

Jesus Invites Us to Love Him

A Lesson on Forgiveness and God's Love

Grades 4-6

Goal: Help the students understand that there is no sin that Jesus will not forgive if they are truly sorry.

Diving into Dignity

What is human dignity?

Human dignity is the value of human persons. Every person has dignity and it can never be taken away. Dignity is unique to us as humans. We'll be learning more about human dignity during our lessons this week and how it affects the way we treat ourselves and others.

Based on the Human Dignity Curriculum (World Youth Alliance)

Lesson: Introduce the topic of forgiveness with a discussion about how we have felt when we have forgiven others and how we have felt when we haven't forgiven others. Ask, "What kinds of things do people do that make you angry?" Then ask what happens when we don't forgive. Include observations such as: when we don't forgive we might be upset, argue or get angry with other people; we might feel badly physically such as a headache or stomachache. Un-forgiveness might make some people not want to be our friends because we are angry. Then ask a few of the following questions about forgiveness from God and ourselves: When God forgives us, does it mean He thinks what we did was okay? When we forgive others, are we saying that their actions were right? Why does God want us to forgive others even when they have not asked for forgiveness or changed their ways? Do all people deserve to be forgiven if they are truly sorry? Who should we forgive?

Read: [The Story of the Prodigal Son](#)

Discussion: Give students examples of different experiences of "coming home" and ask them to think about how they would feel each time:

- Coming in for some hot chocolate after being out on a cold, rainy day.
- Coming home from school with a wonderful report card.
- Coming home after several days in the hospital.
- Finding your parents after being lost at a mall or amusement park.
- Seeing a friend or relative you have not seen in a long time.

- Coming home to have your pet eagerly waiting for you at the door.

How do you think the prodigal son felt about coming home? How did his feelings change when he saw his father?

In the story of the Prodigal Son, we learn that no matter how foolish or unloving we have been in our sin, God is always the patient, loving Father watching for the moment we will come back to Him. He never gives up on us.

True / False Review: Ask the children to choose which of the following statements are correct.

- The Father in this story helps us to learn about God {True}
- The brothers in this story honored their father all the time. {False}
- People who break rules can be forgiven by Jesus if they are truly sorry. {True}
- Some people are too bad for God to forgive and love. {False}

Compare the two sons:

Young Brother (ran away)

- How did this brother dishonor his father?
- How did his father respond to this bad behavior?
- Do you think the father stopped loving this son?
- How do you think the son felt when he was welcomed home by his father?

Older Brother (stayed home)

- Why was the brother upset? What did he do?
- How did the Father respond to this bad behavior?
- Did the father stop loving this son?
- What do you think the son will do next?

Call on volunteers to answer the following questions. Ask follow-up questions to ensure they understand the objective of the lesson.

- Do both brothers deserve to be forgiven by their father?
- What does the father in this story show us about God?

As Catholics, we seek God's forgiveness for not making good choices in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to restore our union with God. The graces we receive through the Sacrament of Reconciliation make us stronger in our faith commitment to try NOT to sin again, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and to allow his grace to transform us.

Watch: [How do I go to Confession?](#)

Discussion:

What's the first step in going to Confession?

What are the different parts of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (i.e. confessing sins, act of contrition, absolution, penance)

What would you say to someone who is nervous about going to Confession?

Why is going to Confession important? Why should we be thankful for the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Prayer:

God of Heaven and Earth, thank you for giving us free choice. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us, so that all our choices may lead us closer to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website