

LESSON 3: JESUS FORGIVES HIS ENEMIES

Leader Guide for Grades 5 & 6

Classroom: Deeply Rooted

 Luke 23:26-43

09/06/2020

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Luke 23:26-43
- In This Passage: Jesus is dying a humiliating death on the cross. As the soldiers torture him and gamble for his clothes, he extends forgiveness. They continue to mock him, but he doesn't condemn them. A criminal on the cross next to Jesus believes in Jesus, and Jesus extends forgiveness for his sins, too.
- Bible Point: Jesus forgives when it's hard...
- Application: ...so we forgive when it's hard.
- Summary Verse: "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *Jesus forgives when it's hard*. It's a lot easier to receive forgiveness than to extend it. Kids might wonder if others really deserve their forgiveness. Maybe the people who hurt them don't seem that sorry. Jesus' example shows that forgiveness isn't about being sorry or deserving it. We can forgive even when it's hard.
- Think About: What's a grudge you've been holding on to? Ask Jesus to help you let it go.

Dig In to Prayer

- Ask God to help your kids fully accept and fully extend God's grace and forgiveness.

Quick Tip

- Demonstrate forgiveness with your kids. It's easy to hold on to your view of kids based on their past behavior or what previous teachers have warned you about. Putting these labels on kids demonstrates a lack of forgiveness rather than giving them a fresh start. Instead of expecting certain behaviors from the "bad" kids, approach each week as a clean slate for kids.

This Lesson at a Glance



OPENING

Kids share about a topic related to the lesson.

Supplies

- Bible



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

Kids consider ways they've been hurt and forgive the people who hurt them.

Supplies

- Bible
- dot stickers
- paper
- markers
- nametags (1 per child)
- pens
- cross or picture of a cross

Easy Prep

- Put the cross near or on a wall.



OBJECT LESSON

Kids' fingers get stuck in finger traps.

Supplies

- finger traps (1 per child) (can be purchased at party supply stores or online)



DEEPER BIBLE

Kids learn the consequences of holding on to a grudge.

Supplies

- Bibles
- pony beads (2 large handfuls per child)
- paper
- crayons or markers
- individually wrapped candy (1 piece per child)



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Kids play a game where they try to keep balloons in the air but must cross their arms if tagged.

Supplies

- inflated balloons (3 per child)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Kids have a white elephant gift exchange.

Supplies

- brown paper lunch bags (1 per child)
- variety of simple, small prizes—see Tips for ideas

Easy Prep

- Place the prizes or treats in the bags, and fold the tops of the bags over to seal them.

- (1 prize per child)
- special prizes kids would value more than the other prizes—see Tips for ideas (1 prize for every 5 kids)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

- Wrap the special prizes in paper bags as well, but set them aside so you know which bags contain the special prizes.



CRAFT

Kids make erasable pages where they can write grievances and forgive people.

Supplies

- plain white paper
- markers
- clear page protectors (1 per child)
- crayons
- tissues

Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft to show kids.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Kids clench and release fists as they pray.

**Marked supplies can be reused from Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



Supplies

- Bible

Welcome

- Thank kids for coming.
- Just for fun, have kids link arms with a partner and swing each other in a circle.
- Make announcements.
- Introduce new kids.
- Celebrate birthdays by having kids shout this birthday cheer: "Two, four, six, eight; it's birthday time, let's celebrate! Gooooo, [name of birthday kids]!"
- Collect the offering.

Introduce the Lesson

Say: **Today we're going to learn that Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard. Not forgiving is kind of like carrying around something really heavy.**

Share

- Tell kids about something heavy *you've* carried.
- Have kids form pairs. Ask kids to share about something heavy *they've* carried.
- After partners have discussed, ask two or three kids to share with the whole group.

