

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 7

Focus:

God our Father is forgiving.

Lesson 7

Bible Basis:

Luke 15:11-24

Lesson 7

Memory Verse:

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. —Psalm 32:2

Your students will understand the importance of both giving and receiving forgiveness as they explore how forgiving our heavenly Father is.

Materials:

Internet access

Begin today's lesson by discussing with your class the meaning and role of forgiveness in their lives.

➤ **What does it mean to forgive someone?** (The dictionary defines forgiveness as, "to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake.")

➤ **We all commit offenses, flaws, and mistakes, but how does it feel to have the wronged party forgive us for what we have done?** (It can feel like an enormous weight is lifted off our shoulders, like we have our life back.)

➤ **If it can feel so good and mean so much when someone forgives us for something bad we did, why then do we so often hold onto grudges and resentment toward people who have wronged us?** (Often, we refuse to forgive because we don't yet feel that the other person has earned it.)

➤ **What kind of damage is caused by holding onto resentment?** (Holding onto bitterness can affect us spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Allow your students to share specific consequences they have experienced or can think of.)

In recent history, there are few stories that better illustrate the internal mental damage caused by harboring bitterness than that of Marvin Heemeyer. The recently released documentary *Tread* looks back at Mr. Heemeyer's rampage across the town of Granby, Colorado in 2004, that resulted in the destruction of 13 structures and a lot of damage. The director looks at what sustaining anger, revenge, and resentment can lead to. The following is a short news story about the documentary.

Play the following video [3:06] You could stop after 2:17:

Title: 'Tread' documentary looks back at Granby bulldozer rampage

Source: YouTube.com

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy-SSvUqfKk>

Short Description: Filmmaker tells why he made the film of Marvin Heemeyer's rampage from the perspective of the Coloradans who experienced it firsthand.

Much investigation has gone into what exactly caused Mr. Heemeyer to construct his tank and destroy the town. Accounts from friends and written statements recovered on his property point toward a dispute with city officials and a neighboring concrete company that ultimately resulted in Heemeyer being forced to abandon his muffler shop—events that became the catalyst for the destruction that transpired.

Some people may think Heemeyer is a hero for standing up to the government and calling attention to corruption, but had he released the hate and bitterness he held in his heart by forgiving these people, he would still be alive today.

Ultimately, we have all had things done to us that we need to let go of, and likewise have done things we need mercy for. Marvin Heemeyer's tragic history of hate illustrates that a life without forgiveness leads to destruction.

Thankfully, God has promised us both the strength to forgive and absolution for our sins as long as we are willing to repent. Today, we'll look at the story of one young man who had done a lot of things he wasn't proud of—let's see whether he experienced forgiveness or not.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

middle school



Lesson 7 / July 18, 2021

Just Ask

for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 7

Focus:

God our Father is forgiving.

Lesson 7

Bible Basis:

Luke 15: 11-24

Lesson 7

Memory Verse:

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. —Psalm 32:2

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- (Optional: prepared document)

If you are teaching this lesson online, ask students to have paper and a pen or pencil available for this part of the session. You may want to put the four points below on a document and share your screen as you talk through them.

Now that we have learned of God’s endless willingness to forgive those who seek repentance, we must learn how to open ourselves up to receive this forgiveness. Admitting our wrongdoings and asking forgiveness is an extremely challenging task that requires a lot of vulnerability and humility. Receiving forgiveness from our Father and giving and receiving forgiveness from others go hand in hand. Because of this, it can help to gain a better understanding of how to ask for forgiveness from someone.

Using the materials provided, move through the four steps outlined below with your class. This is the time to share your screen. Instruct them to write down the headings of each step so that they may refer to them later. This can be a difficult concept for young teens to fully understand, so allow plenty of time for questions from your class.

1. Admit Vulnerability

We must first accept our responsibility for our own role in causing others pain. We should know exactly how we feel about what happened, understand how our actions affected others, and be able to articulate to the other person(s) what about the situation is not right.

2. Really Apologize

A true, authentic apology is one that goes beyond the generic, “I’m sorry you were hurt by what I did.” Rather, it should accept responsibility and promise to make amends. For example, an authentic apology is one in which the speaker says: “I’m sorry, because my

poor choice of action or words directly caused harm to you, and I recognize you feel hurt as a direct relationship of what I did.”

3. Ask for Forgiveness

We can't stop at admitting our wrongdoing; forgiveness is the next stage, where we engage in reconciliation. This process begins by us actually asking the other person, “Please forgive me for what I have done.” Additionally, recognize their grace by thanking them for their forgiveness.

4. Practice often

Like everything else, forgiveness is a skill that can be cultivated. We need to make a habit of seeking reconciliation the moment we realize what has happened.

The above information provides a guideline for how to ask for forgiveness, but now we must make the difficult decision to actually put it into practice. We need to begin the formation of a habit to ask forgiveness the moment we realize we have sinned so that we can continue to enjoy a close relationship with our heavenly Father.

Instruct your students to spend time in prayer and reflection, asking God for forgiveness of their sins and searching their hearts for people they have wronged and have yet to ask to be forgiven. Challenge your students to use what they have learned in class today to (with their parent's help) seek out others they have mistreated this coming week, either online or in person if they are able, and follow through on asking them for forgiveness.

Close in prayer.

Because this is a challenging issue, be sure to reach out to students during the week and see how they are doing with forgiving others.

Resources:

Information used to create the forgiveness checklist used in this step was derived from the following source:

Title: How to Ask for Forgiveness, in Four Steps

Source: NewYorkTimes.com

URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/fashion/how-to-forgive-in-four-steps.html>

Short Description: Suggested steps for asking for forgiveness

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