

## God Forgives

### Remember Verse

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

## LESSON OVERVIEW

**EXPLORE//**  
10 minutes




Nearly Impossible

Option 1

(for younger kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Balloons (4–5) 
- Drinking straws (1 per child)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Stopwatch or timer

Option 2

(for younger kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Jump ropes (at least 1 for every 3–4 children)
- Stopwatch or timer

Option 3 (for younger or older kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Nearly Impossible image\*
- Pencils or pens
- Paper (1 sheet per child)

Option 4

(for older kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Playing cards (4–5 decks)
- Stopwatch or timer

Option 5

(for older kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Disposable cups (20–30)

**DISCOVER//**  
30 minutes



Traditions and Remember Verse

### SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image\*
- Remember Verse animation\*
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

Connect Activity:

So Many Pieces

### SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image\*
- Connect Activity image\*
- Boxes or bins (4, large, all same size)
- Packing peanuts (enough to fill 2 boxes)

The Big God Story

### SUPPLIES

- Timeline image\*
- Timeline animation\*
- Peter and Jesus image\*
- Bibles
- Cell phone

Worship as Response

### SUPPLIES

- Worship music: "Forgiven," TruWorship *Radio the World*
- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pens, pencils, or colored

pencils

**RESPOND//**  
15 minutes



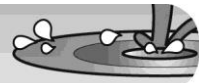
Reflect

God Teaches Us How to Forgive

### SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (7 sheets)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Colored pencils or markers

**BLESS//**  
5 minutes



### SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards\*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 11\*
- Bible

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:

**Customizable copy of Lesson 10 2018–19 Scope and Sequence TruStory How It Works document**

**Small Group Enhancements**

**At Home Weekly: Lesson 10**

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

# LEADER PREP

*Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.*

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## **Inspire** *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

I'd spent countless hours praying, organizing, and preparing for the children's annual church performance. The performance included live animals, open flames, and 200 small children. On the morning of the show, things fell into place. The animals arrived on time. Ample volunteers emerged to help. I even ushered 45 preschoolers into the sanctuary without any tears—including none of my own.

Right before the doors opened for the children to enter, a father walked up to me, angry because his child didn't have speaking lines in the performance. He shouted at me in front the volunteers, children, and parents. I was mortified. The blood drained from my face, my mouth went dry, and my mind went blank just as the cue came to start the show. The performance was a blur as I stumbled through everything. I felt devastated, even though no one and nothing caught fire. I'd known the father for years, taught his children, and visited his family's home. I felt grieved that he thought I'd purposefully excluded his child.

The family left the church that Sunday, and I haven't seen them since. Because there was no closure to the misunderstanding, it left me picking up the pieces of my shattered pride. Sometimes I still feel twinges of resentment when I think of the father. Yet through this incident, God revealed that my unwillingness to forgive is a way of building walls of self-protection. When I offered forgiveness instead, I was forced to open my heart and acknowledge my hurt. Then God was able to come in and heal. God forgives. And forgiveness brings healing.

*Stacy White*  
The Gathering

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## **Equip** *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

Rabbinic tradition held that a person needed to forgive someone three times. In Luke 17:4, Jesus said that if someone sins against you seven times, you should continue to forgive them. In Matthew 18:21, Peter was perhaps trying to clarify Jesus' teaching when he asked if seven was the limit of forgiveness. In response, Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). Only a few versions of the Bible translate Matthew 18:22 as "seventy-seven times," including the commonly used New International Version, but another version states "seventy times seven," as found in other translations such as the New American Standard Bible and the New Living Translation. Jesus told the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate that we shouldn't limit the number of times we need to forgive others.

To understand the magnitude of the unmerciful servant's debt to the king, Jesus used a term denoting the largest number used in the first century. The Greek term is *murion*, often translated as "myriad," which means 10,000. And when the Bible describes the number of angels that exist, it uses the phrase "myriad upon myriad"—which means an incalculable number. But if you tried to relate it to today's economy, it would equate to somewhere between three billion and six billion dollars, depending upon how you calculate a day's wage. (The man owed the king 10,000 talents, and a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages.)

Using this illustration, Jesus showed us there is no comparison between what is owed to us and what we have been forgiven. God forgives, and His forgiveness drives and motivates us to forgive others—just as we have been forgiven.

