



Date: _____

Series: Pass the Promise
Fall Year 1, Lesson 20

God Forgives Us So We Can Forgive Others

Primary Scripture: Matthew 18:23-35

Key Verse: Matthew 18:33, "Shouldn't you have treated the other servant as mercifully as I treated you?"

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

First through fourth graders have learned how to hold grudges. They want to get even. Revenge becomes a common motivation when a friend has wronged them. This revenge mind-set makes it really hard to forgive. Through this Bible Event, God teaches us the importance of learning to forgive and how great God's forgiveness is for us.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus forgives us when we don't deserve it.

Jesus in us: Jesus helps us let go of anger and getting even.

Jesus through us: Jesus helps us be nice to those who have wronged us.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the Presenter is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies:

- *white sheet that can be ruined with mud*
- *five six-inch hearts cut from a second white sheet. Pin these hearts to the first white sheet.*
- *tray with an inch or two of dirt*
- *water to make the dirt into mud*
- *several sponge balls that can be rolled into the mud*
- *towels to clean hands*
- *"change bag" – Hide inside the change bag a clean white heart like those pinned to the sheet (see supply list at end of lesson for where to get this special "magic" prop); OR a paper bag with something in it which creates a separation layer between the clean heart and a dirty heart*

Before Kids Church...

1. Secure the white sheet to a wall or drape it over a table. Pin the five white hearts to various places on the sheet. The bottom of the sheet should extend and cover the bottom of the floor so the sponge ball (mud ball) will roll down the sheet and not touch the floor. Do whatever you can to minimize the mess.
2. Arrange for someone with clean hands (this could be you if someone else makes the mud balls) to retrieve the clean heart from the bag without getting it muddy (See Power of the Cross instructions...)

The mud balls (sponge balls dipped in mud) will be thrown at the white sheet. This is a visual of what it feels like when people sin against us. This happens during "The Power of the Cross."

Today we're going to talk about what to do when someone sins against you. What do you do when someone takes something that belongs to you or hurts your feelings? Do you make a mud ball and throw it back at them?

That's called revenge, and it happens most often when people are hurt. Hurt people just want to hurt back. When we throw hurts back and forth, it becomes like a big mud ball fight and everyone ends up feeling yucky.

When we come to church and worship God, what do you think of when you pray and sing to God? Do you think how wonderful he is? How perfect and loving he is? Let's think about that today.

Our God is perfect and holy. He is like this white sheet. This white sheet doesn't have any spots on it. God is like that. He is perfect, he is holy, and he is loving.

There are white hearts pinned on the sheet.

Point out one of the white hearts.

Let's imagine this white heart is you. When you come to God in worship, your heart can be filled with praise to honor God and his perfect holiness. Let's do that as we worship him today.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies:

- *change bag with a clean white heart (like those pinned to the sheet) hidden inside*

Have a tray with an inch or two of dirt and lightly pour water on top to make mud. Dip sponge balls into mud to make mud balls. While making mud balls, talk about ways in which people might do things against us that really make us mad.

Begin by saying:

Do you know what I'm making here? I'm making mud balls. Yuck! Wouldn't it be terrible to get hit by a mud ball? It would probably

make you feel pretty angry. People sinning and hurting us might make us feel as if we were hit with a mud ball.

Rub a ball lightly to collect some mud around it.

Suppose someone comes up to you and says, “You idiot. You’re stupid.”

Throw the mud ball and begin making another one.

You have a fight with your brother or sister and they tell you that you cannot play with their video game any more. Then to make matters worse, they hide your favorite video game and won’t tell you where it is. Then they deny they did anything wrong to your mom and dad.

Throw another mud ball.

Your two best friends decide they want to play their own secret game and not include you. When you try to join them, they run away, and it hurts.

Throw the mud ball.

See these marks up here? These are like sins against us and see what it does to us? It makes us feel hurt and kind of yucky. Can any of you think of sins that people do against you?

