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a resource in:

**Sunday School**

## Forgiveness Lessons Middle School



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# Forgiveness

## Lesson 1 - God's Example of Forgiveness

Recommended Age/Class: **Middle School** (6th-8th grade)

### Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand God has given us forgiveness, through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, when we did not deserve it.
2. The student will understand all believers gain forgiveness in order to reconnect with their Heavenly Father.
3. The student will understand God extends forgiveness to all, but not all enter into a restored relationship with Him.

### Scripture:

*Colossians 1:12-14* "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:"

*1 John 1:9* "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

*1 Peter 3:18* "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

### Content:

- Sin separates us from God (e.g. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden).
- God does not excuse sin or deny its severity. Rather, sin demands payment. Christ's death on the cross was the ultimate payment for sin.
- Forgiveness is a releasing of a debt. God, through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, offers forgiveness to all believers.
- Forgiveness is given so we can be restored to a connected relationship with God.
- When God forgives us and we ask to receive His forgiveness through repentance, our relationship can be restored with Him and we can now commune with Him.
- Forgiveness does not automatically mean restored relationships. (e.g. Jesus asked God to forgive the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross but they may not have become believers) God has provided a solution for all sin for all time through His perfect Son's death on the cross, but if we do not repent and seek His gift of forgiveness, we cannot enter into a restored relationship with Him.

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## Discussion Questions:

1. What did God do to show He forgives us without excusing our sin?
2. What words can be used to describe God's forgiveness for our sin?
3. How does *Psalm 103:10-12*, *Jeremiah 31:34*, and *Micah 7:18-19* describe God's forgiveness?
4. How does King David's story (*2 Samuel 12*) show God's forgiveness and a restored relationship between David and God?
5. Could God forgive us without us entering into a restored relationship with Him? Why or why not?
6. Could we enter into a restored relationship with God without receiving His forgiveness? Why or why not?
7. What is God's ultimate desire in forgiving us of our sins?

## Activity:

1. The "S" word: Ask students to call out the first word they think of when they hear the word "sin." Make a list of their answers. Typical answers include: stealing, adultery, murder, lying, etc. Discuss how these are actually the results of sin, but the cause of these actions lie deep within the human nature of all of us (*Mark 7: 21-23*). Without God's salvation, we cannot turn from our evil nature.
2. Object Lesson: (Materials needed: clear drinking cup, water, food coloring, bleach)
  - a. Pour water into a clear drinking cup. Tell the students that this cup represents what our heart and life was like when we were born.
  - b. Tell them that as we live life, we inevitably do things that displease God. Give examples or have students give examples of what that could include. Each time an example is given, put one drop of food coloring into the cup. Possible examples:
    - i. Venturing unto inappropriate sites on the internet.
    - ii. Dishonoring parents through words or actions.
    - iii. Gossiping about a friend.
    - iv. Lying/not admitting to doing something wrong.
  - c. Talk about how this "dirty" water represents the condition of our hearts and how God views it as separating us from Him.
  - d. Pour some bleach into the cup and compare it to God's salvation through Christ and that through Christ's forgiveness, God chooses to cast away the mark of our sins.

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## Lesson 2 - God Calls Us to Forgive: What Forgiveness Is and Is Not

Recommended Age/Class: **Middle School** (6th-8th grade)

### Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand God calls us to forgive others, just as He has forgiven us through Christ.
2. The student will understand forgiveness can be given, whether the offender requested it or not.
3. The student will understand forgiveness does not mean sin is ignored or excused, but instead acknowledges sin has occurred and the forgiver chooses to let the offender go of the debt.
4. The student will understand forgiveness is not easy, but rather is an intentional decision that requires hard work.

