

What Is Forgiveness?

Quarter 2 | Lesson 5 | Character Development

1. **Connecting:** Play a tag game to show how forgiveness brings release.
2. **Teaching:** Learn about God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
3. **Responding:** Do an activity about knots of sin and ask God for forgiveness.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Rags, large leaves, or pieces of string, enough for half of your students

Optional Supplies:

- Pencils
- Memory Verse poster
- Student Pages

Before class, gather enough of one kind of item (rags, leaves, or string) to be used to identify a team. The students can either tie it around their arms or hold it in their hands. It must be visible to others. You will need enough for half of your students.

Teacher Devotion

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13–14

Free—released from anger, pain, bitterness. Free to live your life without the heavy burden of guilt and grief. What a wonderful thought! Is it possible to live in such a way? Forgiveness is what brings this blessed release and freedom.

Through Christ's sacrifice, we have received the gift of forgiveness, allowing us to become part of God's family. Jesus wants to set us free from the darkness of sin on earth as well. If we welcome His light, we cannot hold on to anything dark—even darkness brought upon us by someone else's sin. Are there pieces of your heart that are dwelling in darkness? Are you holding on to the pain and bitterness that unforgiveness brings? Open the windows of your soul to His light and allow Him to clear away the darkness of your past hurts.

As you prepare to teach your students about forgiveness, pray that God will expose the dark places of their hearts that need His healing light. Pray that you and your students will feel the warmth of His love, which casts out all darkness and fills the empty spaces in our hearts with hope.

Lesson Time

1. Connecting: Play a tag game to show how forgiveness brings release.

As teens arrive, greet them. After at least 6 have arrived, involve them in a game of freeze tag. Divide the students into 2 teams. The members of 1 team will be identified by rags or leaves. Give each teen on that team a rag or leaf to identify himself. The students will tie the rags around their arms or hold the leaves in their hands so that everyone can see them.

Tell both teams that the object of the game is to tag as many students on the other team as possible. Once a teen is tagged, he must “freeze” in place until he is tagged again by a member of his own team. Then he can return to play. As other teens arrive, add them to the teams evenly. Continue playing until everyone has arrived; then play for about 3 more minutes.

- What happened when you were tagged by someone on the other team?
- What happened when you were tagged the second time—by your teammate?

Today we will learn about forgiveness.

- This game can teach us something about forgiveness. What do you think it is?

“Forgiveness” means releasing a hurt or offence that has been done to us. It is like erasing the pain from the injury or offence. It means letting God determine the consequences for something wrong that has been done to us. It is letting go of anger and bitterness for the hurt we feel.

In the game, when someone from the other team tagged you, you were frozen—stuck in place. That is what happens when we carry around pain or anger or bitterness for a wrong done to us. It also happens when we carry guilt from doing something wrong to someone else. When we do not release these hurts to God through forgiveness, we are unable to move—we are stuck in place.

In the game, when a team member tagged you, you were set free. That is what forgiveness is like. You can move again because you are no longer “frozen” by negative emotions.

- Can you think of a time you were forgiven? How did it feel? You do not have to share what you were forgiven for, only how you felt.

Allow students to share their experiences. Some may be difficult or painful, so allow appropriate time for sharing.

2. Teaching: Learn about God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

We have all done things that are wrong. We have all hurt others. This is because we are human. The Bible tells us that these wrong things—our sins—hurt others and ourselves. But they also hurt God.

- Why do you think our sins hurt God?

God loves us, and He wants us to love Him and to love others. He knows that our sins separate us from Him. He also knows that sin leads to negative consequences and ultimately death.

The amazing thing is that God will forgive us! Listen to what the Bible says about how God responds when we ask for forgiveness by confessing our wrongdoing.

Ask a student to read 1 John 1:9 aloud from the Bible. Show the Memory Verse poster if possible.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Forgiveness is an act of love and grace. God is perfect, good, and holy. He knows that we cannot be perfect, good, or holy through our own effort. So He gave us a way to be forgiven through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a perfect life here on earth as fully human and fully God. He knows what it is like to be tempted to do things we should not do. But He never sinned. He died on the cross to take the punishment for all of our sins. If we believe in Him and receive this gift, we can be forgiven and become part of His family.