Summarize

Open a Bible to Luke 23, and say: **It's hard to carry heavy things for very long. We might get hurt! In the same way, carrying around grudges can hurt us more than it hurts the person we're mad at. Let's see how Jesus forgave even when it was hard for him. God gave us the Bible, his special book, to show us how forgiving he is. The Bible helps us get to know God and reflect his forgiving heart. And God is here right now, ready to talk to you! Let's talk with God now.**

Pray, praising Jesus for forgiving when it's hard.

**Supplies**

- Bible
- dot stickers
- paper
- markers
- nametags (1 per child)
- pens
- cross or picture of a cross

Easy Prep

- Put the cross near or on a wall.

Touch a Scar

Say: **Our Bible story today is a very serious and sad one. We're going to learn about Jesus dying on the cross.**

Ask: • **Where have you seen crosses?**

• **Why do you think churches display crosses?**

Say: **Crosses are symbols of where Jesus suffered and died, which seems sad. But Jesus died to forgive us, and ultimately came back to life! That's why Christians use the cross as a symbol of something good. Let's find out more about what happened on the cross. As we think about what Jesus experienced on the cross, let's try to keep a quiet environment.** If possible, lower the lights to help create a solemn atmosphere.

One thing Jesus experienced was physical pain.

Read Luke 23:33.

Say: **Think of a time you got physically hurt. Maybe someone else hurt you. Perhaps a sibling pushed you or you got in a fight with a bully at school. Put stickers on all the places you remember being physically hurt.**

Distribute stickers. Put on your own stickers, too.

Say: **We've all been hurt. Probably none of our hurts were as painful as being nailed to a cross.**

But listen to what Jesus said when people hurt him and nailed him to a cross.

Read the first sentence of Luke 23:34.

Say: **Let's forgive like Jesus did. As you take off your stickers, silently ask Jesus to help you forgive the people who have hurt you.** Allow time. (During this time, if kids mention any physical abuse from parents or other adults, be sure to report that to your children's ministry director.)

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard. It's hard to forgive when other people hurt us. Forgiving doesn't mean that we let someone keep hurting us. But it does mean we don't hold a grudge for what they've done in the past.**

Put your hand on one of the places you had a sticker. Now imagine walking around like that for the rest of your life. Pause. We wouldn't want to walk around literally holding on to that painful place, because we wouldn't be able to do a lot of things! In the same way, we don't want to hold on to grudges in our hearts. Doing that just holds us back.

Draw Pictures

Say: **The people not only physically hurt Jesus but also messed with his stuff.**

Read the rest of Luke 23:34.

Distribute paper and markers. Say: **Draw a picture of a time someone messed up your stuff. Maybe someone lost your favorite pencil or broke your iPad.** As kids work, draw your own picture.

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard. It can be hard to forgive someone for messing up our stuff. What the soldiers did with Jesus' stuff didn't ruin it, but it was**

humiliating. But Jesus still forgives. Let's show we forgive the people who messed up our stuff by tearing up our pictures. As you tear your picture, ask Jesus to help you forgive.

Have kids tear up their pictures and put the scraps in the garbage as you do the same.

Write Mean Things

Say: **After Jesus had been physically hurt and his stuff had been gambled away, people started saying mean things to him.**

Read Luke 23:35-39.

Distribute nametags and pens.

Say: **Think of the mean things people have said to you. Write them on your nametag, and then stick that nametag on the palm of your hand. Put your hand over your heart. That way no one else can see what you wrote, but we'll see that everyone has mean words others have said to them.**

Allow time for kids to write, and make your own nametag, too.

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard.** Jesus died on the cross to forgive everyone in the whole world. That includes the people who were making fun of him. *And* it includes the people who've made fun of you. It's hard to forgive people for saying mean things to us. **But it hurts *our* hearts to hold on to that grudge. So let's forgive.**

Take off your nametag as you pray for Jesus to help you forgive the people who said those mean words. Then have kids do the same.

Say: **Forgiving is hard. But we don't have to forgive on our own. Jesus is here to help us. He forgives us when we do bad things, and his forgiveness can flow through us to other people. Let's look at one more thing Jesus forgave.**

Bring Sins to the Cross

Read Luke 23:40-43.

