

WHY DOES FORGIVENESS MATTER?

DAY 5

In the story that Jesus told, it's fitting that the servant who didn't forgive ended up in jail, because when we don't forgive others, it's like we're choosing to put ourselves in a prison. When we're trapped in this prison of our own making, we can miss out on things like joy and peace, not to mention the chance to repair a broken relationship.

Hold your wrists together behind your back, like you're in handcuffs. Then try to do the following activities, while keeping your hands "cuffed":

- 1) **Brush your hair**
- 2) **Open a door**
- 3) **Put on socks**
- 4) **Make up your bed**

Those activities were pretty much impossible, right?! When you are imprisoned by unforgiveness, it makes a lot of things impossible too. On the flip side, when you choose to forgive, you can experience all the freedom, joy and peace that comes when you decide that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay.

Look back on the prayer you prayed this week for forgiveness. How are things coming? If you feel like you're still struggling to forgive that person, continue praying and asking God for help so you can experience the freedom of forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS

DECIDING THAT SOMEONE WHO HAS WRONGED YOU DOESN'T HAVE TO PAY

DAY 1

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SO & SO TOP 3

After watching, write one thing that . . .

1) **YOU LIKED:** _____

2) **YOU LEARNED:** _____

3) **YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW:** _____

DAY 2

Read Matthew 18:21-35

As you read Matthew 18:21-35, circle all of the numbers mentioned in the passage.

Then underline the one that is the limit of forgiveness.

That was kind of a trick question, wasn't it? When you read the story Jesus told Peter, you see that the point of the story is really that there's no limit to forgiveness, because there is no limit to God's forgiveness.

You forgive others because God forgives you, and that goes way beyond any number!



DAY 3

Did you notice that when Jesus said that should forgive someone 77 times, He didn't say if that was for different situations? In other words, sometimes we have to choose to forgive someone over and over again for the same thing, just because forgiveness is hard work! The good thing is that even though forgiveness is hard work, God wants to help you.

What is something you need to forgive someone for? Maybe it's something you've already forgiven them for before, but either they keep doing it, or you just keep remembering it and getting mad all over again. Either way, it's going to take some God-sized forgiveness to decide they don't have to pay. Fill in the blanks of this prayer and put it somewhere you will see this week. Pray this prayer, until you feel the release of forgiveness.

Dear God, thank You for forgiving me for all of the wrong things

I've done. Your forgiveness means I can forgive others, including

_____ for _____.
person's name how that person wronged you

But it is not easy, and I need Your help. Please give me your ability to

forgive, and help me release _____.
person's name

DAY 4

When we're trying to forgive someone for something they've done that hurt us, a great first step is to talk to God and ask Him for help. That's what you did yesterday. And often the next step is to tell the person that hurt us that we forgive them. That's what you're going to do today!

However, that's not always possible. Sometimes we can't talk to the person who hurt us for some reason. If that's the case, it can be good to talk to a trusted adult about the situation and your plan to

forgive. Talking about it can make things more real, and it will also give you some accountability that you are in fact going to forgive and release the person who hurt you.

Look back at the prayer you wrote yesterday—the person you need to forgive. Can you talk to that person and tell them that you forgive them? If not, who can you talk to about the situation that will understand and also hold you accountable for forgiving?

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE FORGIVEN?

DAY 5

Find your backpack. If it's not full, fill it up with something heavy (but not so heavy you hurt yourself!) Then put it on your back and walk around the room as you read this.

What's something you did wrong that you needed to be forgiven for? Something that you knew would hurt someone?? Maybe it would hurt their feelings, or maybe they'd just be really disappointed in you. How did it feel to carry that around? Probably not unlike carrying a heavy backpack around. Try doing five jumping jacks—jumping for joy—while you wear the backpack. It's hard, isn't it?

Carrying around the weight of what you had done was hard. You probably couldn't wait to get that load off. But how?

Now think back to what happened afterward. Did you apologize? Were you forgiven? If so, it probably felt a lot like taking a heavy backpack off. Go ahead and do that now.

How do you feel now? Try those joyful jumps now. A lot easier, huh?

Knowing how good it feels to be forgiven, think about someone in your life who needs to have that load lifted. Is there someone you need to forgive so they too can get rid of the weight and jump for joy? If so, ask God to help you forgive that person, and then make sure they know you have!

