



TO FORGIVE OR NOT TO FORGIVE

Preschool-K • #NT16 • April 12, 2026

Concept

God forgives.

Goal

The children will learn that God sent Jesus to die on the cross so we can be forgiven for our sin. They will learn that we should choose to forgive other people when they sin as well.

Passage

Matthew 18:21-35

Key Verse: "Be kind... to one another, forgive each other, just as God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
Lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 puppets – 1 king, 1 servant, 1 friend• Large amount of play coins• Play dollars• Plastic sandwich bag to hold money• 1 bed sheet	Learning Activity #2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Die-cut cardstock crowns with key verse, 1/child• Die-cut cardstock crowns with printed phrase, 1/child• Die-cut cardstock crowns plain, 1/child• Transparent tape• Staplers• Markers• Bright colored stickers, several/child

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the shaded areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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In Jesus' day Jewish Rabbis taught that it was right to forgive others up to three times. Beyond that, there was no command. In that light, Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who sinned against him. His suggestion that one should forgive seven times was actually merciful by the Pharisaical standards of the day. However, Jesus' answer, seventy times seven, indicated that forgiveness for others should be limitless.

"To illustrate further why men ought to forgive one another the comparatively small offenses which divide them, Jesus told a parable to illumine God's greater forgiveness. The sum, which the first servant owed to the king, was exorbitant. If the Attic talent is intended, about 6,000 denarii were involved in just one Attic talent. Remembering that a denarius was a day's normal wage, the poor fellow owed something like 60,000,000 denarii. Even a nobleman could not have amassed such a fortune in a lifetime. On the other hand, the fellow servant owed only 100 denarii. After finding mercy from the king even to the extent of the cancellation of his debt, this abominable fellow subjected his fellow servant to the most stringent punishment for his failure to produce a far lesser sum."^[1] "The servant's attitude is appalling.... Yet the amount is utterly trivial compared with what has already been forgiven him. The similarity of his fellow servant's plea (v.29) to his own (v.26) does not move this unforgiving man. He has him thrown into a debtor's prison (v.30)."^[2]

In light of God's forgiveness toward us, Matthew repeatedly emphasized the importance of forgiving others. (See Mt. 6:14-15, Mt. 18:35.) "... The recall of the King's original forgiveness of the great debtor can only be intended to bring out the utter incompatibility of such harshness towards a brother on the part of one who has been consciously forgiven by God his great debt... It is this new relationship to God which must be the foundation and the rule for our new relationship towards our fellow-servants... But to us all, there is the deepest seriousness in the warning against unmercifulness;..."^[3]

[1] Believer's Study Bible notes, QuickVerse, Matthew 18:23.

[2] Frank E. Gaebelin, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8, 1984, Zondervan Corporation, pp. 406, 407.

[3] The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1993, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., pp. 678, 679, 680.

Set Up

Incorporation Lg. Group

Introduction Lg. Group

Transition

Lesson Lg. Group

- **The week before class** – Pray that the Spirit shows the children how personal He is.
- **The day of class** – Put the coins into the plastic bag.

Activity Stations:

Game – Will You Forgive Me? Yes, I Will

- **Instructions:** This game is played like “Mother May I?” Have children stand facing a teacher. Teacher will say a frequently committed sin; e.g., “you just disobeyed your mommy,” “you hit your friend,” “you grabbed your brother’s toy,” “you said mean words to your sister, etc.” The children will say back to each one, “I made a bad choice, will you forgive me?” The teacher will say, “Yes, I will. You may take 3 steps.” Vary it with the teacher saying, “I shouted at you, etc., Will you forgive me?” Children will say, “Yes, we will.”

Have you ever had a time out? Why do your moms and dads give you time outs? A time out is a consequence for a bad choice, isn't it? Have you ever said "I'm sorry" to someone? What did that person say to you? What do you do when your friends are mean to you? We're going to hear a story from the Bible about a king who said "I forgive you" and a servant who said "I won't forgive you!" We are going to learn that God forgives.

I've invited three friends to help with the story. Your Highness, could you please come in? (As the puppet enters, have the children bow before the king.)

Drama – Puppet Skit performed by 2 teachers

Instructions: Put the sheet over 2 adult chairs or flip a table on its side to make the puppet stage. Two teachers can play all three parts, the same teacher playing the king and the friend.

