



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON FOUR: FORGIVENESS

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LESSON FOUR: FORGIVENESS

OBJECTIVE: To help families learn about forgiveness and make a family forgiveness plan so that they can be families who follow Jesus together.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus taught we must forgive one another and showed us how to forgive even when it is very hard.

([Matthew 18:21-22](#) “Peter came to Jesus. He asked, “Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but 77 times.”)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

God wants to forgive us for the wrong things we do, and for us to forgive one another just like He forgives us!

([1 John 1:9](#) “God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.”)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

Forgiveness is something parents try to teach their children and it can be easy when the offense is small. We teach our children to forgive each other when someone says sorry for taking a toy without asking or calling a name. But forgiveness becomes far more complex as an adult, doesn't it? If you can take a moment right now you might be able to identify people in your life you have yet to forgive, people who have hurt you by failing to live up to your expectations (right or wrong). Do you hold resentment against your parents? In-laws? Old friends who never kept in touch? Someone who has let you down when you needed them, or intentionally caused you to suffer?

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS FROM OUR KIDS

Forgiveness is something we must model for our children, in being people who are quick to forgive in our own lives. One way to model this is to actually – when necessary and appropriate – ask our children to forgive us. This action takes great humility and may be difficult at first – but it gets easier over time. The gains accomplished by this action are demonstrating for our children that we do not expect them to be faultless and perfect (even we make mistakes!). But we do expect them to recognize when they have done wrong and own up to it instead of covering it up. When asking for forgiveness from our children:

1. We must take full responsibility. Never 'but' your way out! 'But' only teaches your kids that we can blame others for our mistake. For instance, say, "I am sorry I lost my temper and yelled at you. I was very angry when I saw the broken toy. I should have listened to what happened first." Instead of, "I am sorry I yelled at you, but you shouldn't have left your toy in a place where it could have been broken!" We sometimes use 'but' as a reason for our anger, but often it comes across as an excuse!
2. Clearly define what it was you did wrong and make a plan to not do it again! This teaches our children that you hold everyone to God's standard, and what to do if they make a similar mistake or sin.
3. Never pretend you are perfect. We need our children to respect us – to obey us, to listen to us and to think well of us. Parenting just works better that way. Sometimes we are hesitant to speak about our past mistakes or even admit when we've done wrong in order to maintain a flawless face before them – but consider what this teaches them. When they sin, make a mistake or even fail to live up to expectations they have no model to follow. They feel alone in their inability, they have no concept that it is normal and something people can eventually – with hard work – overcome. They feel like failures. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, he offers us his own help and his own grace precisely because of our inability and failures.

OFFERING FORGIVENESS TO OUR KIDS

Sometimes our children will offend us or do something that requires us to forgive them. It is always a good practice to teach children to ask for forgiveness from God and from people. So, if your children tell you they are sorry – forgive them. This involves forgiving like God does – freely, repeatedly and offering help to not sin again.

How can you help your child have success at not repeating the offence? [Hebrews 4:16](#) reminds us that when we go to God's throne of grace, we can expect to receive his help, not his chastisement. Do your children expect



that you will help them in any way you can to overcome their sin? Forgiving our children also involves letting go of our right to have retribution. Sometimes if we are very angry, the temptation is to make our children experience our anger through discipline. This is when discipline turns from a tool to help teach our children that there are consequences to wrong behavior, to being an outlet for our own anger. Be very careful in discipline that you are forgiving your children – choosing to let go of your anger, hurt and disappointment instead of making them pay for what they have done! That is not forgiveness.

FORGIVING OTHERS

If you have someone in your life you are finding difficult to forgive, take a little time this month to consider what you can do about this. If there was a particularly horrible offense against you, you may need help from pastors or mentors to overcome the hurt and bitterness in your life. The hurt and anger – just like sin – grows in the darkness and often disappears in the light. Confess your lack of forgiveness to others and ask for help from your church community! Keep in mind these things:

