

JESUS AND FORGIVENESS

Lesson 1: Forgiveness Starts With Jesus

What we want students to learn: That the forgiveness we are to extend to others comes from the forgiveness that originates in Christ.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To be more aware of how they see the concept of forgiveness at work in their lives.

Scripture Focus: Mark 2:1-12

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 1:21, Luke 23:34

Overview: No study of forgiveness is complete without first laying the foundation for how we are to approach the concept of forgiveness. Of course, the foundation of forgiveness is found in Christ. Your students will see in this lesson that Jesus alone is able to forgive sins, and that He willingly does so as part of His plan to redeem all humankind. This lesson will serve as a foundational one, setting up the other lessons in this series.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Forgiveness* Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “*Jesus And Forgiveness* Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-forgiveness-teacher-prep-videos>

Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

The Details

Mark

- **Author:** The Gospel of Mark was written by its namesake. Mark, also known as John Mark, is believed to have received most of his information for his Gospel from Peter's firsthand accounts.
- **Time frame:** Mark is thought to have written his Gospel in the mid 50's AD.
- **Purpose:** Mark was writing primarily for a non-Jewish audience. His Gospel explains Jewish customs to non-Jews in an effort to get them to see the big picture of Jesus' identity.

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The Setting

A lot happens early on in the chapters preceding Mark 2. Jesus has been baptized and led into the wilderness. He's called His disciples, driven out some evil spirits, and healed a bunch of folks. This sets up the very interesting encounter with the paralytic and the Pharisees in Mark 2.

The Main Point

You'll use the story of Jesus and the paralytic, in addition to a couple of supporting verses, to simply remind students that all this talk of forgiveness would be nothing without Jesus. Forgiveness starts with Christ. True forgiveness is born in Jesus and His plan. Without Christ, there would be no true understanding of forgiveness, because in Jesus, we see perfect mercy on display. This is the brand of forgiveness you'll be challenging your students to embrace in the upcoming lessons.

Forgiveness is bound up in who Jesus is. This is why He so naturally tells the paralytic that he is forgiven. Jesus was not ignoring the man's condition. To the contrary, He was seeing the most pressing condition the man had: a soul encumbered by unpaid sin-debt. Jesus rightly took care of the man's most dire need. But in response to those who thought His words were heretical, Jesus showed His power by healing the man. The healing of His physical needs, an amazing feat, served to validate Jesus' identity and thus His ability to forgive sins. Again, you'll help student see that the forgiveness that Christ offered to the world is the foundation for the forgiveness we offer to others.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about the idea of forgiveness and where they see it at work in the world around them.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to be starting a four week look at the concept of forgiveness. To kick off this first lesson, you're going to engage in a brief discussion about forgiveness and where they encounter it in their worlds.

Start by asking something similar to the following:

- **When you think about forgiveness, what do you think about?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What is so hard about forgiveness? In other words, why are we oftentimes slow to forgive people who have wronged us somehow?**
 - Answers will vary. You might want to help students see that for most people, it's not easy to surrender their right to be upset, or angry, or offended. It can feel good (in a sort of twisted way) or even powerful to hold a grudge. Surrendering that may feel like we're giving up too much.
- **Have you ever had to ask forgiveness from someone? How did it feel when you were doing it? How did it feel months later?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, after you've allowed students to discuss this for a moment, ask something similar to the following:

- **You know, we actually see forgiveness come up in places other than relationships. Have you ever heard of someone, or some entity forgiving a debt?**

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- o Answer: Explain to students that in rare occasions, a bank or lending agency will forgive a debt. It's most common for countries to forgive debts incurred by other countries who may have experienced economic crisis, or something similar.
- **How is forgiving a debt owed and forgiving something that someone has done wrong to you similar?**
 - o Answer: In both cases, there is a legitimate "wrong" that was incurred. In both cases, there is one party who failed to do the right thing. And in both cases, the wronged party reaches out and forgives, or wipes away, the "wrong."

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by explaining to your students that in today's lesson, you'll see how forgiveness flows from who Jesus is. Say something like:

- **We can't really talk about forgiveness without talking about how Jesus is the most perfect model of forgiveness, and that only HE has the power to forgive. He offers us His amazing mercy in spite of our continuous tendency to sin. He is all about forgiving us, as we will see in this lesson. Let's jump in and see what we can learn about Jesus and forgiveness.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that the forgiveness we are to extend to others comes from the forgiveness that originates in Christ.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, have your students turn to Mark chapter 2. While they are finding the passage, take a moment to provide some context for the passage you'll be studying using the Bible Background. When students have found Mark 2, read or have a student read verses 1-4. When they've finished, lead students in a brief discussion by asking something similar to the following:

- **Just to make sure we're all on the same page with what's going on, someone quickly summarize the scene that was just depicted.**
- **What does Mark mean when he says the man was a "paralytic"?**
 - o Answer: The man was probably paralyzed in some capacity, whether it was full paralysis or partial paralysis.
- **What happened on the roof?**
 - o Answer: Explain to students that a typical house in this time period and region would have had a flat roof with outside stairs to access it. The roof was made of a combination of wooden beams, possibly tile, and some mixture of compacted dirt and thatch. So, digging it up would have been relatively easy.
- **What were the friends hoping to accomplish? Why was this significant based on what Jesus was doing?**
 - o Answer: It appears like the friends wanted their friend to be healed by Jesus. This is interesting because at the moment, Jesus is not healing anyone. He is preaching.