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## **Support** *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

One of the most tangible ways we can observe God's power is through the simple act of forgiveness. When God works

in us to forgive those who don't deserve it—or to humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness from those we've wronged—a miraculous thing happens: He heals our broken hearts. Only God can offer true healing and give us what we need to forgive others. Take some time to ask God to reveal the parts of your heart that still need to be healed. Whom in your life do you need to forgive? Whom have you wronged? From whom do you need to ask forgiveness? Come to God with these questions and invite Him to work His miraculous gift of forgiveness. Praise God who not only instructs us to forgive but also gives us the power of forgiveness through His Holy Spirit.

## SMALL GROUP

## SECTION

### EXPLORE//10 minutes




*Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.*

### Nearly Impossible

Jesus told the parable of the unmerciful servant to teach His disciples—and us—about forgiveness. The unmerciful servant had an impossible debt to repay, but the king forgave it anyway! To get your kids thinking about the parable, challenge them to do some nearly impossible tasks.

### Option 1 (for younger kids)

#### SUPPLIES

- Balloons (4–5) 
- Drinking straws (1 per child)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Stopwatch or timer

#### SET UP

Stick two long pieces of masking tape to the floor about 30 feet apart. Blow up the balloons and place them along one of the lines. Set the timer or stopwatch for 25 seconds.

#### RELATE

One at a time, have each child take a new straw and use it to try to blow one balloon from one tape line to the other and back again. Let the kids know they have 25 seconds to blow three balloons there and back (only blowing one balloon at a time). After you think the kids have had enough time to attempt this activity, let them know that it would actually be impossible to complete this task perfectly as instructed. Tell them the purpose of this activity is to attempt something impossible, just like it would have been impossible for the servant in the parable to ever repay his debt.

### Option 2 (for younger kids)

#### SUPPLIES

- Jump ropes (at least 1 for every 3–4 children)
- Stopwatch or timer

#### SET UP

Set the timer to 15 seconds.

#### RELATE

Invite the kids to jump rope 25 times within 15 seconds.

### Option 3 (for younger or older kids)

#### SUPPLIES

- Nearly Impossible image (see Resources)
- Pencils or pens
- Paper (1 sheet per child)

### SET UP

Print the Nearly Impossible image.

### RELATE

Have each child take a paper and a pencil or pen. Encourage the kids to copy the image onto their own papers. Tell them they must copy it exactly so their drawings look exactly like the image.

After you think the kids have had enough time to attempt this activity, let them know that it would actually be impossible to complete this task perfectly as instructed. Tell them the purpose of this activity is to attempt something impossible, just like it would have been impossible for the servant in the parable to ever repay his debt.

## Option 4 (for older kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Playing cards (4–5 decks)
- Stopwatch or timer

### SET UP

Set the timer or stopwatch to 45 seconds.

### RELATE

Encourage the kids to build a card tower at least 20 cards high within 45 seconds.

## Option 5 (for older kids)

### SUPPLIES

Disposable cups (20–30)

### RELATE

Tell the kids to stack all the cups in a pyramid without any of the cups falling.

**LARGE GROUP**

**SECTION**

**DISCOVER//** 30 minutes



*Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.*

## Traditions and Remember Verse

### SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

### RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

## Connect

### QUESTION

**If you could buy anything in the world, what would it be?**

## Activity: So Many Pieces

### SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image (see Resources)
- Connect Activity image (see Resources)
- Boxes or bins (4, large, all same size)
- Packing peanuts (enough to fill 2 boxes)

### SET UP

Fill two of the boxes or bins with packing peanuts. Place these boxes or bins on one side of the room and the two empty boxes or bins on the other side of the room.

### RELATE

Organize the kids into two teams. Have each team line up on one side of the room next to a box filled with packing peanuts. On your signal, the first person in each line should grab a handful of peanuts, race to the other side of the room, drop the peanuts in the empty box, and run back to his team. Then the next person gets to go. The kids should try not to drop any packing peanuts, but if they do, they must leave them on the ground. The team that empties its box first while dropping the fewest peanuts wins.

## The Big God Story

**Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21–35**

**Storytelling Technique: Props**

**God Forgives**

### SUPPLIES

- Timeline image (see Resources)
- Timeline animation (see Resources)
- Peter and Jesus image (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Cell phone

### SET UP

Set the cell phone next to you onstage or put it in your pocket.