Take a few comments. Let a volunteer take a shot at the sheet with the mud ball.

Today we want to let God take this yuckiness and get rid of it. When our hearts get hurt by the “mud” people throw at us, we don’t have to try to get even. Instead, we can give our hurts to God. That’s like taking this heart here and putting it in this bag.

Put a dirty heart in the bag, making sure it doesn’t touch the clean heart.

When we come to God, he has the power to lift away sin. That’s because he gave his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. Jesus took all the mud and yuck of the sin of the whole world on himself. He was punished for our sin. Because of that, our hearts can be completely white like this.

Have an assistant who has clean hands pull the clean white heart out of the bag.

Because Jesus gives us his forgiveness, we can forgive others and not hold a grudge at all. Let’s pray for that now.

Dear God, thank you for forgiving our sins. You forgive us of the times we might do things to hurt others. It is kind of like throwing mud balls. But we also give to you the ways we have been hurt when other people have done things that are mean against us. We need you to take away our sin and some of the hurt that was caused by other people. Just as you forgive us, help us forgive them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God wants you to know that he has cleaned your heart so you can forgive others just as Jesus forgives you.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

What does it mean to be stingy? It means to be selfish or not want to share. Is God stingy? No. He's generous and gives us everything we need. He even gives us forgiveness when we don't deserve it. Later we will learn a story Jesus told about someone who was stingy with God's forgiveness.

Do we want to be stingy with our possessions or do we want to share them? We can share our possessions when we give our offerings. Then God will use these offerings to provide for others.

Talk about where the children's offerings are going.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

Forgiveness Overflow:

Supplies:

- *many small balls such as tennis or plastic balls (option: wads of newspaper)*
- *bucket for each team of eight to ten children*
- *masking tape to mark starting and finish lines for relay race*

Divide the children into teams of eight to ten for this relay game. Each team will have a bucket of balls 10 to 15 yards away. Line the teams up in single file.

The first contestant from each group will run to his team's bucket and pick up a ball. He then runs back to the next team member and hands off the ball. The second contestant carries that ball and runs to the ball bucket, gathers a second ball, and runs back. The third repeats the process carrying three balls and so on. Each time the contestants accumulate more balls to carry.

Explain to the children that the object of the game is not necessarily how fast one goes, but how many balls the team ultimately ends up carrying. The players may go to the back of the line and repeat as often as necessary.

Inevitably, balls will be dropped. When a ball is dropped, the only way it can be picked up is if a teammate comes and picks the ball up, locks arms, and runs with the teammate. If a pair drops another ball, even a third person can travel with them helping to carry balls and pass on to the next person.

All ball carriers, even if there are three or more, will have to put the balls into one person's arms. Yes, they can cheat and use their shirts to help carry the balls if they have thought of it. Once again, expect that the overload of balls will require new rescuers to share the spilled-over excess. Each group will have two minutes to run the race and collect the most balls.

When the game is over, have the children return the balls to the buckets and gather back together for further discussion.

Now I want you to imagine that the place we get all those balls is just like the place where we go to get forgiveness.

Hold up a bucket of balls.

We get forgiveness from God and his forgiveness is unlimited. That means there is always more. All we need to do to get forgiveness is to hold in our hands the gift of faith in Jesus.

In the game we played, what did we do with the balls after we picked them up? *(We gave them to others.)*

That is like sharing our faith with others and the reason we can forgive. When someone else receives Jesus by faith, they can go to God and get his forgiveness, too. Forgiveness then begins to grow when you give forgiveness to others. God forgives us so we can forgive back.

Bible Presentation: Audience Participation Drama (Matthew 18:21-35)

Today we are going to hear a parable that Jesus told. Does anyone know what a parable is? *(A heavenly story with an earthly meaning.)*

Jesus told this parable that we call “The Unforgiving Servant” to teach us about forgiveness. (See page 10 for script.)

