

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH

What we want students to learn: That God has always been willing and able to forgive our sins against Him.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To consider how their sin separates them from God and why forgiveness is essential.

Scripture Focus: Psalm 103:8–12, Nehemiah 9:16–19; Psalm 51:1–6

Overview: God is a forgiving God. That is a concept that Christians are intimately familiar with. But sometimes we can be so familiar with something that we lose the wonder of it. It's vital for Christ-followers to reflect and re-consider the awesome truth that God is willing and able to forgive our sins. And for those who have yet to come to saving faith in Jesus, taking the time to focus on God's desire to forgive our sins is a crucial aspect of leading the lost to a relationship with God. In this series, you're going to discover that God's desire to forgive the sin of His people is timeless and rooted in His character. You're going to see how this forgiveness is carried out most vividly in the person and ministry of Jesus. And your students will be challenged to carry this message of forgiveness with them wherever they go.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **Activate** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **God's Forgiveness** lesson 41 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 41, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Psalms

- **Author:** God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms in their era, including seventy-three

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH

by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan, and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other Psalms remains unknown.

- **Timeframe:** The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel's history, spanning from 1100 BC (i.e., Psalm 29, 68) to 400 BC (i.e., Psalm 119).
- **Purpose:** The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity's journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e., Psalm 51).

Nehemiah

- **Author:** Nehemiah is the main character in the Book that shares his name. But he is not the only author. Nehemiah was more than likely written by (at least) Nehemiah, Ezra, and the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles.
- **Timeframe:** Nehemiah, a Jewish exile serving in the courts of the Babylonians, initially arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC and came back again sometime between 433 and 423 BC. The Book would have been written during and sometime after these events.
- **Purpose:** The Jews were at a historic low-point. They had been conquered and dispersed. The Temple and the city walls had been destroyed. Nehemiah is part of the narrative of the rebuilding of the Temple and the city. It was written as a historical narrative to record the events, but also to encourage the Jews as they struggled to rediscover their national identity at significant cost.

THE MAIN POINT

You'll use Psalm 103:8-12 to show students that God is able and willing to forgive us of our sins. You'll help them see that our sins are real. They are a big deal. And that God doesn't have to forgive them. He would be justified in NOT forgiving them. But He does, and the language describing this forgiveness is so poetic. It's a powerful passage.

You'll be using Nehemiah 9:16-19 to show students that we see this desire to forgive over and over again in how God dealt with His chosen people, Israel. The point you'll be making here is simple: God did AMAZING things to bring His people out of slavery and deliver them to the Promised Land. Even after witnessing all of this, they STILL rebelled. And yet . . . God still stood ready to forgive them.

Finally, you'll be using Psalm 51:1-6 in The Last Word to help students consider how their sin separates them from God and why forgiveness is essential. David's words in verse 4 are powerful. We may think that when we disobey our parents, or lie, or gossip, or whatever, that it's no big deal. But ALL of our sin is direct rebellion against God. We want students to marinate on this and to take up David's words of prayer to God as they consider the effect sin has on their lives.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH



THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** The goal is to get students thinking about forgiveness.
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to arrange to show the following YouTube video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d41A6hVmwI>
- If the video is not available, you'll want to search for a story about forgiveness. If you choose to go with a different video, you'll need to change the questions below, but the summarizing statement can remain pretty much intact.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to show a video that depicts a pretty cool relationship. Play the video.

THEN, lead students in a discussion. Ask:

- **For someone like Mr. Stern, who lost so much in the war at the hands of the Nazis, can you understand why this is so real for him?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **How could Mr. Stern have reacted the first time he discovered who Leah's family was?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why is it remarkable that he chose to act as he did?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **When we see stories like this, it reminds us of the power of forgiveness. It would have been understandable if Mr. Stern had harbored angry feelings toward Leah, even though she had nothing to do with her family's history. But he showed great grace in extending forgiveness to her. Over the next three lessons, we're going to be studying God's forgiveness. What we're going to find is that it is about the most powerful force you can imagine. I think you will find that there are few other things quite like it in terms of radically changing the world. Let's take a look at how it all starts with God.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To show students that God has always been willing and able to forgive our sins against Him.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, ask students to describe God. Let it be open-ended. Don't put a lot of parameters on it. If they struggle at first because they are thinking only in terms of physical attributes, help lead them toward God's characteristics, but let them push forward on their own. Here is a good chance that somewhere along the way they will say that God is forgiving. When they are finished, and whether they have mentioned "forgiveness" or not (if they didn't it's a good time to point out one they've missed!), say something like:

- **All of God's characteristics are essential. And it's not great theology to try and elevate or isolate one of His characteristics over any other. BUT, if you asked most people what is one of the primary or most essential characteristics of God, many would reply that He is forgiving. Because of our sin nature, we tend to focus**

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH



on God' forgiveness a lot, don't we? It's one of His characteristics that hits close to home for so many of us. We're going to spend the next three lessons unpacking God's forgiveness and how it impacts us and the world through us. Ready? Let's get started.