Say: **We don't know what this criminal had done. But we know it was pretty bad based on his punishment! Even though he'd done really bad things, Jesus forgave him and promised him a place in heaven.**

Jesus forgives when it's hard. That means he forgives *us* even when it's hard. Even when you feel like what you've done is too big to be forgiven.

Distribute more paper, and have kids spread out and face a wall, where no one will see what they write.

Say: **On your paper, write some of the things you've done wrong. That's called *sin*. Sin hurts others, and it hurts God. Without forgiveness, sin keeps us apart from God. When you're done, crumple your paper.**

Allow time. Write your own list and crumple it, too.

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard.** There is nothing, *nothing* on your list that Jesus won't forgive. When he died on the cross, he took the punishment for everything on all our lists. He wants us to be his friends, so he forgives us. He wants us to be in heaven where everything is perfect, so he took away our sin by dying on the cross.

Let's bring our sins to the cross to show that we want Jesus to forgive us and we want to be his friends. Remember, do this quietly as you think about what Jesus did for you. Set your crumpled paper at the foot of the cross, and then have kids do the same.

When everyone is sitting back down, pray: **Jesus, thank you that you forgive when it's hard.** Thank you that there's no sin of ours too big that you won't forgive it. Thank you that you know what it's like to forgive when people physically hurt you, mess up your stuff, or call you mean names. Help us forgive when people do those things to us. In your name, amen.

Say: **This was a very sad story. Jesus went through a lot of hard things and ended up dying on a cross. But here's the best news ever: Jesus isn't dead now! Three days after Jesus died on the cross, he came back to life! He's alive today and he's here with us now. Let's high-five about that! High-five with kids.**

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard.** We've all gotten to experience Jesus' forgiveness. And when we really experience the joy of forgiveness, Jesus helps us pass that on to others! When you're mad at someone, remember: Jesus died to forgive that person. If Jesus forgives everyone, so can we!



OBJECT LESSON

Stuck

[10 min]

Supplies

- finger traps (1 per child) (can be purchased at party supply stores or online)

Experiment With Finger Traps

Say: **Forgiving others isn't always easy. We may feel like we're trapped between knowing that we should forgive someone and still feeling hurt and anger because of what that person did to us. Let's experiment with something that'll trap us and make us feel stuck.**

- Give each child a finger trap. Show kids how to place a pointer finger in each end of the tube.
- Have kids try to remove their fingers from the trap. They'll find that they're stuck in the tube.
- Give kids about five minutes to play with the finger traps and experiment to find the best way to release their fingers. Encourage kids to try using different fingers, too.



Talk About It

Ask: • **What was the best way to get out of the traps?**

- **How is trying to get your fingers out of these traps like struggling to forgive someone?**

Say: **It's hard to forgive on our own. The more we struggle with hard feelings and unforgiveness, the more we're stuck with hurt feelings and tense friendships. But Jesus forgives when it's hard. When we're friends with Jesus, we can relax and let go of our hurt. He'll help us forgive even when it's hard.**

Ask: • **Tell about a time someone forgave you. Do you think it was hard for that person? Why or why not? Share your own example first.**

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard. We can give our hurt to him, and he'll help us find freedom when we stop struggling and give grace and forgiveness to others.**



Do I Still Forgive if the Other Person Isn't Sorry?

Supplies

- Bibles
- pony beads (2 large handfuls per child)
- paper
- crayons or markers
- individually wrapped candy (1 piece per child)

Hold On Tight

Say: **When you were little, you probably learned how to resolve a conflict: one person says “I’m sorry” and the other says “I forgive you.”**

But what if the other person isn’t sorry? Do we still have to forgive? Let’s dig in to that.

Give each child two large handfuls of pony beads. Have kids hold the beads tightly in each hand.

Say: **Imagine those beads represent mean things people have done to hurt you. Imagine you’re still mad about those mean things, so you’re holding on to them. You are *not* letting go of your hurt feelings and anger.**

Now, without letting go of any of your beads, try to color a picture. Set out crayons and a stack of paper.

