

## **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*

**AGE APPROPRIATENESS:** These lessons are ideal for grades 1st through 6<sup>th</sup> with the understanding that adaptations may be necessary. Some adaptations are suggested in each lesson.

They are also excellent supplemental activities for youth groups who are reading Erlander's Mercy and Manna. Some activities could be used in family or adult groups to support the reading of the resource book as well.

**NUMBER OF LESSONS:** There are 51 lessons, one for each Sunday other than Christmas and Easter and 1 fun quiz lesson to use after a long break between M & M lessons. The quiz lesson can be easily adapted, depending on where you took your break. Some lessons can be used as standalone lessons, but most require you to follow the chronology of events in the Bible.

**MATERIALS:** Materials such as game components, floor maps, props for drama, plush animals, or finger puppets are not provided and need to either purchased elsewhere or created. Photographs of materials are available upon request at no charge. Permission has been granted from Daniel Erlander to use any images in the resource book.

### **MANNA AND MERCY PRAIRIE DOGS:**

Two prairie dog characters are in Erlander's Mercy and Manna making humorous commentary. This curriculum uses prairie dog plush animals or 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. The prairie dogs, 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 the future includes all of creation.

**TAKE-AWAY COMPONENT:** Erlander's Mercy and Manna is the key resource and basis for this curriculum. Ideally, parents can own the book and read it with their children as lessons progress. Each lesson has an optional take-away component for parents that references the pages of the Erlander book.

**OVERALL OBJECTIVE:** Children will develop an overall view of the Bible (its stories & 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 all the world.

### **REMINDER SAYING:** (optional)

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).

### **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:**

Most lessons begin with a Bible story that can be told to a small or large group. Activities 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 floor maps. At the end of most lessons, all move to the worship area which can be a simple altar.

### **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 for children):

The Bible tells the story of God and creation, especially our human nature.

The Bible tells what God gives and 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 came to teach us and show us God and what God wants for us.

What does God want for us?

For all creation to be united in Christ and living in shalom, peace and wholeness.

**Manna and Mercy: Short Lists of Themes, Story Topics, and Lesson Activities**

Lesson 1	Theme: Manna and Mercy Story Topic: Introduction to Manna and Mercy Lesson Activity: Notes from God, Prairie Dogs, & Circle Statements
Lesson 2	Theme: The Beginning of our Story with God Story Topic: Creation Lesson Activity: Creation Signs & Quiz
Lesson 3	Theme: Humans decide to become BIG DEALS! Story Topic: Adam and Eve Lesson Activity: Warped Creation Puzzle & BIG DEAL Props
Lesson 4	Theme: God Responds by Mending Story Topic: After the Ark & Mending Lesson Activity: Shaving Cream Fun & Prairie Dogs
Lesson 5	Theme: Through Journey God Births Partner People Story Topic: Abraham & Sarah Lesson Activity: Journeys and Traveler Traits
Lesson 6	Theme: Covenant Partnership and Promises Story Topic: Covenant, Shalom, & God's Beautiful Plan Lesson Activity: Trust Circles, Yarn Circles, & Coloring Mandalas
Lesson 7	Theme: Big Deals in Egypt Story Topic: Pharaoh's Egypt & the Escape Lesson Activity: Hieroglyphics Story Race
Lesson 8	Theme: The Wilderness School Part 1 Story Topic: The 5 Lessons of the Wilderness Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey

- Lesson 9 Theme: The Wilderness School Part 2  
Story Topic: Review of previous Lesson  
Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey continued
- Lesson 10 Theme: The Covenant Gift and the Ten Commandments (BIG TEN) Part 1  
Story Topic: The Torah & the BIG TEN  
Lesson Activity: Covenant Card Memory Game & Mystery Stations
- Lesson 11 Theme: The Covenant Gift and the Ten Commandments (BIG TEN) Part 2  
Story Topic: Review of previous lesson  
Lesson Activity: Mystery Stations continued
- Lesson 12 Theme: God's Gift of Sabbath  
Story Topic: Personal Experiences of Sabbath  
Lesson Activity: Sabbath Discussion & Balancing Task
- Lesson 13 Theme: God's Gift of Worship  
Story Topic: THAT IS WORSHIP! THAT IS NOT WORSHIP!  
Lesson Activity: Worship Sandwiches & Holy Communion
- Lesson 14 Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 1  
Story Topic: Joshua  
Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey
- Lesson 15 Theme: Graduation and Settling Down Part 2  
Story Topic: Rahab  
Lesson Activity: Floor Map Journey continued
- Lesson 16 Theme: Judges and Liberators  
Story Topic: Deborah  
Lesson Activity: Modern Liberators
- Lesson 17 Theme: People of Memory and Hope  
Story Topic: People of Memory and Hope  
Lesson Activity: Rainbow Coloring and Stickers
- Lesson 18 Theme: Some People Want a King  
Story Topic: Samuel, Saul, David & Solomon (Note: Story is after the activity.)  
Lesson Activity: Mock Debate
- Lesson 19 Theme: God Sends Prophets  
Story Topic: Pre-Exile Jerusalem  
Lesson Activity: Puppet Play & Script Reading
- Lesson 20 Theme: Babylon: A New Wilderness School  
Story Topic: Rachel Lamenting the Exile  
Lesson Activity: *I Would Miss* handout & My New Job
- Lesson 21 Theme: Home Again  
Story Topic: Partner People Return to Jerusalem  
Lesson Activity: *Insider/Outsider* Card Game
- Lesson 22 Theme: God Wants Shalom for All  
Story Topic: Jonah  
Lesson Activity: Conquering Cups on Maps
- Lesson 23 Theme: The Great Persecution and Hanukkah  
Story Topic: Maccabean Revolt  
Lesson Activity: Hanukkah for Today's Jews
- Lesson 24 Theme: New Kinds of Big Deals  
Story Topic: New Big Deal Groups  
Lesson Activity: New Big Deal Word Games