King: I wonder where that servant is? He owes me a lot of money.
(The servant enters, bowing several times.)

Servant: Your Highness, I'm so sorry!

King: Where is my money?

Servant: Oh, I'm soooo sorry! I don't have it.
(He begins to cry, loudly.)

Your Majesty, I only have these few dollars.
(The puppet holds the dollars.)

King: But you owe me this much.
(King holds up the bag of money.)

Lesson
Continued
Lg. Group

Servant: Oh please, (crying even louder) I'll try to pay it back! I'm soo sorry!

King: I could send you to jail!

Servant: Please don't! (still crying)

King: I'll tell you what I'll do. I won't make you pay more money. In fact, you can keep all of your money. Even though you made a bad choice, I forgive you.

Servant: (yells) Yippee! Thank you, thank you!

(The king leaves and servant walks along, singing, "I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven." Friend comes in and bumps into servant.)

Servant: Hey, I know you. You owe me money. You owe me this much money...

(Hold up the moneybag with fewer coins.)

Friend: I'm so sorry I haven't paid you yet. I only have one dollar.

(Puppet holds up dollar.)

Please give me more time.

Servant: (say sternly) Are you kidding? You will pay me now!

Friend: I have to feed my children.

Servant: I am going to send you to jail for your bad choice! Police, police! Take this man to jail!

(Friend disappears)

(King reappears and servant skips along and bumps into the king.)

King: I heard about what you did to your friend. You made a bad choice. You didn't forgive him.

Servant: He owed me money!

King: You owed me money and I forgave you. Because you did not forgive your friend, I'm sending you to jail. Guards, take him away! (The servant cries really hard.)

(Exit King & Servant)

Lesson Lg. Group

(Hold up one of the puppets.) Who is this? What happened to this puppet in the story? (Hold up the other two puppets and ask who they are and what happened to them.) The servant and his friend both made bad choices, didn't they? They both owed a lot of money that they couldn't pay back. Did the king make a bad choice or a good choice when he told the servant he didn't have to pay him back? (Good choice.)

This story shows us what we are like and what God is like. We are like the servant when we won't forgive other people when they make bad choices. The king is like God because He forgave the servant and didn't make him pay back the money he owed. The king forgave the servant because God forgives.

Do you think God ever makes bad choices? (Give time for response.) NO. He never makes bad choices. We make bad choices all the time, don't we? YES. God says ALL people make bad choices. He says we have to have a consequence for our bad choices. The consequence is much, much worse than a time-out. The consequence is that we can't be God's friends. Isn't that awful? (Whisper.) But do you know what? God forgives. Have you ever heard of Jesus? He came to this earth to die on the cross for all our bad choices. He took the consequence for us. God says that when we tell Him that we are sorry for making bad choices and ask Jesus to forgive us, He says, "I forgive you." He says He is our friend.

After the King forgave the servant, the servant made a bad choice when he wouldn't forgive his friend. He owed a lot more money to the king than his friend owed him, but he wouldn't forgive the very little bit that his friend owed him. He learned that God forgives, but he would not forgive. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind... to one another, forgive each other, just as God forgave you." God says that because Jesus has forgiven you for your bad choices, you should forgive others when they make bad choices.

Transition

Let's get into our small groups to talk more about how God forgives.

Learning Activity#1 Sm. Groups

Discussion Questions

- Why did the king get angry at the servant? (The king had just forgiven the servant for money he owed and couldn't pay back, but the servant would not do the same for his friend.)
- The king is like God because he forgave the servant. God says that because Jesus has forgiven you for your bad choices, you should forgive others when they make bad choices. How does Jesus forgive us?

Let's pray together now. Let's say "thank you" to Jesus, for dying on the cross and that God forgives us. Let's thank God that after He forgives us we can "Be kind... to one another, forgive each other, just as God forgave us."

Transition

Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

Let's make a crown to remind us of the king who knew that God forgives.

Craft – Crowns

Instructions: Give each child 2 printed crowns and a plain crown. Tape the two crowns together end to end. Color and put stickers on them. Wrap the crown around the child's head to determine fit and add the third plain piece as needed. Tape or staple the ends together where appropriate.