

Forgiving Our Neighbor
Lesson: Showing Mercy
Grades 1-3 Lesson



Goal:

Students will learn about the importance of offering forgiveness to their neighbors. They will learn of God's forgiveness to each of them, and will have reinforced the understanding that just because someone does something wrong does not make them a bad person.

Lesson:

Forgiveness and mercy are needed for everyone. Everyone makes bad choices, but our bad choices do not define us. We can relate this to children whose choices tend to have small consequences as well as to adults whose choices have larger consequences.

Bible Story:

Jesus taught us how to pray in the Bible when he first prayed the "*Our Father*". Every day when we say this prayer, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". What does that mean exactly?

Children may not all know what forgiveness is or what it is for. We can help them to understand when we are each in need of forgiveness when we do things that are wrong or hurt other people. Ask students for examples.

Help students understand that forgiveness is not a feeling—it is a decision. People sin every day, and every day someone sins against us. These sins make us and others feel bad. We have a choice to make. We can either hold a grudge against the person who hurt us or we can forgive them and allow ourselves to be joyful again.

Activity:

Give students the opportunity to do something active that represents the forgiving going on in their hearts. Use the "How to Forgive Activity for Kids" online resource as a reference, ask students to write or draw a time that they were hurt by something that someone had done to them. Once they have completed that, let them know that together, they are all going to practice forgiveness! They can: tear their paper into little bits; get it wet and wad it into a ball; fold it into a paper airplane; or something else that they imagine. Next, it is time to destroy that paper—either "shoot their ball" into the trash; rain scraps into the trash; or aim their airplane into the trash. Once all papers have been trashed, ask each child to say a silent prayer that they let go of the hurt in their hearts just as they let go of the paper. Then they can say a silent prayer for the person who hurt them, asking God to bless that person.

Activity:

Have children practice saying the Our Father. Say it slowly and help them understand words that may be new to them.

You can print and use the “Our Father Printable for Kids” that provides graphics for each phrase in the prayer.

Depending on the reading ability of students, use the Our Father Word Scramble.

Or, have students act out the Our Father—see online resource.

Watch:

Even though Jesus forgives us when we sin, sometimes we still have to suffer the consequences of our actions. Ask students to share a time when they have been punished for doing something wrong. Maybe they had a time-out or lost a privilege. Adults, too, have to face consequences for their actions.

Watch Nylo’s Story to learn about a boy whose mom is in jail. He misses her but learns to write letters to her every day so they can be connected. What does this tell us about Nylo’s mom? Even though she is in jail, taking responsibility for something that she did that was wrong, she is still a good mom to Nylo and is teaching him and encouraging him. Reinforces the idea that our bad choices do not define who we are.

Prayer:

Dear God,
Thank you for forgiving me when I do something wrong.
Please help me to forgive others.
Amen.