THEN, now that the stage is set, read or have a student read verse 5-7. Then, ask:

- **How do you think the man and his friends responded to Jesus' words here? Why were His words unexpected?**
 - o Answers will vary. Lead students to see that we're of course speculating and that we can't know exactly what the men are thinking. But since they apparently had in mind that Jesus would heal their friend, Jesus' words had to have caught them off guard. And keep in mind, Jesus was early in His ministry. Few people would have believed He had the power or authority to forgive sins.
- **This sentence is actually the heart of the passage. Why was Jesus so bold to make this comment?**
 - o Answer: Only God can forgive sins. By saying He could forgive the man, Jesus was saying He was God.
- **What is the issue the "teachers of the Law" had?**
 - o Answer: They didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God. Because of this, they viewed Jesus' comment as blasphemous.

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Explain that the teachers of the Law's objection sets the table for an awesome moment in which Jesus makes a huge statement about His identity and His authority. Read or have a student read 8-12. Then, lead students in the following discussion. Ask:

- **How does Jesus' ability to heal the man validate His authority to forgive sins?**
 - Answer: Jesus ties the two together. He basically says, "You think forgiving sins is hard? Well, if I can do something as amazing as healing this guy, I can forgive his sins, as well."
- **What does this account say about how Jesus views the priority of our needs? What need did Jesus meet first in the man?**
 - Answer: He didn't meet the physical need first. Jesus knew that the man's most pressing need was his spiritual need.
- **What was the man's spiritual need? Why was that the greater need?**
 - Answer: We know that our sins earn us eternal separation from God, and that on our own, we're helpless to account for our sins. Jesus knew that He alone could forgive our sins and make peace between God and us.

NEXT, explain to students that offering forgiveness for sins is a huge part of Jesus' identity. You could even say that this was His primary reason for coming to earth in the first place. If you want, read the following verse to back this point up:

- **She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. – Matthew 1:21**

FINALLY, help students see that even at the end of His life, when He had been unjustly tried, convicted, abused, and ultimately executed, some of Jesus' final words show how committed He was to the mission of forgiveness. Say:

- **Hanging on the cross, Jesus cried out to God and said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Jesus is the source of forgiveness. He is the most perfect picture of forgiveness we know of. And as we will learn over the next few lessons, we are called to be people who give the same kind of forgiveness Jesus has extended to us. As we move forward we're going to learn a lot. But let's make sure we remember this: the forgiveness we are to extend to others comes from the forgiveness that originates in Christ.**

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students be more aware of how they see the concept of forgiveness at work in their lives.
- **Set-Up:** Provide enough copies of the "Last Word Activity Sheet" (Located in your Lesson 1 folder) so that each of your students can have one. Provide a pen or a marker for each student.

FIRST, remind students that this lesson is sort of a foundational lesson that's designed to kick off your four-week study of forgiveness. As such, you really just want to challenge them to be aware of the forgiveness that's going on all around them. You'll dig a little deeper into the personal applications of forgiveness in the next three lessons. But for now, just get students thinking about how they extend and have been extended forgiveness in their lives.

NEXT, draw students' attention to the "Last Word Activity Sheet." Explain that the four silhouettes are going to help them think about the concept of forgiveness. Instruct them to think over the last few weeks, months, and maybe even years. Have them think about times they have extended forgiveness to others, and times where they have had forgiveness extended to them. For each instance they can remember a time when they have forgiven someone else, have them draw a "frowny face" on a silhouette. For each time they can remember being forgiven, have them draw a "smiley face" on the silhouette. Allow them a few minutes to do this.

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THEN, have students share their mix of “smiley” and “frowny” faces. Ask them to call out how many of each they have. When they’ve finished, lead them in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Why do you think I asked you to draw a “frowny face” on the faces that represented you forgiving someone else?**
 - o Answer: Because in order to forgive someone, we have to have been wronged by him or her. And being wronged hurts. But, as we’ll learn in the next few weeks, we’re called to forgive others. And when we forgive others, we make a positive out of a negative.
- **Why do you think I asked you to draw a “smiley face” on the faces that represented you being forgiven by someone else?**
 - o Answer: When someone forgives us, it means we have wronged him or her. And to be forgiven of a mistake is a wonderful thing. Forgiveness can repair a relationship like nothing else. It brings a smile to our faces.

FINALLY, close by saying something like the following:

- **This activity was just a simple way to get you thinking about where you see forgiveness in your life. As you go throughout your week, I want you to be looking for chances you have to extend forgiveness, and have it extended to you. Keep an eye out for places you see forgiveness. And be ready to go a little deeper on this topic in our next lesson.**

If no one has any questions or observations, close in prayer.

- **Don’t forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you’re printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you’re texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions and with being mindful of the choices they make during the week.**

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn’t work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.