

2 Samuel 4:4; 9

Aim of Lesson

To show how David kept his promise to his greatest friend, and brought happiness to a lame man.

Background study

1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:12-17; 20:42.

Suggested outline of lesson

Introduce the lesson with a statement to the effect that “Today’s story is about a man who had made a promise to his friend and, even though the friend died, he still kept the promise. Do you remember that when David was young, long before he became king, he had a very special friend?” Continue by questioning the children about the friendship between David and Jonathan, and the sadness of their parting when David had to flee into exile. Explain clearly the solemn promise (vow) which each made to the other, that they would never cease to love and care for the other’s family. Although Jonathan was the heir to the throne, he knew and accepted that he would not become king, and that David had been chosen by God to take his place. He, therefore, asked David to safeguard his family name. Because of his love for Jonathan, David readily agreed. At that time, neither could have foreseen the terrible strife that was to mark Israel’s history for many years to come.

During the civil war, which followed the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, Saul’s family and his army fought against David. David, however, gradually gained power and support, and the members of the royal household began to fear. Describe the panic in the palace that drove the nurse to flee with the young prince, Mephibosheth, and the haste and confusion that caused the accident. But in spite of this, she had saved the boy’s life and, though he was to be lame for the rest of his days, he grew up in safety, unharmed by his father’s enemies. Many years went by, and Mephibosheth married and had a son called Mica. They lived humbly with no thoughts of claiming their inheritance, nor of resisting the kingship of David.

David had fought for many years to unite the nation of Israel and to banish God’s enemies from the land. Having established peace and order, he was anxious that his rule should be just and in accordance with his dedication to God, by whom he had been so blessed. It was at this time that David remembered the promise he had made to his friend so long before. Immediately, he set about discovering whether any of Jonathan’s family had survived. His servants were given the task of making enquiries. When David learned that Jonathan had a son still living, he was eager to meet him.

How would Mephibosheth have reacted when the king’s messengers came to fetch him? It was natural that he should feel apprehensive, and doubtful about the king’s intentions. But when they met, David immediately reassured him. For his part, he would have felt warmth and affection for the son of his old friend, coupled with compassion when he saw how lame the younger man was. Suggest how David may have been interested to note the family likeness and to share with Mephibosheth his memories of Jonathan’s gentleness, loyalty and bravery. David may have recounted the happiness which he and Jonathan had shared in their youth, the honour Jonathan had won, the sadness of their parting, and the deep grief he had felt at Jonathan’s untimely death. David did all that was within his power to do, in memory of his friend and in fulfilment of his vow. Not only did he restore to Mephibosheth all the land and property that had belonged to his grandfather Saul, and reappoint Ziba to serve him, but he also welcomed him as a son into his household for the rest of his life.

Relevance to the children’s lives

How do you think Mephibosheth felt at the end of this story? How do you think David felt at having kept his promise to Jonathan? Do you ever make promises? What does it mean when someone says: “I promise?” What are the results of a broken promise? How do people feel when a promise to them has been kept?

Worksheets

Jonathan said to David: “Do not ever cut off your kindness from my family”.

In God’s kingdom:

L	A	M	E	M	A	N
L	A	L	E	M	A	E
W	A	L	L	M	A	E
W	I	L	L	M	B	E
W	I	L	L	B	E	
W	A	L	L	I	B	E
W	A	L	K	I	N	G

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we know that you always keep your promises. Help us to mean what we say when we make promises, so that people can trust us, just as we can trust your word. Amen.

Memory verse

“You shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth” (Deuteronomy 23:23).