on their cognitive development, experiences in both church and school, and in particular their understanding of abstract versus concrete concepts.

These lessons are also excellent supplemental activities for youth groups as they read Erlander's Mercy and Manna. Though some activities are too immature for youth, many are not, and some could be adapted easily.

NUMBER OF LESSONS: There are 50 lessons, one for each Sunday other than Christmas and Easter. Those two events are covered but not on those dates. Some lessons need to be presented as a group chronologically because they build conceptually, but many do not so that some can be pulled and used with other curricula. Some lessons can be skipped and some lessons will allow for the order to be changed in order to accommodate church circumstances.

MATERIALS: Materials such as game components, floor maps, props for drama, or finger puppets are not provided and need to either purchased elsewhere or created. Photographs of materials are available upon request at no charge.

OVERALL THEMES: God is active in human history and in all creation.
God loves us by providing (manna) and mending (mercy) unconditionally.
God's kind of love can be seen throughout the Bible and all creation.
Jesus teaches about God's kind of love through his life and stories.
Because of Jesus' words, certain aspects of the Bible come more clearly into focus such as justice, peace, humility, and inclusion

OVERALL SCRIPTURE BASIS: Ephesians 1: 9-10

(NRSV) With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

(Erlander's paraphrase): God has made known to us the mystery of God's will, according to God's pleasure set forth in Christ, as promised for the fullness of time, to unite everything in Christ, everything in heaven, and everything on earth.

A simpler version incorporating manna and mercy concepts:

The Bible tells the story of God and creation especially us humans.

The Bible tells what God wants for creation.

The Bible tells how God loves us and provides for us no matter what we do. This is manna and mercy.

The Bible tells us how Jesus Christ came to teach us and show us God and what God wants for us.

What does God want for us? For everything and everyone to be united in Christ.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: Children will develop an overall view of the Bible, its stories, and many crucial concepts in a loving, creative atmosphere that encourages learning and celebrates God's creative love of diversity and God's constant love for us and the world.

Reminder saying: God loves us (hand on heart)
by providing manna (arms out)
and mending us with mercy (hug self)
no matter what we do (head back and forth).

MANNA AND MERCY FINGER PUPPETS:

Two prairie dog characters are in Erlander's Mercy and Manna making humorous commentary. This curriculum uses finger puppets as characters who show up in lessons now and then to ask questions about the humans in the stories and offer an opportunity for review. Their frequency of use in the lessons is dependent upon the ages of the children. The puppets, named Manna and Mercy, do not speak; instead they "whisper" in the ears of the leaders because they are shy and humans are their predators. These prairie dogs are reminders that God's family and God's future includes all of creation.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

Most weeks begin with a story that can be told to a small or large group. However, the lessons should happen with small groups in a classroom that allows for the movement of furniture (tables and chairs) as needed. Sometimes all furniture will be moved to the edges to allow for lessons using floor maps. At the end of most lessons, the closing section of the lesson directs the teacher to move the children to the worship area which can be a simple altar that the children sit near in a semi-circle with the teacher near the altar.

SPECIAL NOTE:

One benefit of using Erlander's Mercy and Manna as the key resource is that it is accessible. Parents can purchase the book and read it with their children during the week.

Hints for the Manna and Mercy Elementary Curriculum:

(For questions contact Hanna Schock at hannaschock@bellsouth.net or call 205-910-7931)