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1) YOU LIKED: _____

2) YOU LEARNED: _____

3) YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW: _____

DAY 2

Read Luke 19:1-10

As you read Luke 19:1-10, underline any words that are descriptors of Zacchaeus. Then check your list against the one printed below. Did you find them all?

Zacchaeus was known for lot of things and not much of it was very "good," at least by the standards of the people who had to share a community with him.

But that didn't matter to Jesus. Jesus knew Zacchaeus wanted to see Him and hear Him, and that's why he climbed a tree as Jesus passed through Jericho. So Jesus reached out and forgave Zacchaeus, and as a result, Zacchaeus was known for one thing that would change his life forever:

 O **G** **V** (see verse 9 for a hint).

Chief tax collector
Very rich
Short man
Sinner
Member of Abraham's family line

DAY 3

(Go stand by your bedroom door as you read this.)

Sometimes when someone hurts us, they apologize and we immediately forgive them. It's like we open the door so the relationship can continue. (Open your door.)

Sometimes they apologize, but we struggle to forgive them. (Mostly close the door, leaving just a bit of space.)

And sometimes they never apologize, and that might be the hardest time to forgive of all. (Close the door all the way.)

But when we make the decision that they don't have to pay, whether they've asked us for forgiveness or not, it's like we're opening the door so life can continue for everyone. The person who hurt you has a chance to change. You have a chance to witness that change and restore the relationship. And both of you will likely feel so much better. (Open the door and leave it open as you pray the prayer below.)

"Dear God, thank You for forgiving me. I want to forgive others too. I need your help, especially to forgive _____ for _____ . Please help me to open the door to forgiveness and healing for both of us. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen."

DAY 4

Sometimes when you're forgiving someone, it might feel a bit lonely, especially when that person may not have even apologized. It can be hard to feel like you're the only one making the wise choice to forgive.

But chances are great that you know someone who has been following God for a long time who has seen the change that forgiveness can bring.

Today, go find that person, or give them a call. Ask them about a time that they forgave someone, or perhaps a time that someone forgave them. Ask them how things changed or didn't change.

The truth is, not every person changes every time they are forgiven. But forgiveness opens the door to change, and it's a lot easier to walk through a door when it's open. Share with that trusted friend if you're finding it hard to forgive, and together, ask God for help opening the door to change for you and the person you need to forgive. Because **when you forgive others, it can change them.**



WHAT IS KEEPING YOU FROM FORGIVING?

DAY 5

Read Proverbs 16:18. What does the Bible say might happen if you have pride? You might _____.

In life, we are always moving one direction or another. And each step we take can either be toward life-giving situations: like forgiveness—or it can lead to our own downfall: like pride.

So often pride gets in the way of forgiveness. Maybe we are embarrassed to admit that we've messed up. It definitely takes humility to apologize to someone. Or maybe we are too prideful to forgive someone. We are mad, and we don't think they deserve our forgiveness.

Whether it's pride, anger, embarrassment or any other emotion getting in the way of moving toward forgiveness, we need to release it. In fact, that might be the first step we take: the step over pride, the step over anger. With that obstacle out of the way, forgiveness is in our reach.

Talk to God and ask Him to help you step over whatever might be in your way and keeping you from forgiving someone. Ask Him to help you take a step toward forgiveness today.

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WHO HAS WRONGED YOU
DOESN'T HAVE TO PAY

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DAY 2

Read Matthew 5:1-2, 23-24

Using the boxes bellow, draw a comic strip style illustration of Matthew 5:23-24.

<i>(You with a present for God)</i>	<i>(You remembering a past situation you messed up and hurt someone)</i>	<i>(You asking for forgiveness and offering a present to the person you hurt)</i>	<i>(You coming back to pick up your gift and offering it to God)</i>
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Jesus believes forgiving others is so important that He was saying we need to make things right with others before we make things right with God. Whoa!

Making things right with others might mean forgiving them, or it might mean humbling yourself enough to ask someone else for forgiveness. Whatever it takes to make the peace, Jesus challenges us to take the first step.

DAY 3

Taking the first step to forgive—or to ask for forgiveness—neither one of those is an easy step to take.

