

How to Ask for Forgiveness

Quarter 6 • Lesson 4

Focus on Spiritual Formation

- 1. Connecting:** Play a stop and go game.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn how to ask for forgiveness (Luke 15:21; Matthew 5:23–24; Colossians 1:13–14).
- 3. Responding:** Practice asking for forgiveness.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- *The Action Bible*, page 602
- Student Pages
- Small pieces of paper (1 for each child)
- Pencils
- Crayons

Teacher Devotion

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son."

Luke 15:21

In the story of the lost son, the son wanted to confess his sin to his father because he knew what he had done was wrong. The father did not need to hear these words though. He was already running toward him to offer forgiveness. Just like the father in this story, your heavenly Father is running to you to forgive you.

Everyone makes wrong decisions sometimes because everyone sins. God knows this, and He is waiting to run toward you with forgiveness. You can come to your heavenly Father with humility and ask for forgiveness for anything. Close your eyes and ask Him now. Take the time to pray and listen to God's response. Feel the weight lifted off of your shoulders. God will forgive you—all you have to do is ask.

Family Connection: Encourage families to model forgiveness by forgiving someone this week. If a child does something wrong to someone, encourage him to ask for forgiveness. If it is not safe to ask the person for forgiveness, have the child ask God for forgiveness.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a stop and go game.

Welcome the students as they enter and instruct them to stand close to each other in a circle. Clear a large area or play this game in an outside open area to give the children space to run.

Let's play the "Stop and Go" game. This game will remind you to stop so you can pay attention to things that bring you peace. Everyone, stand in a circle and hold hands with the children next to you. Notice who those people are!

When I say, "Go!" you will let go of the hands you are holding and run around the open space. When I say, "Stop!" you will freeze in place. When I say, "Go!" again, you will walk back to the middle of the space to form a circle. Be sure to hold hands with the same children you did at the beginning.

Have the children reach out and hold hands with the children on both sides of them. Remind the children to notice who is on both sides of them. When you say, "Go," the children will run around the area. After 1 minute say, "Stop!" This will signal all of the children to stop and not move.

After they have all stopped, pause for 15 seconds, and then say, "Go!" again. Now the children will walk back to the middle of the space to make a circle. Each child must stand by the same 2 children she stood next to at the beginning of the game. Repeat this game 2 more times. Then have the children sit in a circle.

Allow 2–3 children to answer each of the following questions.

- **How did you feel when you were running around without direction?**
- **How did you feel when you found your place in the circle?**

When you were running around, it was wild and confusing. You did not know where you were going or who you might bump into. This is how it can feel when you have done something wrong and have not asked for forgiveness. It can make you feel worried, confused, and even scared of what the other person thinks or feels about you.

When you have done something to hurt or anger someone, it is important to stop what you are doing and go make peace with that person. In the game, it became calm when you stopped and returned to the circle. Asking for forgiveness will help you to feel calm again.

2. Teaching: Learn how to ask for forgiveness (Luke 15:21; Matthew 5:23–24; Colossians 1:13–14).

Have the children get into groups of 2–3. For each of the questions in the teaching section, allow the children to first talk to their group members before you call on children to respond.

We have been learning a story from the Bible about a father with 2 sons. The father thought he had lost the younger son because he had left home and spent half of the family's money. When he realized he had done the wrong thing, he returned home to ask for forgiveness.

Allow about 1 minute for the children to respond to each of the following questions in their groups. Then ask 2–3 children to respond for the whole class.

- **Do you think it was important for the lost son to say he was sorry?
Why or why not?**

When you ask for forgiveness, you are trying to fix your relationship with the person you wronged. If that person forgives you, he makes a choice to no longer hold on to the hurt and anger your wrong actions caused. When someone believes in the One True God, he gives the hurt and anger caused by the wrong to God.

- **What do you think the lost son said to his father when they saw each other?**

Listen to what the son said:

Read this verse directly from your Bible.

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son."
Luke 15:21

Optional: If you are using The Action Bible, review page 602 with the children.

The lost son knew he had shamed himself and his father. He tried to bring back honour to his father by asking for his forgiveness. The son knew he had done wrong to his father. He also knew what he had done was not what God would have wanted him to do. The lost son told his father that he had sinned against him and against heaven.

The lost son did not just say, "I am sorry, Father." He did not just ignore the wrong he had done. He did not make excuses about why he had wasted the property and things his father had given him. He simply admitted he was wrong. He said, "I do not even deserve to be called your son."

- **Is it easy for you to admit when you have done something wrong?
Why or why not?**

Allow about 1 minute for the children to respond in their groups. Then ask 2–3 children to respond for the whole class.

Asking for forgiveness is not always easy. This means saying that you did something wrong. It means you are trying to fix a broken relationship. Listen to what the Bible says about asking for forgiveness.

*Suppose you are offering your gift at the altar.
And you remember that your brother or sister has something against you.
Leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and make peace with them.
Then come back and offer your gift.*
Matthew 5:23–24

If someone feels you have done something wrong to him, God wants you to make peace with that person. When we have wronged others, it not only affects that relationship, but it affects our relationship with God too. Remember what the lost son told his father? He said that he had sinned against heaven and his father. Our wrongs affect our relationships with others and with God. Asking for forgiveness helps heal these relationships. When asking for forgiveness, you can use these steps as a guide.