Application:

Why did the king forgive the first servant from his debt? *(He felt sorry for him. He wanted to help him.)*

How do you think the first servant felt? *(He was relieved. He felt like a huge load had been lifted from him.)*

Why do you think the first servant didn’t forgive the second servant? *(He was too worried about himself. He didn’t have love for other people in his heart.)*

What do you think Jesus was trying to teach with this parable? *(We are to forgive others just like God has forgiven us.)*

God is like the king in this parable. He forgives us so much. In fact, he died on the cross for you! If God can forgive everything you have done wrong, and it is loads and loads...

Point to the bags of money.

...we should and *can* forgive what others do to us. First, we need to remember the huge cost God paid for us. Then the Holy Spirit can work in our hearts to make all the changes that need to happen so we can give forgiveness to others. Repeat after me...

God forgives us (kids echo)

so we can forgive back (kids echo).

Let's pray about that.

Holy Spirit, come into our hearts. Give us a loving, forgiving spirit. Change the way we act towards others. Thank you for dying on the cross. Let me share your love and forgiveness with others. Amen.



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Talk about a time someone did something very mean to you and, instead of doing something mean back, you showed him some kindness.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

For prayers divide into groups of eight to ten. You may want to use the same groups as you had for the game. Put an adult or teenager in each group. (This may affect how many groups you have or the size of the group.) Have the children share prayer needs and then pray for each other. Especially pray for those whom you need to forgive and for a spirit of boldness to ask others to forgive you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Audience Participation Drama

“The Unforgiving Servant”

Matthew 18:21-35

Supplies:

- *stacks of paper money made from stacks of cut paper banded and placed in a box. The top and bottom papers should be marked \$500.*
- *five to six garbage bags stacked full of boxes to give the illusion of bags full of money. Something fairly heavy should be placed in each of these bags to make the bag heavy.*
- *garbage bag with one pretend one-dollar bill in it*
- *stack of money*
- *stack of IOUs*
- *one loose IOU*
- *notebook or bank ledger*
- *headpieces / hats / crowns and/or robes, helmets, and swords as listed below or in the supply list at the end of the lesson*

Characters:

- Adult Actor 1 Presenter
- Adult Actor 2 King (costume: a crown)
 Peter (costume: period headpiece)
- Adult Actor 3 Forgiven Servant (costume: baseball cap turned sideways)

The following are kids who are pulled up on stage, given a hat and play their role as they hear the script unfold.

- Child Actor 1 Wife of Forgiven Servant (costume: baseball cap turned sideways)
- Child Actor 2 Child of Forgiven Servant (costume: baseball cap turned sideways)
- Child Actor 3 Child of Forgiven Servant (costume: baseball cap turned sideways)
- Child Actor 4 The Other Servant (costume: baseball cap turned backwards)

The following drama is an ad lib drama that means after the Presenter’s comments (as written below), the Presenter will stop reading and the kids will respond with some statements or actions of their own. The words that are included in this drama need not be spoken verbatim. They just give the actors an idea of what they can say or do. Another option is for the adult actors to have script in hand and read their parts. The presenter and/or assistants should step in and out of the story to help involve people from the audience or help actors with their actions.

It's time for us to hear from God's Word about today's theme. We're going to do this by acting out an Audience Participation drama. Allow me to introduce to you the characters in our little drama.

This is the King (put crown on his head) **and he's also Peter** (throw headpiece on his head loosely). **Here is the character we'll call the Forgiven Servant.**

I will need some actors from the audience for this Audience Participation Drama. I will need a girl who is the wife of the Forgiven Servant and, also, two others to play their children. Volunteers? Come up and get ready off-stage until it's your turn Put on their baseball caps sideways. **I also might need some others from the audience to play servants. I'll choose some people when the times come, okay?**

Ready? Let's begin.

