

Year 2 – Session #1
Family Faith Formation
Forgiveness

Resource for Adults:

Lump, Rob Bell - Approx. 11 min. <https://flannel.org/products/nooma-lump-010>

Objectives for Adults:

- Understand God's forgiving love.
- Learn importance of seeking and giving forgiveness.
- Know Christ's teaching on forgiveness.

Objectives for Children:

- Understand God's forgiving love.
- Know how to ask for forgiveness and how to give forgiveness.
- Understanding the meaning of the story of the Prodigal Son

Objectives for Family:

- Understand that being sorry and expressing sorrow shows our love for God and others.
 - Practice the Act of Contrition
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Welcome / Introduce Theme: (5 min.) Families begin together

Today, we will explore what it means to forgive another person. We will learn how God forgives us, what Christ teaches about how we are to forgive others, and the joy, peace, and love that are felt when we forgive.

Opening Prayer (10 min.)

Sign of the Cross

Scripture Reading: The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-24 (read from children's Bible)

Jesus told this story to help us understand God's love and forgiveness.

Sharing

How do our family members show each other that we are truly sorry? How do we share forgiveness with each other?

Glory Be ...

*Children are dismissed to their session. (See children's lesson)

Parents/Adult Presentation (30 – 40 min.)

Introduce DVD

A lot of us have done things in our lives that we're ashamed of. Some are small things and some might be really big or devastating things. Some of us even have done things that people close to us don't know about: personal junk that we keep to ourselves so we don't have to deal with it. Because we don't know how to deal with it, do we? We're afraid that if we try, it's just going to make everything worse. But no matter how big our junk is, no matter how much what we've done has impacted the way other people feel about us, or how we feel about ourselves, it hasn't changed how God feels about us. God loves us. He always has and always will, and there's nothing we can do to change that.

Watch LUMP

Discussion Questions?

What did forgiveness mean to you as a child? As an adult, has your understanding changed?

Some teaching points

- God's love for us is immeasurable. God forgives us. God's Son was sent to love us, save us, and forgive us. Forgiveness is a big part of Jesus' teaching. He forgives us completely and asks that we extend forgiveness to others. There is nothing we can do that will cut us off from God's love.
- No matter what we do, God invites us to come to Him, and we will be forgiven. In truth, forgiveness is offered before we even ask. But, when we ask, it is freely given, no strings attached. Asking and receiving forgiveness is the most healing thing that can occur in a relationship. Imagine how powerful that same forgiveness and mercy are when God is the giver!
- Forgiveness was so important to Jesus that He even extended it to the criminal on the cross. He promised the 'good thief' that he would be saved and would be with Him in paradise. Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the heart of Jesus' mission. This is why Jesus came from the Father: to forgive the sins of all by offering His life as a ransom for all of us.

Reflection on the Prodigal Son

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the son comes to his senses only after he has squandered everything and realizes he is at the end of his rope. Conversion of heart is hardly his motivation. Sorrow for sin has not entered his mind at this stage; he is merely responding to

his starving belly. He plots once again. "I will go back to my father. I will work as a hired hand. That way I do not have to stay on the estate; I can be my own person, get a good wage, and be about my own business." He wanted salvation on his own terms.

Yet, something amazing happens. He sees his father watching and waiting for him - running toward him. No self-respecting elder would ever run after a defiant son. The son is overwhelmed by how his father extends such love and forgiveness to one who deserves to be thrashed and disowned.

The son's rehearsed speech is forgotten. It is at this moment that the son's heart is converted. The father humiliates himself to show the son how much he loves and forgives him.

Jesus did the same for us on the cross

Discussion Questions

In what way can you relate to the prodigal son? Have you ever been profoundly forgiven? What does this story teach you about the power of forgiveness? What impact might this focus on forgiveness have on your life right now in a real and tangible way?

Conclusion

The Church continues the forgiveness of Jesus through the sacraments. Sacraments are tangible signs of God's presence and actions in our lives. They celebrate, make real, and present the different dimensions of Jesus' ministry of love, reconciliation, and healing.

There is one sacrament in which we come before God, aware of our sinfulness, to celebrate and encounter the incredible forgiveness and mercy that God extends to all of us. It is called the sacrament of reconciliation or penance. Through the ministry of Jesus continued in the Church, we celebrate in word and symbolic action the forgiveness that is already extended to us. Catholics also believe that when we come together for Mass, God's forgiveness abounds.

Children Presentation (30-40 min.)

Use a lesson/activity on forgiveness from your parish Sacrament Preparation Program or choose one of the following movies or stories. (Your parish program might also make recommendations.)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Twenty-Third Publications)

The Promise (Franciscan Media)

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (Harper Collins Juvenile Books)

A wonderful telling of the prodigal son story.

Sharing and Action Plan – Children and Parents together (15-20 min.)

Talk with your child about what he or she learned about forgiveness.

You might want to ask: What did Jesus teach about being sorry?

How was the Father in the story like God our loving father?

Share ideas about ways you family can be forgiving. Choose one thing you can do together during the next several weeks.

Suggestions:

- Make a centerpiece for your dinner table that includes a candle and the words, “Forgive and Seek Forgiveness” to serve as a reminder for your family to be forgiving people.
- Talk about one thing you did today to show you were sorry or forgiving.
- Pray the *Act of Contrition* together each night.

*Provide an action plan sheet for families to record and take home their plans.

Closing Prayer and Ritual (10-15 min.) Prepare cards with the ***Act of Contrition*** to be distributed.

In the story about the father and son, the son felt sorry for the wrong choice he made. Another word for sorrow is contrition. We pray a special prayer to tell God we are sorry for the wrong choices we make. We call this prayer the ***Act of Contrition***.

Let’s pray that prayer together.

My God,
I am sorry for my sins
 with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
 and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
 whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
 to do penance,
 to sin no more,
 and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

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