

**LESSON 3: CHOOSING TO FORGIVE OTHERS**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

People aren't perfect. Even people who have followed Christ for a long time will make mistakes and may hurt others. We must prepare for it—we must make allowance or assume that it will happen. Experiencing freedom means choosing to give forgive others. This lesson will help your students see how holding grudges or being unwilling to forgive can actually be more of a prison of shame and guilt for the one refusing to forgive than the one who caused the pain.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** Forgiving others can be difficult, but it's a healthy, vital step on the journey to freedom.
- 2. WHY:** As teenagers experience God's love and forgiveness, they can begin to better understand why it's important and how it's beneficial to forgive others.
- 3. HOW:** Your students will be encouraged to pursue the power of forgiveness in their lives and the lives of others.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

Colossians 3:12-17

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURES**

Matthew 18:21-35 and Ephesians 4:31-32

**TEACHING PREP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**

**LEADER  
TIP**

**Read Colossians 3:12-17.**

Throughout his writings, the Apostle Paul stressed the importance of unity and peace in the church. The church is made up of imperfect people trying to work together, so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that there will be pain and that people will be hurt. This is impossible to avoid.

In verse 13, some translations use the phrase, "put up with others," while the New Living Translation says to "make allowance for each other's faults." Paul is saying that we can assume that others will cause us pain,

so we need to be prepared. He encourages us to forgive people who have offended or hurt us. This can be tough, but Paul says that this is possible because we have first experienced Christ's forgiveness. Forgiveness leads to peace and unity.

Our freedom is tied to our forgiveness from God, but it can also be tied to our forgiveness of others. We can experience the peace and unity of belonging by being willing to let go of the grudges we hold against others. And even though Paul's original context was about Christians forgiving other Christians, the truths of this passage extend to our relationships with people who aren't followers of Jesus. Our willingness to forgive is a powerful statement to our world about the reality of Christ's love.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXTS OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- What does it take to forgive someone who's wronged you? We'll talk tonight about why it's so important to do it.
- What happens when you hold a grudge? Does it help or hurt? Share your thoughts when we meet this week!

### **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We've finished our series on shame and guilt, and it's been a great reminder of the power of forgiveness in our lives and those around us.

Our final conversation focused on Paul's teaching in Colossians 3 about forgiving others. During this lesson, our students discussed the importance of forgiving others. We encouraged students to reflect on their own forgiveness in order to find the power to forgive others.

As you go throughout the week, look for moments to talk with your teenager about our lesson. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- If we are unwilling to forgive other people, how can that hinder our relationship with Jesus?
- What's the difference between forgiving another person because you "should" and offering forgiveness because you want to?
- What roadblocks keep you from forgiving people who have offended or hurt you? How is that affecting you?
- How can we as a family forgive each other more freely?

Have a great week!

## LESSON 3: CHOOSING TO FORGIVE OTHERS

## 2. LESSON GUIDE

## GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]



Preview the following video for your group: [youtube.com/watch?v=FxoMbPWukOI](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FxoMbPWukOI) (or find another video on the topic of forgiving others). You will need an Internet connection and a computer or tablet to display the video for your participants.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then show the video clip. Then ASK:

- *What was most poignant about this video?*
- *Which sign stood out to you most strongly? Why?*
- *Who benefits most from forgiveness: the wronged, the offender, or both? Why?*
- *What does forgiveness toward other people look like?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Because we live in a broken world, it is safe to assume that many of us—if not all of us—have been hurt by someone else. As you watched that video, it's possible that you saw a sign that reminded you of the way you've experienced hurt or pain. In this video, each person chose to flip the script—they took a message of anger or hurt or pain, and turned it into a message of forgiveness. Today we'll talk about why it's important to forgive others and how we can do it with Jesus' help.*

## TEACHING POINTS



Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *This is a powerful chunk of Scripture filled with life-changing truths about forgiveness and our interactions with other people. Let's see what we can uncover.*