Next, have kids try to tie their shoes while still holding the beads. If they don’t have shoes with laces, they can try to tie someone else’s shoes.

Continue to have kids hold on to their beads.

Ask: • **Describe how you felt trying to color a picture and tie your shoes while holding on to your beads.**

Say: **We’re learning that Jesus forgives when it’s hard. Sometimes it’s hard to forgive, so we hold on to grudges instead. That means we keep all those hurt feelings inside, on purpose. But that actually ends up hurting us! In fact, sometimes the person you’re mad at doesn’t even know you’re mad, so your unforgiveness *only* hurts you. Just like holding on to the beads held you back from doing normal, everyday things, holding on to grudges can keep us from living our fullest lives. Let’s see what the Bible says about that. Keep holding on to your beads until I say to let go.**

Dig Deeper

Say: **In our Bible story, Jesus forgave people while they were still hurting him. They definitely weren’t sorry! So let’s see what our true motivation to forgive others is. As we read these verses, pay attention to *why* we forgive.**

Have two kids read Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:31-32.

Ask: • **Based on these verses, what’s the reason we forgive others?**

Say: **The reason we forgive others isn’t because *they* feel sorry. It’s because we know that God forgave us! We’ve all received forgiveness, so we can all pass it on. In fact, holding back forgiveness can limit us from experiencing God’s forgiveness fully. Listen to this.**

Have a child read Mark 11:25.

With kids still holding on to their beads, give each child a wrapped piece of candy. Say: **If you can use your hands to unwrap your candy in 20 seconds or less, without letting go of your beads, you may eat it.**

Count down from 20, and see if anyone was successful.

Ask: • **What was it like trying to unwrap your candy?**

Say: **Maybe you got your candy unwrapped, and maybe you didn’t. Either way, something that’s usually really easy to do became really hard to do. Why? Because you’re still holding on to the bead grudges. Forgiving others helps us fully experience God’s forgiveness. And God doesn’t want us to put a limit on how much we’ll forgive.**

Have a child read Matthew 18:21-22.

Ask: • **Why do you think Jesus wants us to keep on forgiving?**

Say: **God doesn't put a limit on how many times he forgives us, and we can give that same unlimited forgiveness to others because God gives us the power to do so. That doesn't mean letting people continue to hurt us; we might need to spend less time with those who keep hurting us. But forgiveness means letting go instead of holding on to a grudge.**

Ask: • **What things do you do that show you're still mad at someone?**

Say: **Forgiveness means we don't talk badly about that person. Let's let go right now.** Have kids put down their beads.

Ask: • **How do your hands feel now that you've finally let go of the beads?**

• **How is that like the way it feels to forgive?**

Say: **Now that your hands are free, you can eat your candy if you weren't able to unwrap it earlier!** Pause for kids to unwrap their candy.

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard.** Even though forgiving can be hard sometimes, it's so much better for us than holding on to grudges!



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Angry & Bitter

[10 min]

Supplies

- inflated balloons (3 per child)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Tip

- If you used the Music Video block, consider repeating the songs from today's lesson during the game. You can find the downloadable album [here](#).

Keep the Balloons in the Air

Say: **Today we've discovered that Jesus forgives when it's hard...and he's had some difficult things to forgive! Forgiveness can be hard, but holding on to angry feelings toward someone can make life even harder. I'll show you what I mean with a fun game.**

- Have everyone spread out, and then place balloons on the ground throughout the area where everyone's standing.
- Invite a willing person to be "It."
- On your cue, kids will pick up balloons and bop them into the air over everyone's heads.
- Kids will work together to try to keep all the balloons in the air and bop them back up overhead before any touch the ground.
- Any balloons that do touch the ground are out of play for the round.
- While bopping the balloons, everyone will also be trying to avoid getting tagged by It.
- When someone's tagged, he or she can no longer use his or her arms to bop the balloons and must cross arms in an "angry" or "stubborn" posture.
- Once almost half of the players have been tagged, call out to ask if they're willing to forgive It for tagging them. If they are, then everyone can use their arms again and start a new round of the game, with the last person who was tagged being the new It.
- If players won't forgive It, then everyone will keep playing with arms crossed until all the balloons are out of play or It has tagged everyone. At that point you can start a new round with the last person who was tagged being the new It.
- If you'd like, play upbeat music while kids play.

