

TEACHING ABOUT JUSTICE AND MERCY

November 15, 2020

There is so much hurt and pain in our world right now. A global pandemic has taken the lives of hundreds of thousands and caused millions more to become sick. Racial tension has led to protests and riots stemming from deep seeded division and historical injustices. In the midst of all of this, it is easy to become inwardly focused—to look only to our own needs and not seek the good of our neighbors as well.



The current situation in our world also makes it hard to teach our children to look beyond themselves and toward the needs of others. When my children were younger, they would fight over toys and throw tantrums when they had to share. Now as a family with two teenagers, we waste precious Friday family movie time as both kids insist on their favorite selection. No one wants to agree to a movie that is not their first choice. Helping our children overcome selfishness and inward thinking will prepare them to tackle larger questions of justice and mercy as they get older.

In Luke 10:25-37, a self-important expert in the Hebrew law decides to test Jesus. After an exchange about loving God, neighbor, and self, Jesus then tells the Good Samaritan parable, a story where most of the characters could not look beyond themselves. Jesus calls us to live lives of justice (doing what is right) and mercy (looking out for the needs of others). Jesus told the expert in the law, the most important commandment is to love God and love your neighbor. How do we instill justice and mercy—tenderness, compassion, and love—into the lives of our children? Here are a few ideas.

1. **Search the Bible with your children for themes of justice and mercy.** God cares about all people. As you read through the Bible with your children, specifically note instances where God or his people do what was right and look out for the needs of others.
2. **Point out justice and mercy in the world.** As you and your children interact with the world around you, look for people who are putting the needs of others above their own. Call out and even celebrate those instances in the world around you and in your own family.
3. **Point out injustice in the world.** It is also important to point out examples of selfishness and injustice. Helping our children discern both the positive and the negative is an important step as they develop a sense of what is right and what is wrong. Talk about situations that demonstrate a lack of justice and mercy and what could have been done differently to make them more mercy-filled and just.
4. **Make time to practice justice and mercy together as a family.** Putting our faith into action is one of the most meaningful ways to model justice and mercy for our children. Even better, look for times that you can serve together with your children. Serve at a local soup kitchen. Volunteer for a ministry at your local church that seeks to serve others. Consider taking your children on a mission trip for your summer vacation.

As you serve together, read scripture, and begin to intentionally look at the world through the lenses of justice and mercy, you'll find God at work daily. It won't always be easy. In fact, it will almost certainly be difficult and change you and your children. But it will bring you closer to God and his heart for his people.

Want to dig deeper? Check out Family Fire's article [Taming the Tongue](#).