THEN, have students turn to Psalm 103:8-12. While they are finding it, provide some context for the book by referencing the Bible Background portion of your lesson. When you're ready, read or have a student read the verses. When they've finished, explain that this first passage teaches a valuable point: "God is able and willing to forgive us of our sins." If you want, write the point on the board. Then, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **How is God described in the first verse?**
 - Answer: Compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love
- **Taken as a whole, what kind of picture does this paint of God? What kind of God is He?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Verse 9 says something interesting. It says that God will not harbor His anger forever. While that's super comforting, that means that God is capable of anger. Does that seem out of place with what you just read? What makes God angry?**
 - Answer: Scripture is clear that sin angers God. This is sometimes referred to as God's wrath. But what we need to remember is that like all of God's attributes, even His anger is perfect. His anger is the perfect response to sin. It is not a vindictive, or catty anger. It does not delight in the ruin of someone else. It is a holy anger.
- **Verse 10 is a pretty amazing verse. What does it mean?**
 - Answer: Our sin rightfully earns for us death (Rom 6:23). That is the penalty for rebelling against the holy, perfect life-giver. But because God is forgiving, He does not punish us as our sin deserves. He made a way in the Old Testament for people to live even though they sinned (the sacrificial system), and He made a perfect way for that through Jesus.

Encourage students to soak up verses 11-12. Explain that this is a poetic picture of the forgiveness God offers us. Say something like:

- **God doesn't have to forgive our sins. It's easy to forget sometimes that God owes us forgiveness or that forgiveness is "fair" and condemning our sins is "unfair." God would be well within His rights to punish our sin with death, immediately. That He doesn't is amazingly amazing! His forgiveness is something we can never take for granted. Let's see other places in Scripture where we see this.**

NEXT, have students turn to Nehemiah 9:16-19. While they are finding it, provide some context for the book by referencing the Bible Background portion of your lesson. When you're ready, read or have a student read the verses. When they've finished, explain that this passage highlights the second truth of the lesson: "We see this desire to forgive over and over again in how God dealt with His chosen people, Israel." Again, if you want, write the point on the board. Then, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **What do you remember about the Israelites exodus from slavery and entrance into the Promised Land?**
 - Answer: Fill in any gaps as needed. Make sure you highlight the fact that Israel was super disobedient even though God did amazing things to deliver them.
- **Do you remember any about the later stages of Israel? Before they were overtaken by Assyria and then Babylon?**

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH

- o Answer: Highlight the fact that God had done EVERYTHING for Israel, given them military victories, prosperity, etc., and they still turned from Him.
- **How does this line up with what Nehemiah is saying in verses 16-18?**
 - o Answer: He's confirming that Israel had rebelled against God.
- **Verse 17 says something that should sound familiar. How does it describe God?**
 - o Answer: The same way He is described in Psalm 103:8-12.

Again, remind students that this is Nehemiah looking back on how his people had treated God hundreds of years in the past. He is appalled at how sinful they could be. And yet, he recognized God's forgiveness. Say something like:

- **Nehemiah recognized that God could have dealt as harshly with Israel as He wanted. It would have been justified. But God didn't. He forgave them over and over again. And while there were very real and very unpleasant consequences, God never abandoned His covenant faithfulness. He stood willing to wash the sins away of His people over and over again.**

FINALLY, help students understand that the forgiveness God has always offered His people is still available today. Say something like:

- **God has always been forgiving. As we know, it's a part of who He is. The great news is that God offers perfect forgiveness to us today. We're going to look at that more closely next lesson. For today, we're going to close by looking at one more passage of Scripture and the profound truth it contains.**

If there are no more comments or questions, transition to The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students consider how their sin separates them from God and why forgiveness is essential.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, have students make a list of sins that are common to teenagers. Explain that this is not a PERSONAL list. Nor is it exhaustive. The idea is to get a few common sins out there to use as an example.

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion using some of the sins they've put on the board. For the various sins, ask the following question: "Who is harmed by this sin?" You'll need to manage the discussion based on your list. But the idea is to let the conversation flow. Don't correct or redirect other than to help encourage interaction.

THEN, encourage students to listen as you read Psalm 51:1-6. Re-read verses 3-4. Then say:

- **OK, let's set the stage here. Psalm 51 is David responding to God over being convicted of his sin with Bathsheba. Remember, David essentially saw Bathsheba bathing on a rooftop because he was somewhere he shouldn't have been. Instead of turning away, he acted on his sin and, because he was the king, he had her brought to him. Even though he knew she was married (to one of David's soldiers, no less), he slept with her. When he found out she was pregnant, he had her husband killed. What a twisted, messy situation. Did David sin against Bathsheba? Yes! Did David sin against her husband? Yes! But David knew that ultimately his sin was against God. Ultimately, in doing what he did, David was directly rebelling against God and His ways.**

activate

THE
BUILDING
BLOCKS
OF FAITH

NEXT, help student process this fact. Ask if this changes the conversation you just had about the sins they listed on the board. Remind them that our sin absolutely affects others. But we can never lose sight of the fact that our sin is ultimately doing wrong against God. That's why there is no such thing as a little sin. All sin is a violation of God's ways. And it all deserves punishment.

FINALLY, close with saying something like:

- **The hope for us is that through faith in Christ, God has provided a way for us to be freed from the penalty of sin and restored to relationship with Him. But only in Christ. Apart from Christ, our sin destroys our relationship with God. We'll get into this more next week. But between now and then, let this discussion flavor your life this week. Be mindful of what sin is and what it does. And be thankful for a God who stands ready to forgive.**

If there are no more comments or questions, close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.