- The directions for the story and lessons are always wordy. This is to give the storyteller context and options. Do not read them or try to memorize them. There is more content than must be covered. It is more important to enjoy telling the story and engage with the children. This is why key concepts and phrases are underlined.
- Some stories will take longer than others. The time for lessons will need to be adjusted.
- Be careful not to have too little altar time. This is where application is emphasized.
- Teaching these lessons to non-readers will be tricky. You may need to emphasize only a few of the concepts and change the format of teaching. Use your discretion.
- Combined-group storytelling is recommended, but all teachers should be present to hear the story and reinforce it during the lesson. Using non-teachers for storytelling is a good way to involve many adults. Storytellers should be skilled at storytelling.
- Storytellers will need access to the resource book. This is not as important for teachers, but it would be beneficial.
- If possible, encourage parents to purchase the resource book and send them e-mails regarding the themes and resource pages so that they can read the book and look at the illustrations with their children. If this is not possible, give the parents access to the resource book some other way, perhaps via your church library.
- At least one adult helper in addition to the teacher is assumed for each group. No more than 10 or 12 children per group are best especially if they are young. Some lessons need more adult helpers.
- The supply lists is usually what is needed for 1 group/classroom only.
- Look for supplies at dollar stores, thrift stores, and websites such as amazon.com.
- Documents and materials sometimes show up at later lessons so save them.
- Use props for decorating rooms once they are introduced & save them for the last week which is a Manna and Mercy Museum Tour.
- Illustrations from the resource book may be used throughout the curriculum. I have Daniel Erlander's permission for this. Use them how you see fit. Coloring them as they are explained is a good option for the younger children.
- The finger puppets may be added to lessons for younger children at any time deemed appropriate. Don't over use them. They need to be "special guests." Putting little scarves or hats on them allows you to tell which is which.
- Any time you can adapt a lesson to your specific city/church's culture or environment is best. The goal is to make the lessons meaningful to the children. For instance, because we are in Birmingham, we sometimes mentioned the civil rights movement. If immigration is an issue in your area, these lessons will offer many points of discussion.

Manna and Mercy: A Short List of Themes, Story Topics, and Lesson Activities

Week 1	Theme: Manna and Mercy Story Topic: Introduction to Manna and Mercy Lesson Activity: Notes from God, Finger Puppets, & Circle Statements
Week 2	Theme: The Beginning of our Story with God Story Topic: Creation Lesson Activity: Creation Signs & Quiz
Week 3	Theme: Humans decide to become BIG DEALS! Story Topic: Adam and Eve Lesson Activity: Warped Creation Puzzle & BIG DEAL Props
Week 4	Theme: God Responds by Mending Story Topic: After the Ark & Mending Lesson Activity: Shaving Cream Fun & Finger Puppets
Week 5	Theme: Through Journey God Births Partner People Story Topic: Abraham & Sarah Lesson Activity: Journey People and Journey Traits
Week 6	Theme: Covenant Partnership and Promises Story Topic: Covenant, Shalom, & God's Beautiful Plan Lesson Activity: Trust Circles, Yarn Circles, & Coloring Mandalas
Week 7	Theme: Big Deals in Egypt Story Topic: Pharaoh's Egypt & the Escape Lesson Activity: Hieroglyphics Story Race
Week 8	Theme: The Wilderness School Part 1 Story Topic: The 5 Lessons of the Wilderness Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey
Week 9	Theme: The Wilderness School Part 2 Story Topic: Review of previous week's lesson Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey continued
Week 10	Theme: The Covenant Gift and the BIG TEN Part 1 Story Topic: The Torah & the BIG TEN Lesson Activity: Covenant Card Memory Game & Mystery Stations
Week 11	Theme: The Covenant Gift and the BIG TEN Part 2 Story Topic: God's Love Letter & the <u>BIG TEN</u> Lesson Activity: Mystery Stations continued