Talk About It

Ask: • **What was it like to play before you got tagged?**

• **How did having to pose like you were angry change the game?**

Say: **When you had to hold an angry pose, the game wasn't as fun. In real life, sometimes we cross our arms in anger or frustration or stubbornness when we won't forgive someone. Maybe we think we're punishing them for how they hurt us, but holding on to hard feelings and not forgiving actually makes things harder on us, the way it did in the game.**

Ask: • **What's an action that's hard to forgive?** Share an example of your own, such as someone saying cruel or untrue things about you. Don't get into specifics where you would share names.

Say: **Forgiveness isn't always easy, but it's good for the person we're forgiving *and* for our own hearts. Jesus forgives when it's hard, and whenever you need help forgiving someone, you can ask Jesus to make your heart more like his so you can forgive, too.**



LOW-ENERGY GAME

[10 min]

Give and Take

Supplies

- brown paper lunch bags (1 per child)
- variety of simple, small prizes—see Tips for ideas (1 prize per child)
- special prizes kids would value more than the other prizes—see Tips for ideas (1 prize for every 5 kids)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- Place the prizes or treats in the bags, and fold the tops of the bags over to seal them.
- Wrap the special prizes in paper bags as well, but set them aside so you know which bags contain the special prizes.

Tips

- For the variety of simple prizes, you could raid your craft closet and snack closet for things such as sheets of stickers, pencils, markers, small notebooks, ping-pong balls, chenille wires, Hershey's Kisses, individual bags of crackers, pretzels, or rice cakes.
- For the special prizes you could include items such as a dollar bill, a full-size candy bar or bag of Starburst candy, or a new box of crayons.
- If you used the Music Video block, consider repeating the songs from today's lesson during the game. You can find the downloadable album [here](#).

Play a Game Similar to a White Elephant Gift Exchange

Say: **Today we're learning that Jesus forgives when it's hard. Jesus shows us that it's possible to forgive others even when it seems impossible. Let's play a fun game to see what it's like to forgive someone even if it's hard.**

- Form groups of about five, and have groups spread out and sit in circles.
- In the center of each group's circle, place one special prize and four simple prizes (or enough for each group member minus one). There should be one bag per person for each group when all are distributed, and kids shouldn't know which bag has the better prize.
- Invite the person in each group with the closest birthday to choose a gift bag first and open it so everyone can see the gift.
- Continuing around the circle to the right, each person following the first will choose between picking a new gift to unwrap or taking one that's already been unwrapped.
- When a person chooses a new gift and unwraps it, the next person in the circle will go.
- When an unwrapped gift is taken away, the person whose gift was taken can take a gift from someone else or choose a new gift from the center to unwrap.
- There's no limit on how many times a gift can be taken away, but once the final gift in the middle is unwrapped, the game stops and the gifts are final.
- If you'd like, play upbeat music while kids play.

Talk About It

- Ask: • **What was it like to have a gift that you really wanted to keep taken from you?**
• **How hard would it be to forgive anyone who stole from you in the game?**

Say: **Being human means we're going to hurt others sometimes. We'll all need to forgive and be forgiven at different times. And sometimes forgiveness is hard when someone has done something that hurts us or makes us angry or frustrated.** Share a kid-friendly example about a time you had trouble forgiving someone and what it was like when you forgave even though it was hard. For example, maybe a friend or family member said something very hurtful in an argument and the two of you didn't speak for a long time because of it.

