

Study Series: When We Say Father

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 Lesson Title: “The Freedom of Forgiveness” (pp. 118-128)

Session 10

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The main point of this lesson is: Forgiveness is costly but necessary for a follower of Jesus.

Focus on this goal: To help adults develop the habit of forgiveness

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 6:12

Before the Session

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Guide adults** to brainstorm strategies for breaking a negative, or developing a positive, habit. (**Examples:** identify unhealthy patterns or triggers, set goals, ask for support, consider benefits of the habit, practice daily.)

**Draw attention** to this session’s goal (p. 129).

**Ask:** Why might forgiveness be a difficult habit to develop? Why is it necessary?

**Declare:** If we want to live a life of freedom, we must learn to live a life of forgiveness.

Step 2. Day 1 – The Pardon of the Prayer

**Read** the first Day One paragraph (p. 118).

**Analyze** the difference between being guilty and feeling guilty; then determine how both prevent people from living free.

**Explore** how bitterness prevents people from living free.

**Ask:** What did Jesus teach us to pray that deals with our deep wounds of guilt and bitterness?

**Draw attention** to Matthew 6:12 printed at the beginning of Day One (p. 118).

**Consider** why “debts” is a good word to use when praying about forgiveness.

**Ask:** Is forgiveness free? Explain.

**Invite responses** to Day One, activity 2 (p. 119).

**Encourage** adults to imagine every sin they’ve ever committed recorded on paper, then visualize God nailing that paper to the cross through Jesus’ body and stamping it Paid in Full.

Step 3. Day 2 – The Compelling Reasons for Forgiveness, Part 1

**Ask:** How are we to respond to the sin debt others owe us?

**State** when we struggle to develop a habit, it helps to remember why we want to develop that habit. Days Two and Three examine compelling reasons to develop the habit of forgiveness.

**Use** the first section of Day Two and activity 1 (p. 120) to explore the “Grace Factor.”

**Declare** the “Guilt Factor” (pp. 120-121) is another compelling reason.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 6:14-15.

**Request** adults clench their fists.

**Discuss** how fists illustrate our hearts when we hold on to resentment.

**Ask rhetorically:** Can God’s forgiveness enter our hearts when they’re clenched tight with unforgiveness?

 **Request** adults open their hands.

**State:** When we live open-handed and forgive others, our hearts are open to receive God’s forgiveness.

Step 4. Day 3 - The Compelling Reasons for Forgiveness, Part 2

**Ask** who suffers the “Grief Factor” (p. 121-123) when we don’t forgive and why.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:31.

**Use** Day Three remarks and activity 1 (p. 122) to **trace** how each negative habit in this verse leads to the next.

**Request** adults consult the bulleted points in Day Three (p. 124) and identify what happens when believers don’t forgive one another.

**Guide** the group to draw from Ephesians 4:32 positive habits that must replace the negative habits of 4:31.

**Consider** what we gain when we choose to live by Ephesians 4:32.

**Invite** volunteers to read Matthew 5:23-24 and 18:15.

**Determine** what these verses reveal about God’s priorities.

Step 5. Day 4 – The Costly Requirements of Forgiveness

**Ask:** If forgiveness is so beneficial, why do we find it so hard to forgive?

**Assert** there are costly requirements to forgiveness.

**Explore** what it means to forgive freely.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 18:21-22.

**Ask:** What was Jesus really teaching about forgiveness?

**Use** Day Four remarks to **analyze** why it is costly to forgive fully (p. 125).

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 2 (p. 126).

**Evaluate** what it means for God to not remember our sins.

**Ask:** Is it possible for us to “forgive and forget?” Explain. How can we “forgive finally” even if we can’t forget?

**Consider** what it means to forgive forcefully (p. 126).

**Point out** we use strategies to develop habits because it’s almost impossible to break or start a habit by willpower alone.

**Ask:** Do you think it’s possible to develop the habit of forgiveness by sheer willpower? Explain.

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 3 (p. 126).

Step 6. Day 5 – The Certain Results of Forgiveness

**Invite** adults to state from Day Five (pp. 127-128) three reasons the author gives for why forgiveness is worth the great cost.

**Discuss** from the “mutual reconciliation” section (pp. 127-128) questions people might ask about forgiveness.

**Analyze** the difference between forgiveness and foolishness.

**Note** forgiveness does not mean we allow someone to continue abusing or betraying us; it does mean we choose to let the offense go and determine that person owes us nothing. That is costly, but it’s liberating.

**Read and discuss** the Day Five margin/pull quote (p. 128).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Review** the strategies for developing habits discussed in Step 1.

**Evaluate** how those strategies can be applied to developing the habit of forgiveness.

**Urge** adults struggling with forgiveness to ask for support from trusted believers.

**Note** one way to develop the habit of forgiveness is to meditate on and memorize Scriptures about forgiveness, such as those listed in Day Five, activity 1 (p. 127).

**Invite** adults to share other compelling reasons and ways to develop the habit of forgiveness they gained from this study.

**Encourage** them to begin implementing those into their lives.

**Close in prayer.**

After the Session