- Week 12 Theme: God's Gift of Sabbath
Story Topic: Personal Experiences of Sabbath
Lesson Activity: Sabbath Discussion & Balancing Task
- Week 13 Theme: God's Gift of Worship
Story Topic: THAT IS WORSHIP! THAT IS NOT WORSHIP!
Lesson Activity: Worship Sandwiches
- Week 14 Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 1
Story Topic: Joshua
Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey
- Week 15 Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 2
Story Topic: Rahab
Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey continued
- Week 16 Theme: Judges and Liberators
Story Topic: Deborah
Lesson Activity: Modern Liberators
- Week 17 Theme: People of Memory and Hope
Story Topic: People of Memory and Hope
Lesson Activity: Rainbow Coloring and Stickers
- Week 18 Theme: Some People Want a King
Story Topic: Samuel, Saul, David & Solomon (story is after lesson)
Lesson Activity: Mock Debate
- Week 19 Theme: God Sends Prophets
Story Topic: Pre-Exile Jerusalem
Lesson Activity: Puppet Play & Script Reading
- Week 20 Theme: Babylon: A New Wilderness School
Story Topic: Rachel Lamenting the Exile
Lesson Activity: *I Would Miss* handout & My New Job
- Week 21 Theme: Home Again
Story Topic: Partner People Return to Jerusalem
Lesson Activity: *Insider/Outsider* Card Game
- Week 22 Theme: God Wants Shalom for All
Story Topic: Jonah
Lesson Activity: Conquering Cups on Maps
- Week 23 Theme: The Great Persecution and Hanukkah
Story Topic: Maccabean Revolt
Lesson Activity: Hanukkah for Today's Jews

- Week 24 Theme: New Kinds of Big Deals
Story Topic: New Big Deal Groups
Lesson Activity: New Big Deal Word Games
- Week 25 Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 1
Story Topic: no story
Lesson Activity: Carnival (for concept review)
- Week 26 Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 2
Story Topic: no story
Lesson Activity: Carnival continues
- Week 27 Theme: God's Surprise (Christmas)
Story Topic: Story Stations of the Nativity Story
Lesson Activity: Experiences & Feelings in the Nativity Story
- Week 28 Theme: A Wild Preacher & Jesus at Wilderness School
Story Topic: Jesus and John the Baptist
Lesson Activity: JB & JC Clothespin Board
- Week 29 Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 1 (Fed, Forgiven, & Found)
Story Topic: 3 Parables
Lesson Activity: Shamrock Connections
- Week 30 Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 2 (Freed, Praised, & Welcomed)
Story Topic: 3 Parables
Lesson Activity: Butterfly Connections
- Week 31 Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 3 (Included, Touched, & Persistent)
Story Topic: 3 Parables
Lesson Activity: Tulip Connections
- Week 32 Theme: The Lord's Prayer
Story Topic: Jesus Teaches the Lord's Prayer
Lesson Activity: Lord's Prayer Toss-Up
- Week 33 Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 1
Story Topic: Stations of Holy Week
Lesson Activity: Holy Week Walk
- Week 34 Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 2
Story Topic: no story
Lesson Activity: Review of Holy Week & I have/Who has? CARD GAME

- Week 35 Theme: Easter Resurrection
Story Topic: Easter as described by John
Lesson Activity: Resurrection and Jesus Riddles
- Week 36 Theme: The Gospel is Good News
Story Topic: Doubting Thomas
Lesson Activity: 2 Gospel Skits
- Week 37 Theme: The Road to Emmaus
Story Topic: On the Road to Emmaus
Lesson Activity: Road to Emmaus Decision Tree
- Week 38 Theme: A Pentecost Spirit for Mission
Story Topic: Pentecost
Lesson Activity: Mission Toolbox & Dominoes/Bowling Pins
- Week 39 Theme: Taking Jesus Here, There, & Everywhere
Story Topic: Paul's Letters to Churches
Lesson Activity: Early Missionary Map
- Week 40 Theme: So You Wanna Be a Christian?
Story Topic: Peter's Food Dream (story is after lesson)
Lesson Activity: So You Wanna Be a Christian? Game
- Week 41 Theme: The Early Christians: A Peculiar People
Story Topic: Peculiar Responses of Early Christians
Lesson Activity: Roman vs. Peculiar Sorting Game
- Week 42 Theme: Jesus, Not the Emperor, is Lord
Story Topic: Christian Martyrs Then and Now
Lesson Activity: Mock Roman Interrogations
- Week 43 Theme: Fruit of the Spirit
Story Topic: Paul's List of the Fruit of the Spirit
Lesson Activity: Fruit of the Spirit Stick Drop
- Week 44 Theme: Called to Bear Fruit
Story Topic: Peter's Healing of Tabitha/Dorcas
Lesson Activity: Fruit of the Spirit Healing Game
- Week 45 Theme: Segregation in Communion & the World
Story Topic: Paul Changes Communion Practices
Lesson Activity: *The Village of the World* – book or video
- Week 46 Theme: The Church is the Body of Christ
Story Topic: Paul's Description of the Church as a Body
Lesson Activity: Parachute Games