1. Refusing to forgive allows the offender to continue to have power over you. Forgiveness, as we've said, is letting go. Choosing to hold onto bad feelings means you are allowing them and their actions to continue the pain in your life.
2. **Adjust Expectations:** Almost all hurt in our life is because someone failed to live up to our expectations. Think about that for a minute. Is there an example you know of where that's not the case? We expect people in authority, such as parents, to act perfectly and when they don't it can be a source of great pain. We expect spouses to know our needs and take care of them without fault. We expect people to be there for us when we need them. Not all these expectations are bad! But sometimes when we are offended it is because of unrealistic, unmet expectations. Examine your areas of unforgiveness. Are you holding people to an impossible standard? What would your life look like if you allowed them to be human and forgive them for not being perfect? We should expect others to treat us well, it isn't necessary to lower expectations to nothing, but we must be aware that sometimes the offense comes because expectations are impossible.
3. **Those Sins are Paid for by Jesus:** Where we absolutely cannot let go of an offense to us – perhaps something completely unfair has happened in our past – we need to know there is freedom in what Jesus has done for us. Reconciliation with the offender is not necessary or productive, but our sense of justice requires that someone pay for what has been done to us. It is important to remember that Jesus died for these sins too – he took all sin onto himself – and offers forgiveness to those who ask. Someone has already suffered for what has been done to you – Jesus! It has been done – work on letting it go!

Consider these Questions:

- What behaviour do you find most difficult to forgive? What does that reveal to you about your heart?
- What did your family or parents teach you about forgiveness as a child? How did they teach it?
- Does society see forgiveness as a weak action or a strong one? How does that influence you?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- **Text inside this box is a short activity or task**

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- Pieces of coloured paper, with one of these words written on each: (Happy, Sad, Mad, Frustrated, Angry, Disappointed, Hurt, Left Out)
- Plain paper for writing on
- Balloon for each child (if available)
- Tape (if available) or sticky notes

FORGIVENESS AND FEELINGS

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!



Feelings

The opening activity today involves feeling identification. Some children will have an easier time with this than others. This lesson takes the position that we can choose our responses to our feelings, and with enough practice, even choose our feelings.

Today we're going to talk about a really important topic for families who follow Jesus – forgiveness. Anyone who lives with another person – moms and dads, brothers and sisters, grandmas and grandpas and grandkids – soon finds out that other people do things that they don't like. Other people make mistakes, bug us, or even sometimes do mean things on purpose. What do we do when someone does something that we don't like?

As a family, take a piece of paper and divide it into four pieces. On each piece, write down something that happens in your house that bugs or hurts someone else. For instance – when little siblings make too much noise, or when someone takes something without asking, or when someone doesn't let you play with them, etc. When you have four real examples written down, set them aside, as you will need them later.

Next, put the coloured pieces of paper with the words SAD, MAD, FRUSTRATED, ANGRY, DISAPPOINTED, HURT, LEFT OUT written on them out on a table or floor space where everyone can see them.



When something happens that we don't like, we often feel one of these feelings. We feel sad when someone doesn't want to play with us. We feel angry when someone breaks something that belongs to us. We feel frustrated when someone doesn't listen to us.

Read each of the four situations you wrote down earlier together. Ask children to point to or stand on the emotion they might feel if that happened to them.



If you felt that emotion, what might you do?

Those feelings feel very yucky. One thing we might do is to take that feeling and hold onto it very tight, and when we can't hold on anymore, we try to make someone else feel the same way – especially the person who we think gave us the feeling in the first place. *(You can pick up one of the feelings on the table/floor and tape it or stick it to another family member)*

Now you have stuck the feeling on someone else – maybe you did the same thing as they did to you. Kids fight with each other, parents yell at kids to stop fighting, kids act out and disobey because they don't like the yelling, and it becomes a big yucky mess. The feelings don't go away, they just get spread around. *(Demonstrate with the Sticky Feelings activity on the sidebar if you wish)*

But guess what? God who loves us doesn't want us to have those yucky feelings inside us, or to hurt each other and make each other mad! So here's what God teaches us in the Bible.



Read: [Colossians 3:13](#)



Read: [Ephesians 4:31-32](#)



What is God's solution to getting rid of those yucky feelings?

We have heard that we need to forgive, but sometimes we don't always understand what that means. So I'm going to show you.



Help children to recognize both actions and thoughts that might be attached to our emotions. These might help them recognize their feelings in the future.



Sticky Feelings

In this activity, you will demonstrate that trying to pay people back for the feelings we feel becomes a yucky circle of continued hurt. If you have two adults leading this lesson, discuss this visual example ahead of time. Demonstrate passing blame and hurt back and forth by writing new sticky notes with 'angry' or 'sad' on them every time one is stuck to you, so that when you gain one, you actually gain two, and you both soon are covered.



Forgiveness means to choose to give up your right to be mad, sad, angry, disappointed, hurt or other feelings.

