The Shiny Cup and the Giant Camel



At the neighborhood fair, Ben was in charge of the lemonade stand. His big sign said: **EVERYONE WELCOME! FREE LEMONADE!**

Ben wanted his stand to look impressive. He lined up his striped cups in perfectly straight rows, then counted ten mint leaves for the first pitcher.

Just then, Mia came up with her little brother. He'd been running and was hot and thirsty.

"Two cups, please," Mia said.

"Only for kids with a blue ticket," Ben said.

Mia pointed to the sign. "You said everyone."

"I wrote it," Ben said. "I didn't promise it." Then he whispered to his helper, "If anyone asks, tell them the ticket rule was always there."

Mia's brother tugged at her sleeve. "Let's go."

"Hang on," said Mia. She picked up a cup for her brother, then stopped. There was a **sticky ring of old juice inside**. She tipped it toward Ben.

Look closely: Find the dirty ring, the napkin, the sieve and the thirsty boy. Which problem is Ben missing?

Bible detectives

Ben grabbed a napkin. Still busy making the cups look good, he picked up another cup and wiped the outside without looking inside.

“Ben,” Mia said. “That’s not where the dirt is.”

Just then his helper fished a tiny gnat out of the pitcher. “Got it!”

Mia looked at the pitcher, then at the little boy walking away. “You two noticed that, but what about him?”

Ben wanted to tell her to mind her own business. He’d spent all morning painting “Everyone welcome!” Now Mia was asking him to mean it, and he wanted her to go away.

Then he looked at the cup in his hand. He’d **wiped the wrong side**.

“Wait!” he called. “You don’t need a ticket. I made up that rule. I’m sorry.”

Ben and his helper washed the cups. Ben filled the first clean one with lemonade and carried it over to Mia’s brother. No one clapped or stopped to admire his stand. The little boy just took a long drink. Ben watched him lower the cup. He had kept that thirsty boy waiting while he fussed over how everything looked. Now, instead of waiting for someone to praise his sign, Ben asked, “Would you like some more?”

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **Matthew 23:25**

You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. **Matthew 23:26**

Bible detective: Underline outside and inside. Circle what Jesus says to clean first. Why didn’t wiping the outside clean the cup?

Ask: If someone showed you that you were doing the wrong thing, what would you want to say first?

Line to remember: Don’t just shine the cup. Listen to Jesus and let Him change what’s inside.

Find the camel • Look and color

Connect it to Jesus: Ben's helper noticed the gnat, but Ben nearly missed a much bigger wrong: keeping a thirsty boy away and covering it with a lie. Jesus pictured a tiny gnat and a huge camel to warn religious leaders. They carefully gave part of their herbs to God but neglected **justice, mercy, and faithfulness**. Religious work could not replace obeying God.

Ben wanted Mia to leave when she corrected him. Jesus warned of something much worse: the leaders said they would not have helped kill God's prophets, yet they would reject and hurt the messengers He sent.

Jesus sees our sin too. We don't have to hide it. **Jesus died and rose again to save sinners**. We can turn from sin, tell Him the truth, and trust Him for forgiveness and help to change. Putting things right does not earn His forgiveness. With His help, we can stop making excuses and obey God, not just look good.

The little thing isn't necessarily bad. It just can't take the place of what matters more.

You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!
Matthew 23:24

Ask: What was Ben's "camel"?
Picture puzzle: Look back at the stand. Find and circle four objects that do not belong, then color.



Listen and act

Underline what the person does well. Write what they need to do differently.

I put every game piece back neatly, but I change the rules so my brother can't win. **What would be fair?**

I can say my memory verse without missing a word, but I laugh when a new kid reads slowly. **What would mercy look like?**

I make a beautiful promise card, but I look for a reason not to keep my word. **What would faithfulness look like?**

"Is it easier to say 'I would have listened to God back then' or to listen when He corrects me now?"

Privately finish: **"Jesus, when You show me _____, help me _____."**

Word challenge: Find 12 words in all eight directions. Circle in the list the three things that matter more than appearances.

K	O	U	T	S	I	D	E	I	X	K	Y	J	V	Y
V	E	C	N	P	A	J	U	M	X	T	F	Z	W	H
Q	J	I	K	F	P	K	R	D	B	A	E	D	E	T
G	I	N	J	G	J	Q	Q	D	I	J	A	T	N	U
N	G	S	E	U	F	Y	H	T	E	C	Z	H	N	R
I	U	I	M	T	B	I	H	C	A	G	L	R	A	T
E	C	D	C	T	S	F	R	M	C	W	N	T	T	T
Z	K	E	P	I	U	I	E	S	K	Q	R	A	S	P
M	B	A	Q	L	A	L	L	U	T	E	I	M	H	S
T	I	M	N	D	Y	E	C	I	T	S	U	J	U	C
C	A	E	P	C	M	Y	L	J	R	J	U	Z	T	J
G	S	G	R	U	V	I	E	Y	D	T	K	G	F	Y
S	U	E	N	Y	C	A	B	V	A	W	K	A	B	H
S	M	O	N	A	F	N	B	Y	J	S	I	Y	P	C
A	T	E	H	A	T	M	Q	L	O	B	W	B	Z	J

JUSTICE
MERCY
FAITHFULNESS
INSIDE
OUTSIDE
FIRST
CUP
GNAT
CAMEL
TRUTH
LISTEN
CHANGE

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/lessons/clean-inside-outside
Lesson page coming later