- Ask: • **When have you had a hard time forgiving?**

Say: **Forgiveness can be hard, but Jesus forgives when it's hard. Jesus changes our hearts in amazing ways when we spend time with him, and Jesus can help us forgive even when it's too hard to do on our own.**



CRAFT

Forgiveness Sheets

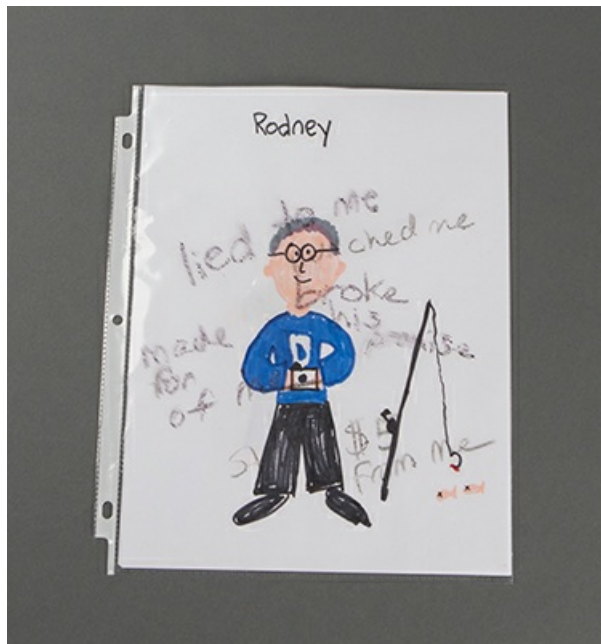
[20 min]

Supplies

- plain white paper
- markers
- clear page protectors (1 per child)
- crayons
- tissues

Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft to show kids.



Make Forgiveness Sheets

Show kids the sample craft you made. Give each child a page protector. Set out the remaining supplies to share, and have kids follow these directions to make forgiveness sheets.

- Use markers to draw all the people you spend a lot of time with and sometimes get mad at. That might include your parents, your siblings, your friends, your teammates, or others. Draw each person on a different piece of paper. Include a picture of yourself.
- Put all the papers in one page protector, choosing someone you're mad at now or were recently mad at to put on the top of the stack.

Forgive

On the outside of their page protectors, have kids use a dark crayon to write reasons they are mad at the person whose drawing is on top. They can also make scribble marks.

Say: **When we're mad at people, we can reflect Jesus' heart by showing forgiveness. Jesus forgave people while they were still hurting him! And he can help us forgive others.**

Ask Jesus to give you his heart and help you forgive the person on your forgiveness sheet. As you pray silently, use a dry tissue to erase the crayon. Allow time.

Talk About It

Ask: • **How do you feel when you're holding on to a grudge?**

• **How do you feel after you forgive someone?**

Say: **Sometimes, forgiving other people is really hard. But we don't have to do it by ourselves!**

Jesus forgives when it's hard, and he can help us forgive even if it's hard for us. Plus, we've all needed Jesus' forgiveness, and he was willing to forgive us. We can pass on his forgiveness to others! Whenever you need Jesus' help forgiving someone, put that person's picture on the top of your forgiveness sheet, write the problem or make scribbles on the plastic, and then pray as you erase the crayon.

Have kids take their forgiveness sheets home and show them to their friends and families as they share about how Jesus can help them forgive when it's hard.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

[5 min]

Let It Go

Make Fists and Pray

Say: **Jesus forgives when it's hard, so we forgive when it's hard.** Let's pray as we take on a posture that represents unforgiveness.

- Have kids make fists and clench their fists tightly as they talk to God about the things they've done that hurt God.
- Have kids release their fists and hold out their hands with their palms up as they thank God for forgiving them.
- Have kids clench their fists again as they talk to God about grudges they've been holding on to.
- Have kids release their fists and hold out their hands with their palms up as they pray for a forgiving heart.

Wrap Up

Pray: **Jesus, thank you for forgiving us, even when it's hard.** Help us forgive others, too. In your name, amen.

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week.

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