### RELATE

**Welcome, everyone! I'm so excited to see you today.** Check cell phone. **Oh, excuse me. I just got a text message. I normally don't check my phone during The Big God Story, but I'm having a problem with a good friend of mine. Let's see what she said.** Pretend to read a text message aloud. **"I totally understand. I'm so sorry for what I did. Will you please forgive me?"**

**My friend and I got into an argument the other day, and what she said really hurt my feelings. I can't believe she's asking for my forgiveness. I've been so upset. I don't like to fight with my friends. Do you ever feel that way?** Invite responses. **What she did really wasn't very nice. Every time I think about it, I get angry all over again. She really hurt me. What do you think I should do? Should I forgive her?** Interact with responses. **Hmm ... those are great thoughts.**

**You're right. I really should forgive my friend. But sometimes forgiving someone is really hard. Why do you think it's so hard to forgive?** Encourage kids to answer. **Many times we feel hurt by something someone did, and the pain we feel can make it hard to forgive. But God is good! He forgives us, and He can heal us and give us what we need to forgive others.**

**Today we're going to hear a parable Jesus told His disciples. Before we hear more, let's ask God to teach us.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

**Oh, look! I just got another text from my friend.** Pretend to read text message. **“I hope you can forgive me. Maybe read Matthew 18:21–35?”** Well, now I’m curious. **Let’s find out what it says!** Invite children to open their Bibles and follow along as you read Matthew 18:21–22. **Seventy-seven times? That’s a lot of forgiving!**

*Tech: Cue Peter and Jesus image.* **Peter was one of Jesus’ followers. In Peter’s day, religious leaders taught that people only had to forgive someone three times. So Peter might have thought he was being generous by offering to forgive someone seven times. But Jesus was helping Peter understand a new way to show forgiveness. Seventy-seven times! Well, with a number that high you might as well just forgive the person an unlimited number of times!**

**Let’s see what happened next.** Encourage children to follow along as you read Matthew 18:23–27. **This man owed the king lots and lots of money—more money than he could ever pay back. The king said to the servant (point in front of you and speak in a booming voice), “Because you owe me so much money, you and your family will be sold as slaves.” The servant replied (get down on your knees and plead), “Please, have patience! I will repay you everything!”** Stand up. **The king decided to have compassion on the man. Instead of selling the man into slavery, the king decided to forgive his debt! The king told the servant he didn’t owe him anything and let him go.** Look at phone. **I just got another text.** Pretend to read text message. **“God forgives.”** Have children say, “God forgives” aloud with you. **Yeah! Just like this king, who forgave a huge debt, God forgives our sins.**

**That man must have been so excited! What do you think happened next?** Read Matthew 18:28–30 aloud as kids follow along. **Another servant owed a lot of money to the servant who’d just left the king. The forgiven servant approached the man and grabbed him. Yell the next line. “You owe me lots and lots of money. Pay me back ... now!” The other servant was scared.** Get on your knees and look scared. **“Please, have patience! I will pay you back!”** Stand up. **The man who’d been forgiven by the king continued to demand his money. Yell again. “No! You must go to jail!”**

Act angry. **How could he? He refused to forgive the debt of the other servant, but his debt had just been forgiven!** Read Matthew 18:31–34 aloud. **When the king heard about this, he got very angry. And he took that man who didn’t forgive and threw him into jail.** Have children say, “God forgives” aloud with you.

**Who can help us understand what forgiveness means? Does forgiveness mean just saying, “I forgive you,” or is it something more?** Invite responses. **Good thoughts. Real forgiveness happens when you really mean what you’re saying when you tell someone “I’m sorry.”** It means forgiving from your heart, just like Jesus said in the parable.

**Jesus knows forgiving someone isn’t easy. When we’ve been hurt by someone, we can’t forgive on our own. We need God to heal the hurt in our hearts first so we can forgive others. We need mercy and compassion to forgive, and God can give this to us. He has mercy on us and forgives us.**

**Jesus gave us the ultimate example of how to forgive when He died for us. He had mercy on us and died for our sins so we could be forgiven for everything we’ve ever done wrong. Now we can have a healed relationship with God, and we get to be with God forever! He’s forgiven us, and that means He calls us to forgive others as well.** Share a story about a time God helped you forgive someone.

**I guess it’s pretty clear, then, what I should tell my friend. What do you think I should do?** Interact with responses. **You’re right. God forgave me so much more than I could ever repay.** Pretend to type on the phone. **“I forgive you.”**

**I’m thankful God showed me the right thing to do! Friends, God can heal the hurt we experience and give us His mercy and compassion so we can forgive others from our hearts.**

## Worship as Response

This time allows kids to respond to God through worship. Make plans for your worship time, but prepare yourself and your team to hold them loosely if the Holy Spirit leads the group in a different direction.

