

# Year 3, NT Lesson 5: God's People Forgive

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## Lesson Highlights:

- ✓ **Scripture References:** Matthew 5:38-48; 6:12, 14-15
- ✓ **Teaching Point:** God's people forgive others as they have been forgiven.
- ✓ **Unit Memory Verse:** *Matthew 6:21* – For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- ✓ **Alternate Memory Verse:** *Matthew 5:44-45* – But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

## Lesson

### Overview

Sometimes in Christianity, we can so long to preach the grace of God that we fail to give as much time to the commands of God. They cannot be obeyed apart from that grace...but it is equally true that they are not optional for those who call themselves His. One of those that Jesus teaches on repeatedly is forgiveness. Those who are given much are required to pour it out to others in that same spirit. Nothing is more true than with the forgiveness God gives because His wrath was poured out on His only Son. Pray with us that our kids would begin to see their need for such a gift and to become those who walk in their Savior's steps, forgiving as they have been forgiven.

### Story (Some M&M's or other small candies are needed for this story.)

We've been talking a lot about this new kingdom that God is bringing to earth. It's a kingdom that isn't like the kingdoms of this world. When we think of kingdoms of earth, we think of things like money and power and land...and fighting to get more money and power and land. That's a lot like people everywhere live...fighting to get more for themselves...trying to make sure that they are strong and can do whatever they want. But this kingdom that Jesus is teaching us about isn't like the kingdoms of this world. Jesus didn't teach us a couple of weeks ago that "blessed are the strong...or blessed are the mighty...or blessed are the rich." He came to show us that the way to be a part of God's kingdom is to be just the opposite of that...to live lives that are humble and giving and depend completely on God instead of on ourselves.

And last week we looked at one thing we can do that shows that we get that...prayer. Pray is one key way we can know that we are trusting in God for our lives...to show that we believe Jesus...that we are resting completely on Him and not on our own ideas or our own way. Every time we go to God to pray, we're telling Him that we need Him...that we don't know how to do this life without Him...that we need Him to give us what we need to live. That way of depending on God and trusting Him and wanting more of Him in all of our lives is what it looks like to have faith in Jesus as our Savior and King.

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As we talked about prayer last time, we noticed that Jesus taught us to pray first of all by giving us the name we can call God. What was that? (*Father*) That's the truest thing about those who belong to Jesus...we have God as our Father. We're not alone. We're not orphans without a home. We aren't left desperate, without someone to take care of us. We have a Father. The One who is the Creator of the Universe...the Lord of all...the Eternal God...is our Father. So, it's only right that we would trust Him and go to Him to get everything we need...just like we would with a good earthly father. And last week in that prayer, we saw that Jesus gave us three things to ask God for. This might be harder, but can anyone remember any of them? (*daily bread, forgiveness, salvation from evil*) Today, we're going to focus on that middle one...forgiveness... because Jesus focused on it again after He taught them that prayer. Let's turn again to **Matthew 6** and first of all, read what Jesus said in the prayer. Look in your Bible while I read **verse 12..."and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."** Now, read **vs. 14-15**.

People can do things that we don't like, that hurt us a lot. What are some of those things that people do that hurt you or make you mad? (*see what they say...mean words, not letting them play, taking things, making fun of them, etc.*) All of those things hurt us a lot. And God knows it, but notice here that Jesus didn't just have us say, "Father, forgive us," when we do things wrong. He told us to say, "Father, forgive us...in the same way we forgive others." Think about that. Think about the last time someone made you angry. When others make fun of you and hurt you. Do you feel like forgiving them? (*not usually*) They've hurt us and we want them to know it, right? We want them to "pay for it". And that's exactly what the world would tell you. They harm you? Get them back. Make them pay for it. Make sure they know that they are going to have to try really hard to have you like them again. Every person on earth would agree...except Jesus.

Because Jesus sees something else. He's not looking at what we have done to others; He's looking at what we've done to God. Our God is the one who deserves the best of everything we can give Him, but our whole lives are lived as if He's not worth it. We don't love Him. We don't honor Him. We hardly even think about Him. We just want the best of everything here that we can get and complain that it's not more. We turn away from Him to get more for ourselves. And do you know what that means? We owe God. We are in His debt. We've all sinned. We've all turned away from God. Not one of us is good and keeps His Word. Every one of us owes God. And do you know what the punishment is for our sins? The Bible says that "***the wages of sin is death.***" (**Rom. 6:23**) What we owe God is our very lives. But instead of taking ours, He sent His Son to die for us...in our place. His body was beaten. He was bruised. He was killed...because you and I owed God a debt. And God looked down at His Son...and He agreed. Jesus paid it all for you and me. Everything we owed God was paid...if you repent and turn away from your sins and give your whole life to this new kingdom of heaven. But that means we have to live like it's true. That really was our debt and Jesus really did take it. We have to be so grateful for that payment that we treat others the same way we were treated by God.

(NOTE: If you don't have time to do this during the lesson, you can use it as an activity later in your class time.) Let me see if I can show you what this is like...I need a volunteer who really likes chocolate. I happen to have just one piece of candy. Who would like it?

