



LESSON 3: FORGIVE WITHOUT LIMITS

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: We can't put any limits on our forgiveness; there is never a moment when we can say, "enough forgiveness."

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To accept that the emotional turmoil caused by forgiving people who repeatedly hurt them makes them more Christ-like than they know.

Scripture Focus: Luke 17:1-4

OVERVIEW: At our best, we'll forgive someone and make efforts to move on. There is often the assumption that this is a one-time deal, that we need to tough it out and do the hard work of forgiveness and then move on. But what happens when we're dragged back into the messy pain of being wronged and trying to extend forgiveness? What happens when the person who wronged us wrongs us again? There is only so much we can be expected to do, right? Wrong! Jesus makes it clear: as often as we are hurt, that is how often we are to forgive. As hard as this seems, it's the way Christ sees us. It's a high challenge, but one that aligns our students with Jesus and His ways.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Forgiveness Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "Jesus And Forgiveness Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-forgiveness-teacher-prep>

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details give 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

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

THE SETTING

Luke chapter 17 comes during a huge block of writing that contains a lot of Jesus’ teachings. In chapter 15, Luke shows Jesus addressing the Pharisees with the parables of the lost things, which, of course, ends with the parable of the prodigal son. Chapter 16 sees Jesus leveling His sights at the Pharisees, teaching on such topics as the love of money, divorce, and mercy to the poor. The passage you’ll look at comes at the beginning of chapter 17 and forms the last section before a transition to a new section of discourse.

THE MAIN POINT

This is an interesting passage in which Jesus covers a lot in a few short verses. First, Jesus acknowledges that sin is something we can’t be free from this side of heaven. It happens. But Jesus strongly warns against being people who lead others to sin. Maybe there is some truth here that is applicable in our study of forgiveness. The underlying truth behind forgiveness is that someone has wronged you. As Christ-followers, Jesus is reminding us that we can’t be people who wrong others, not only because this is sinful, but because we might put someone in the position of struggling to forgive us.

But the real heart of this passage is verses 3-4. Jesus lays out a simple framework for how we should approach forgiveness (directly telling others how they have wronged us) and what should be expected of those to whom we point out his or her wrongdoing (that they would stop). Then Jesus drives home His point: no matter how often we’re wronged, we must continue to forgive. There isn’t a moment when we can say, “OK. Enough is enough. No more forgiveness for you.” As long as we live, we must be willing to extend God’s mercy to others, no matter how difficult this must be.

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.

THE LEAD-IN

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about the idea of how much forgiveness is enough.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a copy of the "Lead-In Activity Sheet" (found in your Lesson 3 folder). You'll want to display it by either printing it out or displaying it digitally (tablet, laptop, or projector). To make this activity personal and a little more fun, consider downloading a picture of a specific celebrity or musician that your students might have a "love/hate" relationship with, or if you live in a part of the country where there is a heated sports rivalry arrange to show an image of one of the team's logos. Be prepared to show the picture at the end of your discussion.

FIRST, remind students that this is the third lesson in your four-week study of Jesus and Forgiveness. Explain that this week you're going to be learning a pretty interesting truth about what Jesus expects when it comes to our forgiveness. But that first you going to have a little discussion to get the lesson started.

THEN, say something like:

- **How much is too much? Are there certain things in life, certain good things, things you enjoy, that you can simply get too much of? For instance . . .**

At this point, show the first image from the Lead-In Activity Sheet, a slice of pizza. **Ask something like:**

- **Who can tell me what your favorite food is?**
Allow students to call out their favorite foods.
- **Choose one student and ask: What would the scenario be where you could have too much of your favorite food? Is that possible or impossible?**
Allow various answers, and if you have time ask multiple students their opinions.
- **Why is it that you can have too much of your favorite food? It's delicious, right? Why wouldn't you want to eat it all the time?**
Allow students to answer as they will, but lead them to see that even our favorite food would become dull and boring, and maybe even gross after too much of it.

NEXT, repeat a similar discussion with each of the next two slides. Show the image of the electronics and lead students to discuss if it would ever be possible to have too many awesome gadgets and electronics. Allow the discussion to go where it will, but look for a chance to make the point that if our world was overrun with electronics, we'd lose the human element of our culture.

THEN, do the same for the image of the teenagers. Inform students that these individuals represent their friends and lead a lively discussion about how, though we all love our friends, sometimes we simply need a break or some time to ourselves.

