

Fine to Forgive

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 **Lesson 12****Focus:**

Forgive each other
even when it's hard.

Lesson 12**Bible Basis:**

Philemon 1-21;
Matthew 5:23-24;
Ephesians 4:26-27

Lesson 12**Memory Verse:**

Be kind and compassionate to one
another, forgiving each other, just as in
Christ God forgave you.
—Ephesians 4:32

In order to introduce the lesson topic, students will hear one expert's tips on forgiveness and talk about when they find it easy and difficult to forgive.

Materials:

- None

Begin your time by reading this short story to your students:

Sometimes, we are deeply hurt by people we love. But even if we usually get along with everyone in our lives, there will be times when someone is stubborn or unthinking or just plain selfish. In those moments, we're faced with an opportunity to form a grudge against that person or to forgive them.

Let's hear the three tips shared by a Christian therapist, Dr. Alison Cook, for how to forgive someone even when that person hasn't apologized.

Read the following three tips from Dr. Cook's blog on forgiveness aloud to your students. You can also display the article so students can read along:

1. Before you even consider the process of forgiveness, ensure you are safe and far removed from the hurtful behavior.

Forgiveness does not mean you that you don't change how you interact with the person. In fact, you might need to remove yourself entirely from a relationship before you can even begin to process the idea of forgiveness. You can forgive someone AND maintain healthy distance. You can forgive someone AND have firm boundaries. You can forgive someone AND let consequences play themselves out.

2. Once you've established a healthy distance, notice the feelings that are inside of you.

Forgiveness is as much about what goes on inside of you as it is about the other person. It's about acknowledging and releasing anger, resentment, hostility, and pain. But don't rush the "releasing" part. First, really take the time to work through and heal the hurting parts of you: What emotions surface when you think of the person? Can you extend compassion to those feelings? Do you understand them and why they're there?

3. As you tend to your own heartache, it's then that you can begin to release the resentment, anger and pain you've carried.

You may never again be in the same kind of relationships with this person. But you will be free.”

➤ **What stood out to you from what Dr. Cook said about forgiveness?** (Accept all reasonable responses.)

➤ **Did you agree with what she said about choosing to forgive and heal regardless of whether the person who hurt us is willing or able to apologize? Why or why not?** (Accept all reasonable responses.)

➤ **Why is it sometimes hard to forgive?** (Allow students to offer their opinions; accept all answers.)

➤ **What do you think is easier: forgiving someone else, or asking for forgiveness? Why?** (Opinions may vary; encourage discussion. Be prepared to share your own experience.)

It would be wonderful if everyone who ever hurt us was repentant and apologetic. However, sometimes we will have to forgive people who don't apologize. Other times, we'll need to forgive people who have hurt us in very major ways. In these cases, it's important to remember forgiveness doesn't mean putting ourselves back in dangerous situations or relationships. Instead, it means surrendering the hurt that person caused to God and allowing Him to do His healing work in us. In today's lesson, we'll explore what Paul taught Philemon about forgiving others even when it is hard.

Source:

<https://www.dralisoncook.com/blog/how-to-forgive-when-no-ones-asking-for-it>

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

Lesson 12 / August 23, 2026

Fine to Forgive

for use as
STEP 4 **Lesson 12****Focus:**

Forgive each other
even when it's hard.

Lesson 12**Bible Basis:**

Philemon 1-21;
Matthew 5:23-24;
Ephesians 4:26-27

Lesson 12**Memory Verse:**

Be kind and compassionate to one
another, forgiving each other, just as in
Christ God forgave you.
—Ephesians 4:32

Materials:

- Index cards
- Pens/pencils

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

As students clean up from Step 3, move back toward the lesson focus.

When others hurt us, it can separate us from others and make forgiveness more difficult. But Paul's lesson for Philemon gives us the answer: when we see others as part of the same church family—the Body of Christ—we are no longer separated from them and it is easier to forgive! Ask for a volunteer to read Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." **When we think of all that God has forgiven us for—all that Jesus went through to make sure we would be accepted—it should make it easier for us to forgive.**

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Ask your students to think of someone they may have upset in the past or someone they haven't forgiven and why they think it has been hard to forgive. Ask them to record a way they will use what they have learned in today's lesson to mend that relationship. Challenge them to note the outcome and be ready to share next week.

After your students have had a chance to think and write, call them back together as a group.

This week, be on the lookout for ways you can use today's lesson. I hope no one wrongs you this week, but if that does happen, use Paul's advice to make peace instead of responding in anger or retaliation.

Close in prayer.

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