- Week 47 Theme: A Global Community of Faith
Story Topic: Paul's Plea for Jerusalem & Your Mission Story
Lesson Activity: Donation Gathering
- Week 48 Theme: John's Symbolic Revelation
Story Topic: John's Writing of Revelation
Lesson Activity: Code Names for Jesus
- Week 49 Theme: God's Dream for Planet Earth
Story Topic: God's Dream
Lesson Activity: Shalom Acrostic Poems/Drawings
- Week 50 Theme: Manna and Mercy Museum
Story Topic: no story
Lesson Activity: Manna and Mercy Museum

Manna and Mercy: A Chronological list of Themes, Story Topics, and Lesson Activities

Week 1	Theme: Manna and Mercy
Week 2	Theme: The Beginning of our Story with God
Week 3	Theme: Humans Decide to become BIG DEALS!
Week 4	Theme: God Responds by Mending
Week 5	Theme: Through Journey God Births Partner People
Week 6	Theme: Covenant Partnership and Promises
Week 7	Theme: Big Deals in Egypt
Week 8	Theme: The Wilderness School Part 1
Week 9	Theme: The Wilderness School Part 2
Week 10	Theme: The Covenant Gift and the BIG TEN Part 1
Week 11	Theme: The Covenant Gift and the BIG TEN Part 2
Week 12	Theme: God's Gift of Sabbath
Week 13	Theme: God's Gift of Worship
Week 14	Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 1
Week 15	Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 2
Week 16	Theme: Judges and Liberators
Week 17	Theme: People of Memory and Hope
Week 18	Theme: Some People Want a King
Week 19	Theme: God Sends Prophets
Week 20	Theme: Babylon: A New Wilderness School
Week 21	Theme: Home Again
Week 22	Theme: God Wants Shalom for All
Week 23	Theme: The Great Persecution and Hanukkah
Week 24	Theme: New Kinds of Big Deals
Week 25	Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 1
Week 26	Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 2

Week 27	Theme: God's Surprise (Christmas)
Week 28	Theme: A Wild Preacher & Jesus at Wilderness School
Week 29	Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 1 (Fed, Forgiven, & Found)
Week 30	Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 2 (Freed, Praised, & Welcomed)
Week 31	Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 3 (Included, Touched, & Persistent)
Week 32	Theme: The Lord's Prayer
Week 33	Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 1
Week 34	Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 2
Week 35	Theme: Easter Resurrection
Week 36	Theme: The Gospel is Good News
Week 37	Theme: The Road to Emmaus
Week 38	Theme: A Pentecost Spirit for Mission
Week 39	Theme: Taking Jesus Here, There, & Everywhere
Week 40	Theme: So You Wanna Be a Christian?
Week 41	Theme: The Early Christians: A Peculiar People
Week 42	Theme: Jesus, Not the Emperor, is Lord
Week 43	Theme: Fruit of the Spirit
Week 44	Theme: Called to Bear Fruit
Week 45	Theme: Segregation in Communion & the World
Week 46	Theme: The Church is the Body of Christ
Week 47	Theme: A Global Community of Faith
Week 48	Theme: John's Symbolic Revelation
Week 49	Theme: God's Dream for Planet Earth
Week 50	Theme: Manna and Mercy Museum