Have the children repeat each of these steps after you say them. Then repeat the step with the motion after each description.

Teacher Tip: If you feel another motion would be better for showing any of the following steps, you may change the motion. Please make sure to use the same motion each time you name that step.

1. Know what you did wrong.

Point to 1 side of your head and indicate "no."

If someone has been hurt by you and you do not know what you did wrong, ask what you did to hurt him. If you already know what you did, state this when you ask for forgiveness.

With the children, repeat the step and the motion 3 times.

2. Think about how the other person feels.

Frown and look down at the ground.

Think about what it would be like to be the person you hurt. If someone had done the same wrong to you, what emotions would you feel? Would you feel angry, sad, or something else?

3. Ask God to forgive you.

Raise both hands up high and look up.

Before you ask the person to forgive you, ask God for forgiveness. God is the One who forgives our sins.

4. Offer an apology.

Hold your hands together near your chest and bow.

Tell the person you hurt you are sorry for what you did. State exactly what you did and state that it was wrong. Then ask the person to forgive you.

Teacher Tip: For children who may deal with angry people, it is important they know when it is safe to ask someone for forgiveness. Other children are usually safe people to ask for forgiveness, but an angry adult is not. Make sure children understand that God can forgive them when it is not safe to ask a person for forgiveness.

When you ask someone to forgive you, there is a risk. That person may not forgive you. You can still be forgiven even if the person you hurt does not offer forgiveness. When you do something you knew was wrong, you can ask God to forgive you. The Bible tells us what God did to give you a way to be forgiven.

He has saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Because of what the Son has done, we have been set free.

Because of him, all our sins have been forgiven.

Colossians 1:13–14

Jesus died on the cross to forgive your sins. This verse says because of Him, all of your sins can be forgiven. God does not stay angry over your sins if you ask for forgiveness. When the person you hurt does not forgive you, have hope! God is the One who can forgive all sins.

3. Responding: Practice asking for forgiveness.

Asking God to forgive you is always important. There are also times when you need to ask others to forgive you. Asking for forgiveness can be a hard thing to do because you must admit you are wrong. Just like the game we played at the beginning of class, we feel calmer and more at peace when we are forgiven.

Let's practice asking for forgiveness. First, let's list some things people do wrong or ways people hurt other people.

As children answer the following question, remember there are no wrong answers as long as the ideas show things that will hurt someone else.

- **What are some things people might do wrong that would hurt other people?**

Answers may include: getting angry or being selfish; saying mean things; hitting, kicking, or pushing someone else; stealing from someone.

Optional: If you have scrap paper and a pencil available, write each child's response to this question on a separate piece.

It is never easy to ask for forgiveness when you have done something wrong, but it is important to learn to do this. You can start by saying something like: "I am sorry for... then name the specific thing you did wrong. I know I was wrong. Please forgive me for hurting you. Will you forgive me?" Let's practice this. Repeat each part after I pause.

I am sorry for... (pause)

I know I was wrong (pause).

Please forgive me for hurting you (pause).

Great! Now that you know how to ask for forgiveness, let's practice.

Ask the children to form 2 lines. The children should be close enough to speak to each other without shouting. Have the children in each line face each other. Use the responses from the question asked at the beginning of this section for the following activity.

I will choose something you said people do wrong and say it out loud. You will say, "I am sorry for (name the wrong thing you did)." For example, I might say, "I am sorry for saying mean things to you. I know I was wrong. Please forgive me for hurting you. Will you forgive me?" Let's practice together.

Choose a statement to say to the class. Indicate which line of children will say the words to ask for forgiveness. Lead them in following the words you taught them. Then lead the other line in responding with "I forgive you." Continue choosing statements, alternating which line of children asks for forgiveness and which line says, "I forgive you."

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give the children crayons and allow 3 minutes for them to draw their pictures. Then lead them in praying for forgiveness.

The next time you do something wrong, talk to God. Tell Him what you did wrong and ask Him to forgive you. If you need to talk to the person, you can use the words you learned in class today. Even if that person does not forgive you, God's forgiveness can set you free. Our memory verse today reminds us that it is important to forgive others because we are forgiven.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

*Be kind and tender to one another.
Forgive one another, just as God forgave you
because of what Christ has done.
Ephesians 4:32*

Do the following motions as you read through the memory verse. Repeat the actions and words with the children 3 times.

Be kind and tender to one another—Make a heart with your hands.

Forgive—Extend your hands in front of you with palms facing up.

One another—Hold arms in a circle in front of you as if you are holding a large ball.

Just as God forgave you—Raise 1 hand up to the sky. Then bring both hands together in front of you with palms facing up.

Because of what Christ has done—Extend your arms straight out to your sides.

End class by saying this blessing, based on Matthew 5:23–24 and Colossians 1:13–14, over the children.

Blessing: May you desire to make peace with others. May you find the time to stop what you are doing and ask for forgiveness. May you know that Jesus made a way for you to be forgiven.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"What a Beautiful Name" by Hillsong Worship: <https://youtu.be/r5L6QIAH3L4>