

This theme would work best when incorporated during Lent and towards Easter

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. In the Bible, the Greek word translated “forgiveness” literally means “to let go,” as when a person does not demand payment for a debt.

To some people, forgiveness may seem like weakness or letting an undeserving person win, but it has no connection to weakness or even to emotions. Instead, forgiveness is an act of the will.

Forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. No one deserves to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a deliberate act of love, mercy, and grace. Forgiveness is a decision to not hold something against another person, despite what he or she has done to you.

There are two types of forgiveness that appear in the Bible:

- 1. God's forgiveness of 'our' sins.** Christians believe that when Jesus died on the cross, He took the sins of the world, so all would be forgiven, not because it is deserved, but because of unconditional the love of God.

He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. Ephesians 1:7

- 2. 'our' obligation to forgive others.** (*our here refers to Christian believers*)

So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them." Luke 17:3-4

Bible verses:

The Bible clearly states that Christians should forgive others because they have been forgiven by God.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18:21-22

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said forgive people 70 x7 times?

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matthew 6:14

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14

Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?
You do not stay angry forever
but delight to show mercy.
Micah 7:18

- What does this verse teach you about the nature of God?

You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.
Psalm 86:5

And forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who sin against us.
Matthew 6:12 (The Lord's Prayer)

- How important do you think forgiveness is to God?
- Why do you think He included it in the Lord's Prayer? What does that teach Christians about the importance of saying sorry and forgiving others?

He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. Ephesians 1:7

Bible stories that illustrate forgiveness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7c976lrlek> – Unforgiving servant video clip. (Forgive others as God forgave you.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndETu4bzwAY> – Joseph forgives his family video clip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppb9bKX1r7k> – Jesus forgives Peter (Peter denies Jesus, Holy Week) video clip -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jO2QsF_nnIU – Jonah video clip. God forgave Jonah for not obeying Him. God wanted Jonah to give the people in Nineveh a message to seek forgiveness of their sins.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BjtbJFz2ug>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe7dTNID6h8> – Zacchaeus video clip. When Zacchaeus knew he had made a mistake so he said he was sorry. Jesus forgave him for all he had done, even though all those watching didn't think he deserved it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfDfMZ6MTJs> – The Lost / Prodigal son. The son has to seek forgiveness from his father, which the father gives unconditional despite all the son had done. This is a parable Jesus.

Collective Worship plans

<https://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/idea/exploring-values-bible-forgiveness> - Barnabas in schools website, further guidance on exploring forgiveness in your acts of worship.

<https://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/search?keywords=forgiveness> – Barnabas in schools website – links to collective worship plans on forgiveness.

<https://www.assemblies.org.uk/search.php?term=forgiveness&ksval=6&order=aid&offset=0&restype=part> Forgiveness worship plans, be aware that not all are suitable for Christian acts of worship.

Quotes to discuss:

There is no love without forgiveness and there is no forgiveness without love. Bryant H. McGill

If we really want to love, we must learn to forgive. Mother Teresa.

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.
C.S Lewis

Sorry is the most important word.

Forgiveness is more than just words.

- What do you think these mean?
- Do you agree with them? Why/ why not?
- Are they helpful to understand forgiveness?
- Are they always true?
- How easy is it to forgive people?
- Is sorry the most important word? What might happen if no one said it anymore?

Theme videos:

<https://request.org.uk/issues/ultimate-questions/big-questions-why-should-i-forgive/#> - Good introductory video. Explanation of the Christian understanding of forgiveness. *This is what Christians believe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXwQORTszBg> – An illustration of how God removes sins.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1SiHfT-SCY> – explanation about the Christian meaning of repentance.

Songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO-2fm7IKcU> – You forgive me by Life Tree Kids.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGTYuTkGf3A> – No not one by Life tree kids.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X3nW6dB8As> – Amazing Grace, gospel version by Life Tree Kids.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olbCpy0CQEo> – Forgiven by Matthew West – Song to listen to.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrwkCOUOlil> - Amazing Grace – song to listen to.

<https://www.godtube.com/popular-hymns/amazing-grace/> - Information about the meaning behind the lyrics of Amazing Grace by John Newton.

Reflection / Prayer area ideas:

Display the Bible verses – Forgive 70x7, Lord's Prayer and Ephesians 4:32. Have key questions around them.

Why do you think Jesus said to forgive 70x7 times? What does this look like in life?

Why do you think it says in the Bible about forgiving others?

- Is it important to forgive people?
- Is it easy to forgive people?
- What would the world be like if no one forgave each other?

Have a Bible open with Ephesians passage open. I wonder how this Bible passage might help you?

Display some [artwork](#) associated with forgiveness.

- How do these images make you feel? Do they describe forgiveness?
- How would you explain or draw forgiveness?
- How do you think the people are feeling in these images? Why?

Activity:

I wonder if you need to say sorry for anything?

Have some mini whiteboards or chalkboards in the reflection area, encourage the children to write something they are sorry for on it and then rub it out as a sign that it has been forgiven.

Have a tray of sand in the space, allow children to write sorry in the sand and then smooth the sand over, removing the word as a sign of being forgiven.

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/sitesearch?txtsearch=forgiveness> There are more ideas here for prayer spaces in schools with a focus on forgiveness.