- What do you think it means to be purified from all unrighteousness?

“Unrighteousness” means not living up to God’s perfect standard. The Bible tells us that God does not just forgive our sins—He washes them away completely. Once He has forgiven us, in His eyes it is as if our sins never happened. Listen to this verse about what happens when we are forgiven.

Ask a student to read Psalm 103:12 aloud from the Bible.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:12

- Turn to a partner and talk about this: do you think there are sins that are so big or so horrible that God cannot wash them away?

Give the partners a couple of minutes to talk about the question. Then ask for a few volunteers to share their thoughts.

Teacher Tip: Some teens may share that they feel that they have done things that make them unworthy of forgiveness. Assure them that God can forgive any sin, no matter how bad it may seem. You might also share that sometimes, even though God has forgiven us, we may try to hold on to the negative feelings we have. But we need to release those to God.

Ask a student to read 2 Corinthians 5:17 aloud from the Bible.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*

2 Corinthians 5:17

- What do you think it means to be a new creation?

Students may answer that it means that nothing from the past is part of you or that it is like being given a new start.

If you accept Christ as your Saviour and confess your sins to God, He will forgive you. He will completely wipe away your sins. He will make you a new person—one who desires to obey Him and become more like Him. Can you imagine this kind of forgiveness? He has paid the price so that the bad things you have done in the past will no longer be part of you. He will make you new. Can you imagine this kind of love?

- **How does it feel to know that God will forgive you if you ask Him to?**

Teens may say happy or relieved.

3. Responding: Do an activity about knots of sin and ask God for forgiveness.

Ask the students to sit in a circle. Give each student a piece of string or yarn. If you do not have enough for every student, you can follow the instructions in the Optional Supplies section.

Teacher Tip: Be sure to participate in this activity. It shows them that we all need forgiveness and helps them build relationship with you.

Are there things you have done for which you want God to forgive you? You do not have to share those things with anyone. But think about them—and think about how free you would feel if you knew you had been forgiven for what you have done wrong.

Think of a wrongdoing for which you need forgiveness. It may be an action, an attitude, or something you said. Then tie a loose knot in your string to represent your sin. Do this for as many things as you can think of. These may even be things you think no one else knows about. But you knew it was wrong—and God knows about it.

As students think of their sins, read the following verses from the Bible.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from you.

Psalms 69:5

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

After everyone has tied at least 1 knot in her string, hold yours up. As you give the following instructions about untying knots, demonstrate with your own string.

We all have knots in our strings. We have all done wrong things. When we live without forgiveness, it ties our lives into knots of anger, pain, bitterness, and guilt.

I will read some verses about what God says about forgiveness. As I do, you may ask God to forgive you for that sin. After you have asked God to forgive you, untie the knot to represent His forgiveness.

Optional:

If you only have 1 string, tie a knot at 1 end of the string. Read the Bible verses while you pass the string to a student who will tie a knot and pass the string to the next student. Continue passing the string around the circle until all have added a knot. The students' knots will represent all of the wrongdoings they think of.

Let the students know that you will pass the string around the circle again. This time, they will untie a knot when they ask God for forgiveness and pass it the next person.

End of Option

Read the following verses slowly. If students still have knots to untie, you may read them again.

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 43:25

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.

Ephesians 1:7–9

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalms 103:11–12

God forgives all of our sins when we ask Him. We can be free from shame and guilt because His love for us is so great.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, your students can complete the pages as they consider God's forgiveness.

Teacher Tip: If students have questions about salvation and forgiveness, share the Salvation Path from the front of this guide with them.

Close your time by praying for the students with a blessing based on Micah 7:18–19:

Blessing: May the God who forgives show compassion and mercy in your life. May He remind you that His love for you is so great that He will throw all of your sins into the depths of the sea.

Family Connection: Encourage the students to ask their family members about something unexpected they received. The students can then share about God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus and how He wants us to forgive others.

Lead your students in singing this quarter's song if possible.

"Blessed Be Your Name" by Matt Redman: <https://youtu.be/tTpTQ4kBLxA>