

April 26 Lesson

Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21–35
(Parable of the Unmerciful Servant)



God Forgives

Remember Verse

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Items to gather:

- jar of coins
- Remember Verse written in chunks on strips of paper
- Tape
- Washable finger paint or regular paint and paint brushes
- paper plate or bowl or something to put the paint on
- Paper towels and wet wipes
- Plastic tablecloth or tarp or newspaper
- Construction paper (1 sheet per person, white)
- Coins (1 per person)
- Buckets (2, small)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Optional: additional buckets (2–4)
- Bible

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

I'd spent countless hours praying, organizing, and preparing for the children's annual church performance. The performance included live animals, open flames, and 200 small children. On the morning of the show, things fell into place. The animals arrived on time. Ample volunteers emerged to help. I even ushered 45 preschoolers into the sanctuary without any tears—including none of my own.

Right before the doors opened for the children to enter, a father walked up to me, angry because his child didn't have speaking lines in the performance. He shouted at me in front the volunteers, children, and parents. I was mortified. The blood drained from my face, my mouth went dry, and my mind went blank just as the cue came to start the show. The performance was a blur as I stumbled through everything. I felt devastated, even though no one and nothing caught fire. I'd known the father for years, taught his children, and visited his family's home. I felt grieved that he thought I'd purposefully excluded his child.

The family left the church that Sunday, and I haven't seen them since. Because there was no closure to the misunderstanding, it left me picking up the pieces of my shattered pride. Sometimes I still feel twinges of resentment when I think of the father. Yet through this incident, God revealed that my unwillingness to forgive is a way of building walls of self-protection. When I offered forgiveness instead, I was forced to open my heart and acknowledge my hurt. Then God was able to come in and heal. God forgives. And forgiveness brings healing.

Stacy White
The Gathering

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

Rabbinic tradition held that a person needed to forgive someone three times. In Luke 17:4, Jesus said that if someone sins against you seven times, you should continue to forgive them. In Matthew 18:21, Peter was perhaps trying to clarify Jesus' teaching when he asked if seven was the limit of forgiveness. In response, Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). Only a few versions of the Bible translate Matthew 18:22 as "seventy-seven times," including the commonly used New International Version, but another version states "seventy times seven," as found in other translations such as the New American Standard Bible and the New Living Translation. Jesus told the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate that we shouldn't limit the number of times we need to forgive others.

To understand the magnitude of the unmerciful servant's debt to the king, Jesus used a term denoting the largest number used in the first century. The Greek term is *murion*, often translated as "myriad," which means 10,000. And when the Bible describes the number of angels that exist, it uses the phrase "myriad upon myriad"—which means an incalculable number. But if you tried to relate it to today's economy, it would equate to somewhere between three billion and six billion dollars, depending upon how you calculate a day's wage. (The man owed the king 10,000 talents, and a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages.)

Using this illustration, Jesus showed us there is no comparison between what is owed to us and what we have been forgiven. God forgives, and His forgiveness drives and motivates us to forgive others—just as we have been forgiven.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

One of the most tangible ways we can observe God's power is through the simple act of forgiveness. When God works in us to forgive those who don't deserve it—or to humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness from those we've wronged—a miraculous thing happens: He heals our broken hearts. Only God can offer true healing and give us what we need to forgive others. Take some time to ask God to reveal the parts of your heart that still need to be healed. Whom in your life do you need to forgive? Whom have you wronged? From whom do you need to ask forgiveness? Come to God with these questions and invite Him to work His miraculous gift of forgiveness. Praise God who not only instructs us to forgive but also gives us the power of forgiveness through His Holy Spirit.

CONNECT//10 minutes



Find Your Match

In today's Scripture passage, a man owed a king a lot of money—more money than he could ever repay. Invite your family to interact with money as you get started today.

SUPPLIES

- jar of coins

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Open your time by asking this question: **What would you do if you had so much money that it never ran out?**

Ask everyone to look through the coin jar and find 2 coins that match. Once each person finds a match, have them answer one of the questions below (or some questions of your own) based on the coin match they found.