Today, go on a prayer walk, either around the inside of your house, or with a parent's permission, around the outside or in your neighborhood. With each step you take, talk to God about forgiveness, using one of the situations below:

- If there's a specific situation in your life where you know you need to ask forgiveness, ask God for boldness and courage to take the first step and ask for forgiveness.
- If someone else needs to experience your forgiveness, ask God to help you bravely offer it.
- Or if you feel that you're at peace with everyone right now, ask God to give you a forgiving attitude, so you're always ready to take that first step toward forgiveness.

As you close your prayer, ask God to direct your steps today toward forgiveness.

DAY 4

Yesterday you prayed for courage and boldness to take the first step toward forgiveness.

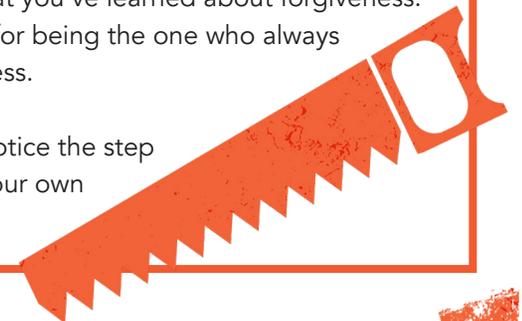
Asking God for help is super important, but now it's time for you to take the first step.

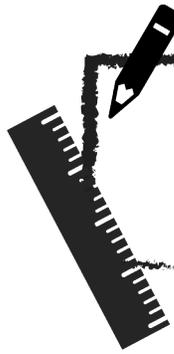
Today, find the person you need to ask forgiveness from—or who you need to forgive—and take that first step. That step will look different based on the situation, but it might look like . . .

- Telling a friend you've been angry because of something they did, but telling them you're not mad any more, and you'd like to make the peace. Suggest something fun you can do together to move on!

- Apologizing to a family member for something you did. Ask for their forgiveness. End the conversation with a hug or a high-five.
- If you don't have any ongoing situations in your life that require forgiveness at the moment, find a friend or family member who also trusts God and share with them what you've learned about forgiveness. Ask them to hold you accountable for being the one who always takes the first step toward forgiveness.

As you walk away from your friend, notice the step you took toward forgiveness made your own steps a lot lighter!





WHEN HAS SOMEONE FORGIVEN YOU?

DAY 5

It feels awesome to know God has forgiven you, doesn't it? But how about others? Have you ever had to ask for forgiveness from someone else for something you did that hurt them? How did it feel when they forgave you?

Grab a sheet of paper and write your own parable. It could be based on a true story from your own life, or just a modern day re-telling of the story Jesus told. Either way, before you write, think about how you've felt when you've messed up, and how you felt when you were forgiven. Include those emotions in your story.

After you write your story, take some time to share it with your family and then hang it somewhere that reminds all of you how great it feels to be forgiven.

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DAY 2

Read Luke 15:11-24

Put a number in the blank beside each of these events, in order according to the story Jesus told in Luke 15. When you're done, go back and read Luke 15:11-24 to see if you got it right.

- ___ The father called for his servants to bring his best robe.
- ___ The son ran out of money.
- ___ The father ran out to him.
- ___ The younger son moved away.
- ___ The younger son asked for his share of the inheritance.
- ___ The son went home.
- ___ The country experienced a famine.
- ___ The father called for a party to celebrate.
- ___ The son got a job feeding pigs.
- ___ The father gave him what he asked.
- ___ The son apologized.
- ___ A man had two sons.
- ___ The son wasted his money living a wild and crazy life.
- ___ The son realized he could ask for his father's forgiveness.

Notice the order of 10, 11 and 12. All it took was for the son to head home to his father for the father to forgive him. He didn't even get out his apology to his father for the way he had treated him and wasted all his father had given him before his father was welcoming him back into he family. His hug said it all to his son: **"You don't owe me anymore."**

Answers: 13, 6, 11, 4, 2, 10, 7, 14, 8, 3, 12, 1, 5, 9

DAY 3

In the story Jesus told as recorded in Luke 15, when the younger son realized he had done something wrong, he went home to make it right. When we realize we have done something that was wrong, we too need to ask for forgiveness.

Think back over the last few weeks. Is there something you did that you know was wrong? Did you hurt someone, or break a rule? Were you dishonest?

