Kindness builds a Family

Today, we are talking about something we all do, but something Jesus warns us about: pointing out everyone else's mistakes while ignoring our own. Jesus wants our family to be a place of unity, kindness, and forgiveness—not a place where we carry around heavy grudges or boss each other around.

The Heavy Backpack

(Before you start, grab a backpack and fill it with heavy things like books, canned goods, or blocks. Have one of the kids put it on.)

Imagine this backpack is full of heavy, dirty, gross offenses. Every time someone in our house annoys us, makes a mistake, or takes our toy, and we choose to hold a grudge, stay angry, or keep score, it's like we are dropping another heavy weight into our backpack.

How does that feel to carry around? Is it easy to run and play with that on?

Carrying around bitterness and judging others weighs our hearts down. Today, we are going to learn how to "dump the backpack" through forgiveness and repentance so we can be light, happy, and united! (Take the backpack off them.)

The "Log-In-The-Eye"

(Read Matthew 7:3-5 and Colossians 3:13 together)

Jesus paints a funny, silly picture here. Imagine walking around with a giant, heavy wooden playground log sticking straight out of your eye. Then, you walk up to your brother or sister, squint around your giant log, and say, "Hey, you have a tiny speck of sawdust in your eye. Let me fix that for you!"

It sounds ridiculous, right? But Jesus says that when we yell at someone else for being selfish, mean, or lazy, while we are being selfish, mean, or lazy, we are the guy with the log in his eye!

Why is it so much easier to use God's Word like a magnifying glass to spy on other people's mistakes, instead of using it like a mirror to check our own hearts?
(Help them see that blaming others is a trick to make ourselves feel "good" or "perfect" without having to say "I'm sorry" for our own bad attitudes.)

What does it look like to "make allowance" for someone's mistakes? Is every single little thing that irritates us a sin, or are some things just accidents or differences?
(Explain that sometimes people drop things, forget things, or move slowly. "Making allowance" means choosing not to get mad over small accidents or everyday annoyances.)

How to remove a splinter: Gentleness

(Read Galatians 6:1 together. Use a pair of tweezers to help illustrate the principle)
If you actually had a tiny wooden splinter stuck deep in your finger, would you want someone to come at you with tweezers, screaming, grabbing your hand, and pulling roughly? Or would you want them to be incredibly quiet, gentle, and kind?

What happens to our hearts when people treat our mistakes harshly instead of kindly? Why is privacy so important when we need to talk to someone about a mistake?
(Connect this to how we correct each other. Harshness makes people pull away and defend themselves. Kindness and privacy make people feel safe enough to admit they were wrong.)

Jesus prayed deeply that His followers would be completely united. He even promised that when two or three of us gather to make things right and build unity, He is right there with us. How does knowing Jesus is actively helping us be a family change the way we talk to each other when we are upset?

"Dumping the Backpack"

(Pass around the backpack and have everyone drop an item out as they answer the questions).
As a family, let's practice dumping our heavy burdens right now so we don't carry them into tomorrow. Go around the circle and answer one or both of these questions:

- Is there a "heavy burden" (a grudge, a mean thought, or an unexpressed anger) you need to drop out of your backpack and forgive today?
- Is there a "log" in your own eye (a bad attitude, a time you were mean or selfish) that you need to confess and say sorry for to someone else in this room?

Closing Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for being so incredibly kind to us. Your kindness is what makes us want to change and follow You. Forgive us for the times we act like judges, pointing out everyone else's flaws while ignoring our own giant logs. Help our family to be a gentle family. Give us the courage to dump our heavy backpacks of bitterness every single day, to choose forgiveness, and to speak the truth in love. Amen."