

## SHOULD I FORGIVE?

All Activity Sheets

### KEY WORDS

MERCY RIGHTEOUSNESS HAPPINESS FORGIVENESS REVENGE

### BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 5:7; 18:21-35.

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

To learn that happiness is found through forgiveness and mercy.

### MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV\*).

### PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

When people hurt us, our natural reaction may be to get revenge. This happens when resentment and bitterness linger in the heart, generating serious emotional and spiritual problems.

Some parents who, on the pretext of helping their children mature and be respected, teach them how to fight and defend themselves. However, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught something completely different.

Forgiveness and mercy are two concepts that are difficult to understand for most people, but for those of us who walk in the light of Christ, they must be goals to follow.

Preadolescents must learn to forgive those who hurt them. Perhaps many of them receive insults, even abuse, and do not understand why they should forgive the one who hurts them. Jesus’ teaching on how to show mercy is a very different concept from what preadolescents see around them. But they must understand that only through the grace of God can we be merciful.

### BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Matthew 5:7 and 18:21-35. It is important to understand that mercy is not synonymous with pity. Pity is the emotional response to a situation that causes sadness, but that does not prompt action. Mercy includes not only recognizing the need, but accepting the responsibility to do something without expecting reward. Mercy is active, not passive. Even when we do not deserve mercy, God gives it to us without needing to do something in return.

In antiquity, the Romans did not practice mercy, because they believed that each one should receive what he deserved. They abhorred every sign of pity, compassion and weakness, considering that the merciful were weak. The Pharisees also had no mercy on the one who violated the rules, stating that suffering was the just punishment for sins. Therefore, Jesus' call to be merciful was revolutionary and challenging.

In the parable of this lesson, the king had mercy on his servant and forgave him a debt that was so big that the servant had no way of paying for it. However, the servant did not want to forgive his fellow servant a much smaller debt.

The servant represents the selfish person who always expects to receive consideration and special treatment, but refuses to treat others like that.

Jesus wanted to teach Peter, and us today, this lesson: The children of God must forgive and be merciful without expecting anything in return.

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

### Anonymous letters

After welcoming your students, and singing some songs of praise, we suggest that you start the lesson by reviewing the memory verse. If you used the "Put the vowels in their place" option in the last lesson, you will need those letters again for this activity. Again ask each student to put the letter on the board, while the group repeats the memory verse. When all the letters are attached, repeat the verse together.

## TEACH THE LESSON

Read the study passage (Matthew 18:15-35) in advance, and give it to your students in your own words. Another option is to read the passage to the class using a paraphrase of the Bible to make it easier to understand.

Allow time for the group to ask questions or express their doubts, and you can respond in light of the Word of God.

## CONNECT THE LESSON

### Should I forgive?

Ask students to work in pairs to reflect on and answer the following four questions.

What is forgiveness?

Who needs to be forgiven?

Why is it hard to forgive others?

What makes you feel better: forgiveness or revenge?

Then, ask a volunteer to look up Matthew 5:1-12 and read it aloud. Tell the group: "The blessedness that we will study today tells us that we are blessed (we receive the approval of God, and the peace and happiness that comes with it) when we are merciful and forgive the people who have wronged us."

Read these verses about forgiveness with the group:

Matthew 6:14-15

Mark 11:25

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13.

## **PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE**

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Prepare a large card in the shape of a loaf of bread. In large letters, write the memory verse on the card/ bread. Read it aloud several times. Ask the children to form a circle and pass the bread from hand to hand while you silently count to ten. When you say "stop!" the child with the bread must say the memory verse. Continue the game until everyone has participated.

## **WRAP-UP**

### **Pray**

Choose a volunteer to lead in a closing prayer, asking the Lord to help you all forgive and be merciful to one another.

### **Encourage**

Allow time for everyone to put the room in order before saying goodbye. Encourage them to practice the Bible teachings during the week.

### **Invite**

Remind the group that the next session will be the last on the Beatitudes, and that it is very important that no one miss it. Encourage them to welcome visitors.