NEXT, if you have downloaded an image of a celebrity, or musician, or a sports team, have some fun by engaging students on how

much of whatever it is you've chosen is too much of a "good" thing.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by explaining to your students that this lesson is all about how for some good things, there is never too much. **Say something like:**

- **We're about to see what Jesus says about how much forgiveness we can dish out before it's too much of a good thing. Ready? Let's jump in.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that we can't put any limits on our forgiveness; there is never a moment when we can say, "enough forgiveness."
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, encourage your students to see who can remember anything about what you've studied the last couple of weeks. **Ask students** if they can remember specific points from lessons 1 and 2. If you need to supplement their thoughts, do so by referencing the following bullet points:

- **Lesson 1:** The forgiveness we are to extend to others comes from the forgiveness that originates in Christ.
- **Lesson 1:** We need to be more aware of how we see the concept of forgiveness at work in our lives.
- **Lesson 2:** God will not forgive us unless we forgive others.
- **Lesson 2:** We must identify anyone in our lives to whom we need to extend forgiveness, and commit to forgiving him or her.

THEN, inform your students that today's lesson packs a lot of truth into just a few verses. Have students turn to Luke 17 while you give some of the setting for the passage. See if anyone can remember any facts about who Luke was and why he wrote his Gospel. (Supplement their answers by referencing the Details section of the Bible Background.) If you choose, set the context for the passage by summarizing the Setting section of the Bible Background. Once you've finished, read or have students read Luke 17:1-4.

NEXT, explain that you're going to go back and dig through the passage a little deeper. Instruct students to look back at verses 1-2. **Ask:**

- **What is Jesus saying here about sin in the first part of verse 1?**
Answer: That it is inevitable. There will be temptations that we will give in to.
- **Based on what you know about the Bible and about Jesus' life and teachings, do you think this gives us permission to not worry about sinning? Explain your answer.**
Answer: Help students process this. Remind them that our goal is not to be good people, but to be Christ-like (Ephesians 5:1-2). There's a difference! Christ is the standard, and we're called to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). So while Jesus knows we will sin because we all have a sin-nature (Romans 3:23), this isn't saying that we can approach sin lightly.
- **Now, look at the second part of verse 1 and all of verse 2. This gets really interesting. What is Jesus saying here?**
Answer: Jesus is warning about being someone who causes others (specifically here "little ones," meaning those young in their faith) to be tempted to sin. We can't truly cause others to sin, as the decision to sin is made by the individual. But we can lead others to being tempted to sin by our actions and words.

- **So, since most of us don't work in mills anymore, here's a refresher: a millstone was a large, round stone weighing a hundred pounds or more. It would have been pulled by a donkey or ox and used to ground-up grain. So, knowing this, what is Jesus saying here? What does He mean?**

Answer: Help students see that Jesus is comparing the earthly to the eternal. It would stink to be thrown into the ocean with a hundred-pound rock tied to us. We'd drown pretty quickly and this is bad. But Jesus is saying that tempting others to sin is worse than this. He can say this because Jesus rightly values the eternal over the earthly.

This raises an interesting point when it comes to our discussion on forgiveness. You don't want to push this too far because it might be reading a little more into the text than is actually there, but it's an interesting point to consider. **Ask:**

- **We learned last week that not forgiving someone is something Jesus is strongly against, right?**

Answer: Yes. Maybe you want to remind students of Jesus' words in Matthew 6:14-15: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

- **And we talked last week about how forgiving someone is not easy. It's hard. Sometimes it's really hard, right?**

Answer: Right!

- **So, when we wrong other people, when we hurt them through something we say or do, we put them in a situation where they have to forgive us to be in obedience with Jesus' commands. We've already said that this is a hard thing for us sinful humans to do. So, is it fair to say that when we do wrong to people we're kind of putting them in a situation where they are tempted to NOT forgive us? Why or why not?**

Answers will vary. Again, it's probably a side point, but a very interesting one as far as your discussion on forgiveness. And something that will make your students think, which is never a bad thing.

THEN, help students see that verses 3 and 4 are the heart of the passage and the main point you want to get across today. Have students look back at these verses and **ask:**

- **Jesus is giving us a bit of a framework for how to deal with other people's hurtful actions toward us. It hinges on two words. Do you know what the words "rebuke" and "repent" mean? What does it mean to rebuke someone?**

Answer: To rebuke someone is basically to point out to someone the wrong that he or she has done.