Presenter: Jesus teaches us about personally forgiving others. This is from God's word, starting at Matthew 18:21. "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked him, 'Lord, how often do I have to forgive a believer who wrongs me? Seven times?'" May I introduce to you: **Peter!**

Peter: (*Enters.*) One, two, three—wow! I sure am good if I forgive someone three times. No, wait a minute! Four, five, six...Man, you're talking forgiveness machine here! But even I would have a limit. There is only so much I could put up with. I'll just add one more to be safe. Seven. Seven times, Jesus. How about that?

Presenter: "Jesus answered him, 'I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven.'"

Peter: What? Seventy times seven? Now let me get that straight. (*Begins to count on his fingers, runs out, takes off his shoes, and counts his toes.*) Now Jesus, there's got to be a limit to how much we ought to be able to forgive other people. Come on! (*Exits.*)

Presenter: **That is why the kingdom of heaven is like a king who...**

King: (*Interrupts*) Ta-dah! I am the king and I am rich. I've got many, many, many servants. (*Points toward the audience.*)

Presenter: **...wanted to settle accounts with his servants.**

Forgiven Servant: That's me. I'm a servant. Yes, I am. And I have got it good. I have a rich, rich, rich master. He has lots and lots and lots of money that I've been helping, helping, helping myself to. I've been borrowing just a little bit here and a little bit there and I'm doing fine.

Presenter: **When the king checked the IOUs, he found that this servant owed him millions and millions of dollars.** *(Holds up stack of IOUs.)*

Forgiven Servant: Millions and millions?

King: Yes, millions and millions. Would you like to see how much you've borrowed? Bring it in, boys!

(The presenter pulls some "servants" from the audience and gives them the garbage bags full of money to carry on stage. Conversations can ensue as to how much money that really is and whether they would want to count that all out. The "servants" can then return to the audience.)

Forgiven Servant: Do I really owe you that much money?

King: You sure do. This is how much you've borrowed from me.

Presenter: **Because this servant could not pay off the debt, the master ordered him to be sold off as a slave to pay the account.**

King: That's you, Bud. You're out of here. *(Points offstage.)* Prison city. Until you pay every last nickel.

Forgiven Servant: What can I do? What can I sell off? My car? My home?

King: That's a starter. But you probably need to sell off your wife and kids, too.

Forgiven Servant: Now how much do you think I'd get if I sold off my wife and kids?

(Wife and kids are escorted on stage by the presenter.)

Presenter: **How much do you think he'd get if he sold his wife and kids into slavery and even sold himself?**

(The Forgiven Servant hands to the king a small stack of money. The king takes the short stack of money and shakes his head in disappointment.)

King Sorry, Bud. This is pretty far short. I figure you will have to be in prison about 3,000,263 days making license plates to be able to pay this off.

(The presenter can prompt some "wailing and complaining" from the wife, kids and Forgiven Servant.)

Presenter: **Then the servant fell at his master's feet and said...**

Servant: Please, please, please! Be patient with me, and I will repay everything!

(Prompted by the presenter, the Forgiven Servant, his wife, and children continue to wail and groan.)

Presenter: The king felt sorry for his servant.

King: *(Says to himself.)* Ah, poor guy. Well, it's only a couple million dollars. Maybe he's worth it. Yes, I think he is. Sure, he might have swindled the money from me but, after all, he's one of my servants. And he is a person. Yeah, I guess he is worth it.

Servant & Family: *(Groveling.)* Yes, yes, yes!

Presenter: So the master felt sorry for his servant, freed him, and canceled his debt.

Servant & Family: *(Jump up and shout.)* Yes! We're free! We're outta here!

King: Whew! That cost me a lot, but he is worth it. I just hope he remembers what I have done for him so he really can be free.

(Characters exit.)

Presenter: Now the forgiven servant went away and found another servant who owed *him* money.

(This scene looks much like the earlier scene with the introduction of the king.)

Forgiven Servant: *(Enters.)* I'm free! I'm a free man! I'm rich, rich, rich because I've been forgiven millions, millions, and millions. Isn't that good, good, good, good? I've been forgiven all those IOUs. *(Throws the IOUs in the air. Then reaches into his pocket and finds another IOU and reads it.)* What's this? Someone owes me money? Well, let's just see.