### Scripture:

*Luke 23:34, "Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

*Colossians 3:13 "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."*

*Matthew 5:43-44, "Ye have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."*

*Mark 11:25-26 "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But, if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

*Matthew 18:21-31 "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done."*

### Content:

- God calls us to forgive others, just as He forgave us through His son, Jesus Christ.
- God takes forgiveness very seriously.
- Forgiveness does not have to be asked for before it is granted. The offended can extend forgiveness, regardless if the offender asks for it. Forgiveness requires only one person, while reconciliation requires two people.
- Sin cannot be overlooked and forgiveness does not mean that one is denying the seriousness of sin. Rather, it acknowledges a sin has occurred and releases the debt from the offender. Forgiving others allows the person who

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forgives to also release and detach from the wrong that occurred.

- Forgiveness is not a few simple words, but rather is a process that requires an intentional decision to forgive someone. It often requires hard work through changing our attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and actions. Forgiveness takes courage and is often personally demanding.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What enables us to forgive others who have wronged us?
2. How does God's example of forgiveness demonstrate how we should forgive others?
3. Does it make it easier for you to forgive others knowing God has forgiven us for so many things? Why or why not?
4. Contrast our natural response/s when someone has wronged us versus how Jesus described what our response/s should be.
5. How does the parable of the lord and his servant exemplify how serious God takes people forgiving one another? How does this show the difference between how much God has forgiven us and how little we have to forgive others?
6. Contrast what forgiveness is and what it is not.
7. When someone wrongs us, we have three options: ignore, take revenge, or forgive. Why is forgiveness the best option? Is it the easiest option? Why or why not?

## Activity:

1. Story Discussion:
  - a. Read over the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in its entirety.
    - i. *Matthew: 21-35*
  - b. Discuss this parable with students, emphasizing how seriously God takes forgiveness of others and the consequences that occur if we do not forgive others.
2. Forgiveness Application: (Materials needed: Disappearing trick paper (can be found on Amazon or other online resources, warm water)
  - a. Give each student a piece of the disappearing trick paper.
  - b. Have the student write one thing someone has wronged them for that they might not have forgiven yet.
  - c. Ask the student to take some time and quietly pray for God to forgive these sins, as well as the person who has done the wrong.
  - d. Have the student dip the paper in warm water until it dissolves.
  - e. Discuss the following:
    - i. What connection does this activity have with forgiveness?
    - ii. What does dissolving the paper represent?
    - iii. Are some actions easier to forgive than others?
    - iv. Does the severity of the offense determine if forgiveness should be given?

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3. Object Lesson: (Materials needed: file folder, 3-5 separate papers with one offense written on each one such as Broken Promises, Doesn't Care, Forgot my Birthday, Chose another Friend, Unkind Words)
  - a. Share with students how sometimes we hold on to intentional or unintentional things people have done that have hurt us. It becomes a list; like keeping score.
  - b. Hold up the file folder and say perhaps you have a friend who has hurt you in different ways:
    - i. Maybe the friend did not come to your house on Saturday afternoon like he/she promised. So, you are hurt and you keep a record of it. Hold up the paper "Broken Promises" and put it in the file.
    - ii. Maybe the friend did not listen when you wanted to tell him/her about something exciting you did this past weekend. You are hurt and you keep a record of it. Hold up the paper "Doesn't Care" and put it in the file.
    - iii. Maybe the friend did not tell you "Happy Birthday" or come to your birthday party. You are hurt and you keep a record of it. Hold up the paper "Forgot my Birthday" and put it in the file.
    - iv. Maybe the friend invited someone else for a sleepover instead of you. You are hurt and you keep a record of it. Hold up the paper "Chose another Friend" and put it in the file.
    - v. Maybe the friend told you your clothes were not the latest style or brand that everyone else is wearing. You are hurt and you keep a record of it. Hold up the paper "Unkind Words" and put it in the file.
  - c. Discuss the following:
    - i. Forgiveness does not mean we hold on to the things people might have done on purpose or not on purpose.
    - ii. Forgiveness is an intentional choice of releasing someone of the debt and letting these hurts go.
    - iii. God commands us to forgive, but He also helps us to let go of these hurts when we choose to forgive others.