The truth is, you are not alone. We have all done things that are wrong, and **everyone needs to be forgiven.** But God decided we didn't have to pay for what we did wrong by sending Jesus. Jesus took on our sin and paid the price for us when He died on the cross. All we have to do is ask forgiveness for our sin, and we are immediately forgiven and made clean!

Have you ever told God you were sorry for the things you've done wrong and put your trust in Jesus as your Savior? If you haven't, and you'd like to, find a parent or adult who you know trusts in Jesus, and ask them to pray with you, telling God you're sorry for the things you've done wrong, and thanking Him for sending Jesus to be your Savior. Whether you decide to put your trust in Jesus today, or you have made that decision in the past, take a minute to pray a prayer of thankfulness too—forgiveness is the most amazing gift we can receive!

DAY 4

Have you asked God to forgive you for the things you've done wrong and put your trust in Jesus? Maybe you even did it yesterday! If you did, how cool! And if you aren't ready for that step yet, that's okay too! The good news is that God is always there, waiting, just like the father in the story Jesus told in Luke 15. The son may have wandered from home and messed up, but the father was always there, waiting to welcome him back!

If you have made this decision, take some time today to tell someone about it! Think about someone you know who follows Jesus. They will

be so excited to hear you've decided to trust Him too. Be sure and tell them how it feels to experience forgiveness (really good, right?!).

Also, take a minute to talk about what this forgiveness means going forward. Does this mean you'll never mess up or need to apologize again. (Hint: Nope.) But share with each other how it feels to know that even when you mess up in the future, God is always there, waiting to welcome you back home with forgiveness.



WHAT DO YOU LOSE IF YOU DON'T FORGIVE?

DAY 5

What is your dream party? Who would you invite? Where would it be? What would you do? How long would it last?

Did you create a pretty epic party in your mind? Now imagine that party is happening, but the only way you can go is if you forgive someone who hurt you. That may seem like a strange deal, but it's the situation the older brother found himself in when his father chose to not only forgive, but to celebrate his younger brother when he returned after really messing up.

In real life, you may not miss out on a party if you don't forgive someone (although you might!), but you can certainly miss out on some great things if you don't forgive. You might miss out on a great friendship. You might have your day or even week ruined because you're too caught up in your anger. You might even miss a great opportunity God has for you to experience something really cool, all because you're too caught up in the past.

Go in the bathroom with a dry erase marker and draw a party hat on your head in the bathroom mirror. As you go throughout your week, think about that epic party and how you don't want to miss it because you chose not to forgive!

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DAY 2

Read Luke 15:21-32

As you read Luke 15:21-32, draw an emoji (either in your Bible or on a sheet of paper) that you think represents that sentence or paragraph. (Like, besides verse 21, you might draw a sad emoji, but then beside verse 22-24, you might draw a happy face and a party hat emoji)

There were a lot of emotions in the story Jesus told, weren't there? Everything from happy to sad to angry and even jealous. And if the older brother decided not to forgive, he was missing out on all the . . .



DAY 3

When you don't forgive someone, it's like you're holding on to the hurt and pain they caused you. And when you do that, it's impossible to have a good relationship with that person because you're too busy holding on to anger.

Read the prayer below, filling in your own words in the blanks. Start out your prayer with your fists clenched tight, but as you pray, slowly release your hands and relax. By the time you're done praying, your hands should be turned over and open, palms to the sky, releasing the person you've forgiven.

Dear God, I know I need to forgive _____ for _____ . It really made me mad that they did that, but I don't want to be mad anymore. I don't want to hold on to anger. I want to release my anger and instead choose forgiveness. I have decided that _____ doesn't have to pay, even though they hurt me. I release them and choose forgiveness instead. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen."

DAY 4

Yesterday, you ended your prayer of forgiveness with your palms open and facing upward, instead of clenched tight in anger. Now go take those open hands and use them to either high-five or hug the friend or family member you've chosen to forgive. Think about how you couldn't do that if you still had your fists clenched tight in anger. By releasing them and choosing forgiveness, you won't miss out on this relationship that means a lot to you!

After you hug or high-five, take a minute to tell your friend or family member something you appreciate about them—one or two reasons that you're glad that you're family or friends. Just think: if you didn't forgive, you'd miss out on that special trait or gift that person brings to your life!

