

## AGENTS OF MERCY LESSON: LEARNING TO FORGIVE

GRADES 1-3

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### **Goal:**

Students will learn about the importance of offering forgiveness to their neighbors. They will learn of God's forgiveness to each of them, and reinforce the understanding that someone doing something wrong does not make them a bad person.

### **Lesson:**

Forgiveness and mercy are needed for everyone. Everyone makes bad choices, but our bad choices do not define us. We can relate this to children whose choices tend to have small consequences as well as to adults whose choices have larger consequences.

### **Bible Story:**

- Jesus taught us how to pray in the Bible when he first prayed the "Our Father". Every day when we say this prayer, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". What does that mean exactly?
- Children may not all know what forgiveness is or what it is for. We can help them to understand that we are each in need of forgiveness when we do things that are wrong or hurt other people. When was a time you needed forgiveness?
- Help students understand that forgiveness is not a feeling—it is a decision. People sin every day, and every day someone sins against us. These sins make us and others feel bad. We have a choice to make: we can either hold a grudge against the person who hurt us or we can forgive them and allow ourselves to be joyful again.
- Watch [this animated version](#) of the Prodigal Son.

### **Discussion:**

- How does God forgive us? Why does God forgive us?
- What did the son have to do to receive forgiveness? Is God excited when we ask for forgiveness and come home?
- Did the older son forgive his brother? Why not? How are we supposed to forgive other people?

### **Activity:**

Give students the opportunity to do something active that represents the forgiving going on in their hearts.

- Using the ["How to Forgive Activity for Kids"](#) online resource as a reference, ask students to write or draw a time that they were hurt by something that someone had done to them.
- Once they have completed that, let them know that together, they are all going to practice

forgiveness! They can: tear their paper into little bits; get it wet and wad it into a ball; fold it into a paper airplane; or something else that they imagine.

- Next, it is time to destroy that paper—either “shoot their ball” into the trash; rain scraps into the trash; or aim their airplane into the trash.
- Once all papers have been trashed, ask each child to say a silent prayer that they let go of the hurt in their hearts just as they let go of the paper. Then they can say a silent prayer for the person who hurt them, asking God to bless that person.

### **Activity:**

- Have children practice saying the Our Father. Say it slowly and help them understand words that may be new to them. Stop after each phrase to talk about it or answer questions.
- You can print and use the [“Our Father Printable for Kids”](#) that provides graphics for each phrase in the prayer.
- You can also have students [act out](#) the Our Father.

### **Watch and Discuss:**

- Even though Jesus forgives us when we sin, sometimes we still have to suffer the consequences of our actions. Ask students to share a time when they have been punished for doing something wrong. Maybe they had a time-out or lost a privilege. Adults, too, have to face consequences for their actions.
- Watch [Nylo’s Story](#) to learn about a boy whose mom is in jail. He misses her but learns to write letters to her every day so they can be connected. What does this tell us about Nylo’s mom? Even though she is in jail, taking responsibility for something that she did that was wrong, she is still a good mom to Nylo and is teaching him and encouraging him. This reinforces the idea that our bad choices do not define who we are.
- For an additional video, watch [Murray talk with Nylo](#) about what it’s like to be separated from her mom.

### **Prayer:**

Dear God,  
Thank you for forgiving me when I do something wrong.  
Please help me to forgive others.  
Amen.