- **(penny match) Do you get an allowance or earn money at home? If you earn it, how?**
- **(dime match) Have you ever saved your money to buy something special? If so, what did you buy?**
- **(quarter match) Have you ever lost any money? How did you feel about that?**
- **(nickel match) Why do you think money is so important to people?**

GATHER//30 minutes



Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Game: Remember Verse Chain

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse written in chunks on strips of paper
- Tape

RELATE

Have your family work together to put the words of the Remember Verse in order. Once they've done this, have them say the verse together. Then have them take the strips and link them into a chain while keeping the words in the correct order. Once they complete the chain, have them recite the verse again.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21–35

God Forgives

RELATE

What do you think of when I say the word “money”? Invite responses. **Great thoughts! Money can be a good thing or a difficult thing, especially if we don't do the right things with it. Money can even lead to people not getting along and having to forgive one another.**

Have you ever had to forgive someone for something? Pause for responses. **Was that easy or difficult to do? Why?** Interact with children's responses. **Forgiving another person can be difficult at times.** Consider sharing an age-appropriate story from your life about forgiveness. **When someone does something or says something to us that's wrong, we can be hurt by those things. When I've been hurt by someone, I really don't want to forgive that person.**

But I know that God is the only One who can take away the hurt I feel inside. When God heals me, I can forgive others from my heart. Let's take a look at the video from Mr. Brian to see what God's word has to say about forgiveness, because God forgives. Let's ask God to teach us today. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Watch the storytelling video.

Wow that was so fun to watch. Jesus meant we should forgive over and over and not even keep count. Why does God tell us to forgive people over and over and over? Interact with kids' responses. **That's right—since God has forgiven our sins, we can forgive others. Through Jesus, God has shown us how to forgive. When we trust and obey Him, He will heal us and give us everything we need to forgive others. God is so good.** Share a personal story of a time you forgave someone or someone forgave you.

Discussion Questions

- **What does *forgiveness* mean?**
- **How did the king first show mercy to his servant?** Matthew 18:27
- **Why did the king later get upset with the servant?** Matthew 18:32–33
- **Why is forgiveness sometimes hard?** Matthew 18:35

RESPOND//15 minutes



Craft: Symbols of Forgiveness

Kids will ponder places in their lives where they need to receive or offer forgiveness and then use finger paint to draw symbols or words to represent those situations.

SUPPLIES

- Washable finger paint or regular paint and paint brushes
- paper plate or bowl or something to put the paint on
- Paper towels and wet wipes
- Plastic tablecloth or tarp or newspaper
- Construction paper (1 sheet per person, white)

RELATE

Jesus gave the ultimate example of forgiveness when He chose to die on the cross for our sins. We did nothing to deserve His sacrifice, but He died so we might be able to live forever with Him. Because God has forgiven us for so much, He asks us to forgive others too. Forgiveness is a gift that God gives to us, and He shows us how to offer this gift to others.

Invite your family to spend some time in silent prayer. **Is there anyone whom you need to forgive or a relationship that you would like God to heal? It could be a friend or family member or teacher. Or perhaps you need forgiveness for something you said or did that may have hurt another person. Is there anyone whom you need to ask to forgive you? Ask God to show you if you need to ask for forgiveness.**

After the children spend time in prayer, give each one a sheet of white construction paper. Invite the kids to use the finger paint to draw symbols or words that represent the people or situations where they need to receive or offer forgiveness. For example, if they're hurt that a friend said something behind their back, they might draw an ear. If they're feeling guilty about ignoring a friend at school, they might draw a picture of their friend with a sad face. Encourage them to be as honest as they can about how they're feeling. As they create, suggest they to talk to God and ask Him to show them how to forgive or be forgiven in that situation.

Developmentally Speaking

First and second graders have a hard time distinguishing intervals of time. They may give examples of forgiveness from a long time ago, but they may feel like those situations happened recently.

Game: Coin Toss

In this game, kids will see who collects the most money by tossing coins into a bucket.

SUPPLIES

- Coins (1 per person)
- Buckets (2, small)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Optional: additional buckets (2-4)

SET UP

Use the tape to make a start line on the floor. Place the buckets side by side about six to eight feet from the start line.

RELATE

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, a servant owed his master so much money that he could never pay it all back. Today lead your family in a game in which they compete in teams or individually to see who collects the most money by tossing coins into a bucket.

To play, divide your family into two teams, have each team line up at the start line, and give every person a coin. Then, one at a time, have each person try to throw their coin into the bucket. When both teams finish, have a leader count the number of coins in each team's bucket. The team with the most coins wins! Optional: To increase the chances of getting their coins into buckets, you might set out two or three buckets for each team or don't play with teams and have everyone compete against each other.

BLESS//5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Bible

RELATE

Gather your family and read the following blessing from Colossians 3:13:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

May you know God's forgiveness this week. May you forgive others as He has forgiven you.

Have your family stand together in a circle. Walk around the circle and bless each person individually. Touch each person on the shoulder and say, (name), **may the Holy Spirit help you to forgive others.**