### SUPPLIES

- Worship music: “Forgiven,” TruWorship *Radio the World*
- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pens, pencils, or colored pencils

### RELATE

**Because God’s forgiven us so graciously, He wants us to forgive others as well. And God gives us the ability to forgive others through the power of the Holy Spirit. God knows that forgiving another person brings healing for**

both people involved. In God's power, both you and the person whom you need to forgive (or the person who needs to forgive you) get the ability to experience a loving relationship instead of a difficult, painful, or strained relationship. Pretty amazing!

Today let's take some time to talk with God. Is there someone you need to forgive? What about someone whom you need to ask to forgive you? Because of what God has done for you, how do you want to respond to Him? Maybe you want to write someone a letter of apology, asking for her forgiveness. Maybe you want to tell someone you forgive him. Or maybe you simply want to thank God for forgiving you.

*Tech: Cue music.* Give the kids time to talk with God and to ask Him to give them the strength to forgive others. They might write a letter to God using the supplies or just sit quietly with Him during this response time. Let your kids know that if they need to talk to someone or receive prayer, they can go to one of the leaders.

## SMALL GROUP

## SECTION

**RESPOND**//15 minutes

*Children respond to what the Holy Spirit is teaching them as they reflect on the day's portion of The Big God Story, engage in relationship, and create meaningful pieces of art individually or together.*

### Reflect: God Forgives

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- **How did the king show mercy to his servant?** Matthew 18:27
- **What did that servant do when the other servant couldn't pay him back?** Matthew 18:30
- **What happened to the unmerciful servant?** Matthew 18:32–34
- **How often does Jesus want us to forgive?** Matthew 18:22
- **How has God shown you forgiveness?**
- **How can you show forgiveness to others?**

#### QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

- **How did the king show mercy to his servant?** Matthew 18:27
- **What did that servant do when the other servant couldn't pay him back?** Matthew 18:30
- **What did Jesus say happened to the unmerciful servant as a result of his actions?** Matthew 18:32–34
- **How often does Jesus want us to forgive?** Matthew 18:22
- **What do you think Jesus is telling us about forgiveness?**
- **How has God shown you forgiveness?**
- **How can you show forgiveness to others?**

### God Teaches Us How to Forgive

Children will decorate large, blank letters with words or phrases that help them to remember to forgive.

#### SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (7 sheets)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Colored pencils or markers

## PREPARE AHEAD

Forgiveness can be a difficult subject. Children experience different levels and layers of forgiveness. Assumed forgiveness involves things such as arguments with siblings or disagreements on the playground. And the various wrongs committed against children in today's world require healing and forgiveness only God can bring. During the discussion time that follows your time together in God's Word, be mindful of and sensitive to the conversations children may initiate. Consider bringing in one or two volunteers who can be available to facilitate the group discussion to allow the leader to talk one-on-one with kids as needed.

## SET UP

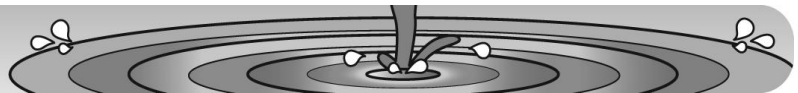
Use the construction paper and scissors to cut out large letters to spell "FORGIVE," with one letter on each paper.

## RELATE

**Asking for forgiveness can be really hard. Sometimes giving forgiveness can be even harder.** Share about a time when you had to ask God for forgiveness or a time you had to ask for forgiveness from a friend or family member. You might also share a time you had to forgive someone. Share with the kids how you felt before and after. **Is there someone you need to show love to? Since God has forgiven you, is there someone you need to forgive? In light of what God has done for you, how do you want to respond?**

Next, invite the children to color the letters of "FORGIVE" any way they please using designs, different colors, or even words or phrases that help them to remember to forgive, such as "Love," "I'm sorry," "It's okay," etc. When they're done, tape the edges of the letters together to create the finished word product.

**BLESS**//5 minutes



*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

## SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 11 (see Resources)
- Bible

## RELATE

Invite the children to cross their arms and stand back-to-back with a partner. Then, one pair at a time, have each child turn to face her partner and say, "May you know God forgives." Have the kids change partners and say the same line. Then, open a Bible and read Ephesians 4:32:

**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

Now encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up, as you read the following blessing over them.

**May you know God's forgiveness this week. May you forgive others as He has forgiven you.**

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.