Forgiveness means to choose not to make the other person, or anyone else, feel a yucky feeling.



If you don't have any balloons on hand, you can do this by folding up the word "mad" into a paper airplane, or just crumpling it into a paper ball to throw away. Not as dramatic or memorable – but it still works!

Ask kids to pretend with you for a minute. Imagine something has made you mad. Ready? Do you have it in your mind? (Pass them each an uninflated balloon and ask kids to blow up the balloon as big as they can; to blow all the bad feelings into it and hold it closed – younger children will need help from a parent. On the count of three – have everyone let their balloons go together! They will fly around the room noisily – adults can collect balloons later.)



How did that feel?

I think if we all tried very hard, we could forgive – let go – of something someone did that we didn't like this week. If something bad only happened to us once in our lives, we could probably handle it. But, of course, that's not what happens in real life!



Some translations record that Jesus specified 77 times, some say 7x70 which is 490. Either way, it's many, many times. To illustrate, you might try to collect that many of something – such as chocolate chips or Lego pieces to show how many it is!

Sometimes, we get bugged every single day. All of us make mistakes, and sometimes we are selfish instead of living with our family members in an understanding way. Adults and kids both have to learn this to live together as a family! But Jesus had lots to say about this tricky thing.



Matthew 18:21-22



What does this verse mean?

That is so many times! A number that is much bigger than three or seven, it means forgiving over and over so many times that we get into the habit of forgiving and we don't count anymore, we just forgive.

But forgiving others – letting go of our yucky feelings and letting go of wanting to give them yucky feelings back – is not easy. The only way we can do it is with God's help. But wouldn't it make a big difference in our



families if we forgave each other instead of passing yucky feelings back and forth? When we do something and then feel bad that we did it, we want to be forgiven. So, in a family that follows Jesus we choose to love each other instead of hate, and we choose to forgive instead of holding on to bad feelings.

Sometimes forgiveness can be confusing! But here is what the Bible says about forgiving. *(Teach the following points. You can choose either of the options on the side for a more engaging presentation)*

1. **Forgiveness IS:** choosing not to get back at someone.
2. **Forgiveness IS:** choosing not to remember the wrong things.
3. **Forgiveness IS:** repeated, it doesn't have a limit!
4. **Forgiveness is NOT:** saying it's okay to do wrong things!
5. **Forgiveness is NOT:** letting people hurt us again and again.
6. **Forgiveness is NOT:** permission to do anything we want!
7. **Forgiveness is NOT:** being free of the consequences of our mistake. For instance, if we make a mess, we might be forgiven but we still have to clean it up!

But forgiving is hard. It doesn't seem fair. Sometimes we're not sure the other person is really sorry, and what they have done is hard to forget. Sometimes the feelings inside us seem really big. So why should we forgive?

1. God has made it a rule for his people – forgive, just like he forgives us. When we forgive, we are obeying God and that makes God happy!
2. God knows forgiving is one way we love each other and take care of each other in families, and it helps our families and friendships when we forgive.
3. If we let our bad feelings stay inside us instead of letting them go, we feel bad all the time, and make other people feel bad. Hurting someone else doesn't make us feel better – only forgiveness can do that.

Forgiveness isn't fair – but that's a good thing! If God was perfectly fair all the time, not one of us would be able to be his children or loved by him. He forgives us even though we don't deserve it. That's the reason we should forgive others!



You can have older children come up with a list of what forgiveness is, and what it isn't. Help them craft the list by asking questions – like “does forgiveness mean we have permission to do whatever we want to?” They may be able to make a list like this, or even add to it!



Learning by Sorting

Prepare the seven statements without the IS or IS NOT in front of them, write them down on small slips of paper. Then write IS and IS NOT on two larger papers. Have children sort the slips into the two piles to see what forgiveness is and is not.

Close by praying together. Pray that God would help your family to forgive one another and obey.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God’s Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. Nlrv is a good one for very young children. Spend time praying together too!