Presenter: The forgiven servant found the other servant who owed him money.

Forgiven Servant: Bring him in here!

(Other servant enters.)

Forgiven Servant: Let's just see how much you owe me. Bring in the amount of money you owe.

(Other servant brings in one of the garbage bags completely deflated with one dollar in it. It is pulled out and displayed with great pride.)

Forgiven Servant: How do you like that? Look at the money you owe me. It's time to pay up, buddy.

Presenter: But the servant could not pay him. So the other servant begged him. "Please, please, please. Give me until Friday.

Other Servant: *(Prompted to repeat.)* Please, please, please. Give me until Friday.

Forgiven Servant: Friday? I want my money now. Cough it up.

Other Servant: I'm sorry, but I don't have it. Please, please, please.

Presenter: At that the rich servant grabbed his fellow servant and began to choke him.

Forgiven Servant: *(Pretends to choke the other servant.)* Pay up, you bum. Pay what you owe.

Presenter: The other servant fell down at his feet and begged him.

Other Servant: *(Groveling.)* Please, please, please. Give me until Friday.

Presenter: The forgiven servant refused to forgive. Instead, he turned away and had the other servant put into prison until he would repay what he owed.

(Presenter drags him away.)

Other Servant: Please, please, please. Give me until Friday.

Presenter: Then more servants who worked with him saw what had happened and felt very sad. I think I see some of the other servants here in the audience. What do you have to say about this?

Three Kids from Audience read separately:

- **That's a rip-off. It's not fair.**
- **Did you see that? What a bully! I can't believe it.**
- **Someone ought to tell on him. What a jerk!**

Presenter: They went and told their master the whole story.

Kids from Audience: *(Exit.)*

- **What a jerk!**
- **Bully!**
- **We're telling on him.**

Presenter: **Then the king sent for him and said to him:**

King: *(Enters) You evil servant! I canceled your entire debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you have treated the other servant as mercifully as I treated you? (Grabs the forgiven servant by his ear and scolds him. They move to the center. The Forgiven Servant kneels down in remorse. Without a word the King points to offstage where the servant will be sent. The silence emphasizes the Presenter's next line.)*

Presenter: **His master was so angry that he handed him over to the torturers until he would repay everything that he owed.**

(The presenter takes the servant off in silence. The king exits in the opposite direction.)

Presenter: **That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if each of you does not sincerely forgive others.**

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- white sheet that can be ruined with mud
- five six-inch hearts cut from a second white sheet. Pin these hearts to the first white sheet.
- tray with an inch or two of dirt
- water to make the dirt into mud
- several sponge balls that can be rolled into the mud
- towels to clean hands

The Power of the Cross:

- change bag with a clean white heart (like those pinned to the sheet) hidden inside (Change bags are available through FishNet Magic at www.fishnetmagic.com.)

Learning Game:

- many small balls, such as tennis balls
- bucket for each team of eight to ten children
- masking tape to mark starting and finish lines for relay race

Bible Presentation:

- costumes:
 - ☐ royal robe (king)
 - ☐ four pretty nice robes (Forgiven Servant, his wife, and children)
 - ☐ ragged robe (Other Servant)
 - ☐ various robes (More Servants)
 - ☐ Bible costume (Peter)
 - ☐ helmets and swords (Guards)
- stacks of paper money made from stacks of cut paper banded and placed in a box. The top and bottom papers should be marked \$500.
- five to six garbage bags stacked full of boxes to give the illusion of bags full of money. Something fairly heavy should be placed in each of these bags to make the bag heavy.
- garbage bag with one pretend one-dollar bill in it.
- stack of money
- stack of IOUs
- one loose IOU
- notebook or bank ledger

The capes can be as simple as sheets or blankets or as elaborate as velvet for the king. They help make a distinction between the servants and the king.

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