Preschool–Grade 6

David and Mephibosheth

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's kindness is given, not earned. Receive it, and pass it on to people who can never pay you back.
Bible passage: 2 Samuel 9:1–13. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." *2 Samuel 9:7 (KJV)* and "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." *Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read 1 Samuel 18:1–4, 1 Samuel 20:14–17 and 2 Samuel 9. Write both memory verses on the board. Draw two columns on the board: "Earned" and "Given."

1. Opening game: Earned or Given? (5–10 minutes)

Read each item. Students call out "earned" or "given," and you write it in a column: a paycheck, a birthday present, a good grade, a trophy, your name, a friend forgiving you, a parent's love, a seat at a family dinner. Ask: *Which things on the "given" side matter most to you? How does it feel to get something you didn't earn?* Say: "Today we meet a man who got a place at the king's table, and he did nothing to earn it."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the background: Jonathan, King Saul's son, loved David as his own soul (1 Samuel 18:1). He asked David never to cut off his kindness from his house (1 Samuel 20:15). Saul and Jonathan later died in battle (2 Samuel 1:4), and David became king.
Read out loud: 2 Samuel 9:1–13. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **the house of Saul** (9:1): Saul's family; **for Jonathan's sake**: because of Jonathan
- **shew the kindness of God** (9:3): show kindness the way God does
- **lame on his feet** (9:3): his feet could not walk
- **fetched** (9:5): had him brought; **did reverence** (9:6): bowed low to honor the king
- **restore** (9:7): give back; **continually** (9:7), **alway** (9:10): always
- **dead dog** (9:8): a way of saying "I am worth nothing"
- **pertained to** (9:9): belonged to; **till the land** (9:10): plow and farm it

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3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. David asked, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Samuel 9:3). David went looking for someone to be kind to. What would it look like for you to go looking, instead of waiting until someone asks?
2. Mephibosheth answered, "Behold thy servant!" (9:6), and then called himself "a dead dog" (9:8). What did David do next (9:9–11)? What does that say about how God sees people who feel worthless?
3. Mephibosheth received land, servants and a place at the table "as one of the king's sons" (9:9–11). How is that like the way God treats us when we come to Him?
4. David kept a promise to Jonathan years after Jonathan died (1 Samuel 20:15; 2 Samuel 9:1). What promises are hard for you to keep? Why does God care about keeping our word?
5. Ephesians 4:32 says to be kind "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." How does remembering God's kindness to you change how you treat others?
6. Who in your school or church feels like they don't have a "place at the table"? What is one thing you could do?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in 2 Samuel 9:7: **surely** means for sure; **shew** means show; **for Jonathan thy father's sake** means because of your father Jonathan; **restore** means give back; **continually** means always. In Ephesians 4:32, **tenderhearted** means caring and gentle.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say 2 Samuel 9:7 this week; keep working on Ephesians 4:32 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Mephibosheth could not earn his seat at the king's table. Neither can we earn God's kindness. 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:8–9, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. When have I felt like Mephibosheth, not good enough or left out? What does it mean to me that God's kindness is given, not earned?
2. Who is one person I could "go looking for" this week, like David did? What will I do?
3. Write a short prayer thanking God for His kindness, and asking Him to help you show it to someone else.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do one kind thing for someone who can't pay you back, and don't tell anyone you did it.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your kindness, which we could never earn. Thank You for making room for us. Help us see the people others overlook, keep our word, and show Your kindness to them. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks how Mephibosheth became lame: 2 Samuel 4:4 tells that when news came that Saul and Jonathan had died, his nurse picked him up and fled, and he fell and became lame. He was five years old. Answer simply, keep the focus on the kindness of God, and never let the word "lame" be used to tease anyone.

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