## 1. GOD CALLS YOU TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

### ASK:

- Which word in verse 12 do you find most powerful? most difficult? most important?
- If we wear the “clothing” in this verse, how can that make it easier to forgive other people?
- Paul wrote these words to Christians about their interactions with other Christians. Does that make this Scripture less relevant to our interactions with people who aren't followers of Jesus? Why or why not?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Some people talk about how followers of Jesus are supposed to live differently, but they focus on the things that aren't essential. This passage helps us see what truly matters—the attitudes, actions, and characteristics that reveal Jesus' work in our lives. Living this way will point people to Jesus, and it helps us reach a place where we're willing to forgive others—even people who've caused deep pain in our lives.*

## 2. OTHER PEOPLE WILL HURT YOU

### ASK:

- Look at verse 13—what does it mean to “make allowance for each other's faults”? What does this look like in real life?
- How do our faults and weaknesses hurt others? And how do other people's faults and weaknesses hurt us?
- What are some reasons it's impossible to go through life without ever being hurt by other people?
- If we are unwilling to forgive other people, how can that hinder our relationship with Jesus?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *People aren't perfect. Even people who have followed Christ for a long time will make mistakes and may hurt others. We must prepare for it—we must make allowance or assume that it will happen. No one is perfect—including us! Paul says not to be surprised when we others hurt us. Instead, we can pursue love, which can help us handle the pain and offense in a way that can lead to unity, harmony, and healthy attitudes toward others.*

## 3. YOU CAN CHOOSE TO FORGIVE

### ASK:

- Verse 13 says we need to forgive “anyone” who hurts or offends us. Why are we usually more comfortable with a pick-and-choose approach to forgiving others?
- Why is it often difficult to separate the act of forgiveness from our feelings and emotions?
- How is love connected to our willingness to forgive others?
- Think about a time another person forgave you for something you did or for some hurt you caused. What was that experience like?
- What's the difference between forgiving another person because you “should” and offering forgiveness because you want to?

- How do we handle the hurts that are just so agonizing, so horrific, or so scarring?
- How is forgiving others different from forgiving yourself? How are those two things similar?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *As we remember and reflect on the way Jesus offers forgiveness to us, we recall how this great gift changed our lives—and in doing so, we can find the strength to forgive. We didn't deserve Jesus' forgiveness, and maybe those who have hurt us don't deserve to be forgiven, but we can release ourselves from the pain by choosing to forgive. We can find strength and the ability to do it through Jesus' grace, love, and forgiveness.*

### EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



#### ASK:

- What's the connection between shame and guilt, and our willingness to forgive other people?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35. How would you summarize the main message of this parable from Jesus?
- Read Ephesians 4:31-32. How are the traits in verse 31 fueled by an unwillingness to forgive other people?
- How are the actions in verse 32 an effective "treatment" for the issues in the previous verse?
- When have you recently asked Jesus for the strength and ability to show kindness and forgiveness?
- If you know someone who has been the victim of a horrible crime—such as rape, abuse, sexual exploitation, or a murdered family member—why would your friend ever forgive the guilty person?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

### LIVING IT OUT

#### ASK:

- What are some benefits of choosing to forgive other people?
- What roadblocks keep you from forgiving people who have offended or hurt you? How is that affecting you?
- Based on today's conversation, how can you make things right with others? How might you handle things in light of the stuff we've discussed?
- What are some specific ways to consistently remember that Jesus has forgiven you?
- If you've been hurt by someone you never want to see again, what does it look like to forgive that person?

Consider giving students a chance to quietly reflect on today's conversation. Offer to pray with teenagers who want to forgive people who've hurt them, or encourage students to form groups to pray with and for one another. Also be prepared to respond appropriately to any students who share details of abuse—in

that situation, you need to contact your youth pastor or other appropriate church leaders immediately so the situation can be addressed. Do NOT ignore the issue.

## SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others" (Colossians 3:13).*