- **What does this look like in a modern context? Give an example.**

Answers will vary. But it simply means going to the person who has done wrong to you and telling him or her what he or she did.

- **Why is this so hard for us to do?**

Answer: It's awkward; we don't like confrontation; etc.

- **What does the word "repent" mean? In other words, what are we looking for from someone?**

Answer: The word "repent" means to turn away from doing wrong. The word picture is someone walking in one direction and then turning 180 degrees and walking in the other direction.

- **What is the modern-day application of this? What does it mean when the person who has wronged us repents?**

Answer: At the risk of oversimplifying it, it means that he or she apologizes for the wrong he or she did and stops doing it. Stopping our hurtful actions is an important aspect of repentance. You may take a moment to explain why it is so important for us to repent after we have done wrong to others, and why this is just as important as forgiveness.

At this point set up Jesus words in verse 4 as they are the gist of the lesson. **Say something like:**

- **So, up to this point, we're tracking with Jesus, right? It all sounds good. We tell people what they did, they say**

they're sorry, they stop doing it, and we're all good. The only problem is that sometimes life doesn't work like that. Occasionally, people will hurt us again. And sometimes they'll hurt us over and over. Luckily Jesus says in verse 4 that we only have to forgive people once, right? Wrong!

Ask:

- **Summarize what Jesus is saying in verse 4.**

Answer: Jesus is not literally saying that seven is the magic number or the limit of how much we should forgive someone. What He's saying is that no matter how many times a person hurts us, we must extend forgiveness to him or her.

- **Ugh! This is SO hard, isn't it? Why is it so hard for us to forgive people who hurt us over and over again?**

Answers will vary.

- **Why do you think Jesus asks something of us that seems so impossible?**

Answer: Jesus is only asking of us the same thing He does for us. When we sin, we wrong God over and over again. And yet Jesus has forgiven us once and for all, no matter how often we may hurt Him or fall short of His expectations for us.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Last Word by **saying something like the following:**

- **We are Jesus' plan to show His love and mercy to a world that desperately needs Him. We are His hands and feet and voice in this world. When we show people the same kind of forgiveness Jesus shows us, we are showing them the power Jesus has to radically transform our lives. We show people that Jesus is real and that He matters. Even though it's tough, it's part of being a Christ-follower. We must be willing to forgive over and over again.**

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the **Last Word**.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students accept that the emotional turmoil caused by forgiving people who repeatedly hurt them makes them more Christ-like than they know.
- **Set-Up:** You can do this a few ways. The simplest way would be to have a three sheets of poster board, with a handful of markers, available to students. You'll want a way to hang the poster board up on the wall when the time is right. You'll need to write the following statements at the top of the poster board, one statement on each board:
 - **When people hurt me it feels like _____.**
 - **When someone does me wrong again and again, it makes me feel _____.**
 - **But I will choose to forgive them because _____.**
- **Of course, there are a few ways you might do this digitally. (For example: Have teenagers text their responses to an assistant's phone and have him or her type them out real-time to display on a PowerPoint slide.) But that will be dictated by your set-up.**

FIRST, remind students of Jesus' moments in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was facing the cross. Remind them that He wept bitterly and was in deep anguish. Remember His words in Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." **Say something like:**

- **The cup Jesus wanted God the Father to take was the cross. Jesus knew what lay in store for Him. But it wasn't just the brutal nature of His death. It was taking on the pain of the world's sin that was so agonizing to Him. But Jesus willingly took your sin on Him to forgive you. Jesus knows the hurt forgiveness causes. He doesn't call you to do**

anything He hasn't experienced a million times over.

THEN, explain to students that you're going to give them a chance to own the emotional aspect of the cost of forgiveness and that you're going to do it as a group. Hang up the poster board where students can see them. Explain that you want them to all approach the different boards and, using the markers you've provided, write how they would answer the question. Allow students a chance to do this. You might even consider playing music while it's going on.

NEXT, when they've finished, acknowledge what they've written. Help them see that it IS painful to be hurt by people, especially to be hurt by people over and over again. But remind them of the power of forgiveness. More importantly, remind them that forgiveness aligns them with Jesus, and that is exactly who and where they want to be.

FINALLY, close by challenging them to embrace this teaching, even though it's difficult. Help them know that you or other adults are here for them if they need guidance, and that the Holy Spirit empowers them to live like Christ.

If no one has any questions or observations, close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

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.