<p>1</p>	<p><u>Luke 17:3-4</u></p>	<p>What do we do in our family if someone does something wrong? If you have an ‘I’m sorry’ script, you can review it with your kids or create one as a family to show them what you expect. It can be simple: <i>Child 1: No, thank you! Hitting is not okay!</i> <i>Child 2: I’m sorry.</i> <i>Child 1: It’s okay, I forgive you.</i> <i>Child 2: Thank you, I won’t do it again.</i></p> <p>Why is it still important to tell someone else when they did something to hurt us? Sometimes we do something that other people don’t like, but it isn’t sin.</p> <p>What should we do if we do something that’s not wrong, but someone else doesn’t like it? Do we always have to stop?</p> <p>What would our family be like if we always forgave each other quickly instead of holding onto our mad, sad, yucky feelings?</p>
<p>2</p>	<p><u>Luke 15:11-32</u></p> <p><i>Tell the story of the Prodigal Son, read it from a storybook or have kids act it out.</i></p>	<p>Jesus told many stories to teach people. One was called the Prodigal Son. The dad in this story shows us what God is like. It’s a reminder that God will forgive us even when we don’t deserve it.</p> <p>Does this story mean we can do whatever we want and not expect consequences? What were some of the consequences the younger son faced because of his choices? Do you think the son in this story would do the same thing again?</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Reference <u>Luke 15:11-32</u></p>	<p>In our story yesterday, who was forgiven? What things did he do that were wrong? If your children are engaged, highlight that he broke as many of the Jewish laws as he could – pigs were forbidden animals! Many of the things he did showed he didn’t care at all about his dad, his family or God – only about himself.</p> <p>What ways is the dad in this story like God? How are people sometimes like the son? What do we need to do for God to forgive us?</p>



4	<p><u>Colossians 3:13</u></p> <p><i>You can tell the story of Joseph and his brothers, read it from a storybook or have children act it out</i></p>	<p>In our life, we don't always get to choose what happens to us. Sometimes things happen that we can't predict or that seem unfair. Sometimes you get sick, plans change, etc.</p> <p>What are some bad things that happened to Joseph?</p> <p>Why might Joseph have been mad or angry or sad at his brothers?</p> <p>What could Joseph have done to get even with his brothers? What did he do instead?</p> <p>How do we know Joseph forgave his brothers?</p> <p>Joseph didn't get to choose what happened to him, but he did choose a better response.</p> <p>How can we choose a 'new ending' to situations in our lives? Like fights with siblings?</p>
5	<p><u>Ephesians 4:25</u></p> <p><u>James 4:17</u></p> <p><u>Luke 10:27</u></p> <p><u>1 John 1:9</u></p>	<p>What is something you are really proud of making? Artwork, etc. Have children share.</p> <p>How would you feel if someone wrecked that thing you made?</p> <p>Tell children that God made us, we are like artwork to God. And when someone sins it is like they are scribbling all over a beautiful picture God has made. It wrecks it. Sin tells everyone that God isn't a good artist and that his creation is worthless – and that's not true! So sin matters very much to God. It breaks his heart.</p> <p>The things that hurt what God has made are called 'sin'. We can also say that sin is breaking God's rules.</p> <p>In our verses here, what are the sins? Can you think of examples of these?</p> <p>Have you ever sinned? Have you done something to hurt what God has made?</p> <p>You may remind your children that <u>Romans 3:23</u> says everyone has sinned.</p> <p>The Good News is that God loves us enough to forgive us!</p> <p>That is one of the reasons we can forgive others, because God forgave us.</p> <p>What do we have to do to receive forgiveness from God?</p> <p>What have we learned this week about being a family that follows Jesus?</p>



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help you to forgive those who sin against you and thank God that because of Jesus your sins are forgiven. Pray that your family would show grace to one another.
- **Memorize:** [1 John 1:9](#) and [Colossians 3:13](#) together as a family.
- **Missions:** Pray for people who have not accepted the forgiveness of God and ask God to show them a need for a saviour. Talk about people around the world who help people find forgiveness in God.
- **Daily Life:**
 - Make artwork together, draw or make something with play clay. Talk about how God loves the world he made and that when it is wrecked by sin, his creation no longer tells the truth about what a great artist God is! When God's people sin, it breaks our relationship with God, and we need forgiveness to fix it.
 - Practice your 'forgiveness script' as a family. When disagreements or bad feelings arise, have kids 'try again' and encourage the words you would like them to use with each other. Model them yourself.
 - Watch a Christian kids tv episode or audio drama on the topic of forgiveness. Talk about it together.
 - Put together a fun game night where you play old-fashioned church picnic games. Three-legged race, wheelbarrow race, egg and spoon race, relays, etc. or set up an indoor balloon-volleyball game. Often working with teams can be frustrating and require forgiveness! Liberally love and forgive one another as you play!