

Lesson 54

TEXT Genesis 45:1-15; Matthew 6:14,15

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to define forgiveness and will understand that if they forgive others God will forgive them.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. — Matthew 6:14

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 104 — Forgiveness

ANSWER TITLE: **Punished for Another Man’s Crime**

SEARCH TITLE: **Forgiveness**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Pardon in the Old Testament, and *remission*, in the New Testament, are often used as the equivalents of *forgiveness*. The normal prerequisites for forgiveness from God are repentance and the willingness to make reparation, or atonement. However, these conditions do not apply when it comes to us forgiving one who has wronged us. The goal of forgiveness is the restoration of both parties to the former relationship; this may or may not be the end result, but it is necessary for us to do our part.

The story of Joseph has been called one of the most

beautiful stories in all literature. Forgiveness by Joseph was the key to God’s will being done for the Children of Israel. Joseph loved God, therefore he forgave his brothers. If you love God you will forgive. And if you forgive you cannot help but love.

Jesus spoke to the disciples about their need to forgive repeatedly. In Matthew 18:21-35, Peter asked Jesus how often must we forgive and Jesus answered, “Seventy times seven.” The point He made was that forgiveness must not be limited.

YOUR OPENER

Forgiveness

TEXT: Genesis 45:1-15; Matthew 6:14,15

KEY VERSE: For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
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RESPONSES

1. Let your students give their definitions. They should bring out that to *forgive* means “to pardon.” It also means that one will not hold any resentment against another or desire to punish him. Discuss the difference between God’s forgiveness and man’s forgiveness. Help your students ponder the magnitude of God’s forgiveness and conclude that the least one can do is forgive his fellowman.

2. Encourage your students to discuss the similarities and differences. You may wish to refer to the following definitions:

Repentance: The resolve to amend one’s life as a result of sorrow for one’s sins, by coming to the Lord with a sincere heart.

Contrition: A sorrow for having sinned, growing out of a love toward God.

Humility: The act of submission, a state of lowliness or meekness.

Godly sorrow: A sincere feeling of sadness over past deeds, causing one to contemplate a change toward God.

All four of these attitudes are necessary if a person sincerely wants forgiveness from God.

3. The students’ answers should bring out that both Joseph and Stephen exhibited a forgiving spirit, as did Jesus on the Cross. Joseph forgave his conniving brothers, Stephen his murderers, and Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him. By these examples, the students should discuss how they can pattern their attitudes concerning forgiveness of others. They must forgive others if they want God’s forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a necessary attitude in the Christian life. To receive forgiveness, one must be willing and able to forgive others. Jesus, on Calvary’s cross, showed the perfect example of forgiveness. Stephen, while being stoned to death by his persecutors, cried with a loud voice, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”—certainly an act of loving forgiveness. See Acts 7:60.

1. Write your own definition of the word *forgive*.

2. What are some similarities/differences in the meanings of the following words?

Repentance

Contrition

Humility

Godly sorrow

How do these words relate to forgiveness?

3. In what way were Joseph and Stephen like Jesus?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. When you consider the treatment Joseph received at the hands of his brothers, why do you think he helped his family during the famine?

5. Explain how forgiveness relates to the fruit of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5:22,23.

6. Explain why it is important for a Christian to show a forgiving spirit through his actions.

7. What are evidences of true forgiveness? Give examples.

8. If someone asks you to forgive him, is it necessary to be sure he is sincere? Explain your answer.

9. Why is our measure of forgiveness so important?

4. The students should realize Joseph was exhibiting the forgiveness that was in his heart toward his brothers. By helping them before they recognized him, he forgave them freely before they could ask to be forgiven. Ask your students to give some hypothetical situations where they can forgive before they are asked to forgive. Discuss what makes a person willing to forgive before he is asked: Christian love. There can be no true love without a spirit of forgiveness.

5. Help your students realize that in showing true Christian forgiveness, the fruit of the Spirit is exemplified (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance). In considering these attributes, which, if any, of these could be omitted if true Christian forgiveness is shown?

6. In discussing this question, the student should realize that the Christian's credibility is at stake. If one says, "I forgive," but does not show any signs of forgiveness in his actions, his testimony is hypocritical and could be a stumbling block to other people.

7. Your students' examples may include: not bringing the subject up again, not telling others about the situation, putting the subject out of one's mind, and remaining friendly to the person involved. Ask your students: Is this something that comes automatically with salvation? Is it easy? Refer to Galatians 5:24. It may not be easy to "crucify the flesh," but it is necessary.

8. The students should realize that the one asking for forgiveness should not even be questioned about his sincerity because that is between him and God. What really matters is that forgiveness is granted, whether or not sincerity has been shown or forgiveness even asked.

9. This question should be used in conjunction with our text, Matthew 6:14,15, to tie together the whole lesson in view of the objective. As God forgives us, we should forgive others. The greater our capacity to forgive others, the greater the blessing we will receive from God. Help your class understand that everyone makes errors in judgment. One could offend someone without intending or even realizing what has happened. Remember, asking forgiveness and forgiving are necessary parts of Christian living. We should keep in mind Matthew 7:2 which says, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

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YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Has someone ever caused you to be unhappy by willfully doing you wrong? What did you do? If you could do it over, would you respond in the same way?

What should you do if you find it hard to forgive someone?

Can you truly love Jesus if you won't forgive others?

What did Jesus mean when He said to forgive seventy times seven?

Do we forgive only those who ask for it?

Why is it needful to have forgiveness in our hearts toward others?

In our ANSWER story, whose voice was it that said, "Forgive him for my sake"? How do we know that God wants us to do the same thing today?

THINGS TO DO

Luke 6:27-36 speaks of "other cheek" religion. Share this true story with your students. For the sake of anonymity, we will refer to a man in our congregation as "Fred." Fred chided a sinner for wrongdoing. The sinner took a "roundhouse" swing at Fred. Fred decided to stand his ground by turning the other cheek. The sinner struck a second and third time but his punches never found their mark. The third punch was to be a real "haymaker," whereupon the sinner overbalanced, fell and struck his head severely on the pavement. Fred gave him assistance to get back on his feet and the matter was settled. Discuss the pros and cons of Fred's action.

To illustrate forgiveness use a chalkboard and eraser. Draw an outline of a person on a chalkboard. Explain that when someone does something against you or to hurt you, it is like making a bruise. Color in a spot. However, forgiveness is like erasing the mark. It is gone when you forgive, just as if it had never been there. Write across the bottom of the board, "You Hold The Eraser!" This same

idea can be illustrated by using eradicator (typing correction fluid) or a pencil eraser.

Ask the students for some situations that they often face when someone does them wrong. Get them to decide how they should handle these situations.

Divide your class into two groups. Set a time limit and have both sides search through the Bible to find the names of some people who forgave others for their trespasses.

Answers for ANSWER

Why Forgive?

Read Genesis 45:1-15. Using the Bible story and the clues listed below, fill in numbers one through seven in the crossword. Then use the word in the shaded area to complete the sentence at the bottom of the page.

1. Jacob was Joseph's FATHER (verses 25,26)
2. JOSEPH forgave his brothers' wrongdoings.
3. "... for God did send me before you to PRESERVE life." (verse 5)
4. GOSHEN is the land where Joseph asked his father and family to live. (verse 10)
5. Joseph fell on this brother's neck and wept. (verse 14)
6. "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great DELIVERANCE." (verse 7)
7. JESUS gave us the greatest example of true forgiveness. He sacrificed His life for our sins.

For if ye **F O R G I V E** men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **F O R G I V E** you.

Matthew 6:14