- Lesson 25            Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 1  
 Story Topic: no story  
 Lesson Activity: Carnival (for concept review)
- Lesson 26            Manna and Mercy Carnival Part 2  
 Story Topic: no story  
 Lesson Activity: Carnival continues
- Lesson 27            Theme: God's Surprise (Christmas)  
 Story Topic: Story Stations of the Nativity Story  
 Lesson Activity: Experiences & Feelings in the Nativity Story
- Lesson 28            Theme: A Wild Preacher & Jesus at Wilderness School  
 Story Topic: Jesus and John the Baptist  
 Lesson Activity: JB & JC Clothespin Board
- Lesson 29            Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 1 (Fed, Forgiven, & Found)  
 Story Topic: 3 Parables  
 Lesson Activity: Shamrock Connections
- Lesson 30            Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 2 (Freed, Praised, & Welcomed)  
 Story Topic: 3 Parables  
 Lesson Activity: Butterfly Connections
- Lesson 31            Theme: Parables & Gospel Accounts Part 3 (Included, Touched, & Persistent)  
 Story Topic: 3 Parables  
 Lesson Activity: Tulip Connections
- Lesson 32            Theme: The Lord's Prayer  
 Story Topic: Jesus Teaches the Lord's Prayer  
 Lesson Activity: Lord's Prayer Matching & Memorizing
- Lesson 33            Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 1  
 Story Topic: Stations of Holy Week  
 Lesson Activity: Holy Week Walk
- Lesson 34            Theme: Jesus in Jerusalem Part 2  
 Story Topic: no story  
 Lesson Activity: Review of Holy Week & I have/Who has? CARD GAME
- Lesson 35            Theme: Easter Resurrection  
 Story Topic: Easter as described by John  
 Lesson Activity: Resurrection and Jesus Riddles
- Lesson 36            Theme: The Gospel is Good News  
 Story Topic: Doubting Thomas  
 Lesson Activity: 2 Gospel Skits
- Lesson 37            Theme: The Road to Emmaus  
 Story Topic: On the Road to Emmaus  
 Lesson Activity: Road to Emmaus Decision Tree
- Lesson 38            Theme: A Pentecost Spirit for Mission  
 Story Topic: Pentecost  
 Lesson Activity: Mission Toolbox & Dominoes/Bowling Pins
- Lesson 39            Theme: Taking Jesus Here, There, & Everywhere  
 Story Topic: Paul's Letters to Churches  
 Lesson Activity: Early Missionary Map
- Lesson 40            Theme: So You Wanna Be a Christian?  
 Story Topic: Peter's Food Dream (Note: Story is after the activity.)  
 Lesson Activity: So You Wanna Be a Christian? Game

Lesson 41	Theme: The Early Christians: A Peculiar People Story Topic: Peculiar Responses of Early Christians Lesson Activity: Roman vs. Peculiar Sorting Game
Lesson 42	Theme: Jesus, Not the Emperor, is Lord Story Topic: Christian Martyrs Then and Now Lesson Activity: Mock Roman Interrogations
Lesson 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
Lesson 44	Theme: Called to Bear Fruit Story Topic: Peter's Healing of Tabitha/Dorcas Lesson Activity: That's Rotten! Healing Game
Lesson 45	Theme: Segregation in Communion & the World Story Topic: Paul Changes Communion Practices Lesson Activity: <i>The Village of the World</i> – book or video
Lesson 46	Theme: The Church is the Body of Christ Story Topic: Paul's Description of the Church as a Body Lesson Activity: Parachute Games
Lesson 47	Theme: A Global Community of Faith Story Topic: Paul's Plea for Jerusalem & Your Mission Story Lesson Activity: Donation Gathering
Lesson 48	Theme: John's Symbolic Revelation Story Topic: John's Writing of Revelation Lesson Activity: Code Names for Jesus
Lesson 49	Theme: God's Dream for Planet Earth Story Topic: God's Dream Lesson Activity: Shalom Acrostic Poems/Drawings
Lesson 50	Theme: Manna and Mercy Museum Story Topic: no story Lesson Activity: Manna and Mercy Museum

### **Hints for the Manna and Mercy Elementary Curriculum:**

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

- Directions for the stories and lessons are wordy 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. Key concepts and phrases are underlined or highlighted as reminders of their importance.
- Some stories will take longer than others. The time for lessons will need to be adjusted.
- Be careful to allow for 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. Adaptations are suggested.
- 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 in your church. Storytellers should be skilled at storytelling.
- Storytellers and Teachers will need access to the primary resource (Erlander's book).

- Encourage parents to have access to the resource book and tell them the themes and pages covered so that they can read the book and look at the illustrations with their children. The revised version has Take-Away documents for parents that do this.
- At least one adult helper in addition to the teacher is assumed for each group. No more than 10 children per group is best, especially for young children. Some lessons need more adult helpers such as the carnival lessons.
- The supply list is usually what is needed for 1 group/classroom only.
- Look for supplies at dollar stores, thrift stores, websites such as amazon.com, eBay, etc.
- Documents/materials sometimes show up at later lessons so save them. Use props for decorating rooms once they are introduced. The last lesson is a Manna and Mercy Museum Tour where many props are displayed.
- 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 prairie dog plush animals or 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 them apart. The same flexible use is true for the M & M glasses.
- I encourage you to adapt lessons to your church's culture, history, geography, or news events. The goal is to make the lessons meaningful to the children and church community.
- Use the quiz lesson at any time; adapt according to the content you've covered.