



Jesus Invites Us to Love Him
A Lesson on Forgiveness and God's Love Grades 4-6

Goal:

Help the students understand that no sin is so serious that Jesus will not forgive them if they are truly sorry.

Materials:

- Video of comic book form version of the [Story of the Prodigal Son](#).
- Read Matthew [18:21-34](#), The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, then watch this [re-enactment video](#) of the story. (6 minutes)
- Worksheet on [Sacrament of Reconciliation](#)

Lesson:

Introduce the topic of “forgiveness” with a discussion about the times we forgive others and what happens when we don’t.

Ask, “What kinds of things do people do to make you angry?” Then ask what happens when we don’t forgive. Include observations such as: when we don’t forgive, we might be grumpy and even pick fights or get angry with other people; we might feel bad physically such as a headache or stomachache; unforgiveness might make fewer people 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 we deserve to be forgiven? Who does God forgive?
- Does he forgive everything? Who should we forgive?
- Should we forgive everything?
- Is there anything that can’t be forgiven?

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

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 they have not seen in a long time.
- Coming home to have your pet eagerly waiting for you at the door.
- How might a prisoner feel coming home after being in prison for years?
- How might a soldier feel coming home after spending a long time at war?

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 out the window for the moment we will come back to Him. He never gives up on us.

Discussion: How does the story of the Prodigal Son's "coming home" help us to understand God's love for us? How does it help us live as followers of Jesus?

True / False Review: Ask the children to choose which of the following statements are correct. If the statement is correct, they should stand if it is false, they should remain seated.

1. The brothers in this story were named Bob & Joe.
2. The Father in this story helps us to learn about God
3. Sin can be an action or an attitude.
4. The brothers in this story honored their father.
5. People who break rules need Jesus to save & forgive them.
6. People who follow rules need Jesus to save & forgive them.
7. Some people are too bad for God to love.
8. People who follow rules need Jesus to save them.

KEY: 1. False, 2. True, 3. True, 4. False, 5. True, 6. True, 7. False, 8. True

Compare Two Sons: Use the following questions to help the children

Young Brother (ran away)	Older Brother (stayed home)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did this brother dishonor his father?• How did the father respond to this bad behavior?• What do you think it would take to make the father stop loving this son?• What do you think the son will do next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did this brother dishonor his father?• How did the father respond to this bad behavior?• What do you think it would take to make the father stop loving this son?• What do you think the son will do next?

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

- Which brother do you think Jesus wants us to copy?
- Which brother do you think deserved to be forgiven by the Father?
- What does this the Father in this story show us about God?
- According to this story, what kind of people does God not love?

Read: Matthew 18: 21-34

Discussion:

- What does the story tell us about the mercy of God?
- Is God very merciful with us, or just a little bit?

In the story, even though the people who were forgiven acted unjustly to others, they were still forgiven.

- What does that tell us about God's forgiveness toward us?

Is there anything that we can ever do that is so bad that God cannot forgive it? NO. No matter what we do, we can always turn back to God if we are truly sorry for our sins, confess them, and ask for God's forgiveness. As Catholics, we seek God's forgiveness for our "bad 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 Penance 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 so we don't want to do bad things anymore.

Watch:

The hilarious video re-enactment of Matthew 18: 21-34. (Try to make time for this. It is very funny and will help end the class on a lighter note.)

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