*(choose one to come up to you)* Okay...now...here's my one M&M. Don't eat it yet. Okay. Who else liked chocolate? *(pick another)* Come on up. You are also welcome to have it. Just ask him for it. *(look at the first child with the M&M)* You can let him have it, but it's all I have. *(see if they are reluctant to give it)* Okay. That's not so easy. But what if I told you that if you give it to them, I would give you another one? Would it be easier to give it up? *(see what the first child says)* Okay...let's try this. *(hand the first child a whole bag of M&Ms)* Now is it easier to share that one M&M? *(hopefully so...thank them for helping and have them sit down after giving them each one M&M)*

It's hard to give things up when we don't have much...and it's a lot easier to give it away when we know we will have a whole lot left for ourselves. Or it's supposed to be. But you know what? When it comes to forgiveness, that's not always true. You see, what can happen is that because we've been hurt we stop thinking about all of the sins we've committed and we start thinking a lot about all of the bad things that people do to us. Like when he was holding that bag of M&M's, he knew that he had so many, it wouldn't hurt to share...but when he thought he only had one, it was hard. We've been forgiven for so many sins...which means, we have a bag full of the millions of times God's forgiven us. But when others harm us, we forget about that...and act like they're trying to take our last M&M. Sure, they really did harm you. They really are wrong. They really do owe you. That's all true.

But what's also true is that you really did owe God. Really. You really deserved death on that cross, not Jesus. Really. You've been forgiven over and over and over and over and over. So, as we look at others who do us harm, it's supposed to be that we stare at all that God's given us, all that He's forgiven us...and we turn to those who hurt us and say, "Well, sure! Of course I forgive you! How could I not? Just look at all the forgiveness I have because of Jesus!" What Jesus taught us in that prayer is that those who are really forgiven act like it. When we go to pray to God, Jesus told us to say, "Forgive us...just like we forgive others." Every time we have someone harm us, we have to remember that debt we owe God...and we have to act like it's really been paid. Let me show you from Jesus' words just a few verses before this. Look at **Matthew 5, verses 43-48**.

Everyone would tell you to like those who like you. All of the world likes their friends. But that's not what happened in God's kingdom. He didn't choose those of us who loved Him and were perfect. He chose those who hated Him and didn't even notice Him. He chose us. And even though we know Him and know what His Word is saying, we still choose to ignore His Word and turn against Him and sin. But God still forgives. And He still takes care of this world. He still sends rain to the earth when we don't deserve it. He still gives us sunshine even though we ignore Him. And those who are really in God's kingdom have to act like that. We have to follow in Jesus' steps. We have to love those who hate us...just like He did for us. We have to take care of those who harm us...just like He does for us. If we are really in the kingdom of heaven, if we are really in His family, then we have to act like it. It's not a suggestion. It's not something we can just do when we feel like it. God's people act like God...they forgive. It doesn't mean it's easy. It doesn't mean that it doesn't really hurt when they do bad things to us. What it means is that we see God and love Him more than we could ever say because He forgave us first.

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As we go to pray, let's ask God to make us into this kind of person...one who forgives just like we've been forgiven...one who is kind to those don't deserve it because we know that we have been given so much that we don't deserve.

### Prayer Time

Before you pray, allow the kids time to share with you things that are happening in their lives. Be sure you write these down with their names for you to pray for as the week goes along. Ask individuals about how things went with the things they mentioned the previous week. Older kids can be asked if they will pray for another who mentions something. As the leader, begin by opening in prayer and thanking God for this lesson:

- Praise Jesus for paying the debt to God that we owed by giving His life up for us.
- Ask God to make us people who forgive as they've been forgiven.

Pray for any specific requests named either by praying yourself or by opening it up to those who said they would pray.

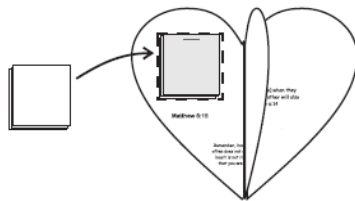
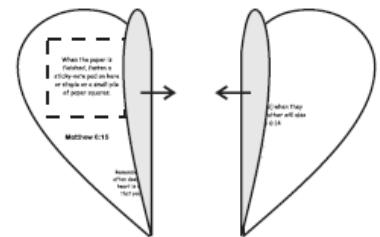
### Suggested Follow-up Activities

Teachers are free to choose the activities that they feel are best for their group. The idea is that as the children work and play, remind them of the truths they just learned.

**Scripture Memory:** Figure out your reward system for memorizing the Scriptures provided in this section. Give the children several opportunities to tell it to you in class. Play a memory game with the kids if you have time.

**Craft: Forgiveness Heart** – Remind the kids that today we learned that those in God's kingdom must forgive others to be forgiven by God. Help them to remember that we are giving only a very small portion of forgiveness to others compared to the enormous debt that was paid by Jesus for us.

Give each child a copy of both of the craft pages along with a small stack of the small square pages. Have them cut out the hearts and color them as they'd like. Have them fold the hearts in half. Have them glue the pieces together on the back sides of the two pages as shown.



Have them staple a small stack of the papers over the square and then hand them a paper clip which will hold the heart together for them.



Materials: craft pages; scissors; stapler; paper clips; stick glue; crayons or markers

**Craft: Forgiven Much** – Remind the kids that today we learned that those in God’s kingdom must forgive others to be forgiven by God. Help them to remember that we are giving only a very small portion of forgiveness to others compared to the enormous debt that was paid by Jesus for us.

Copy the cards together front to back and cut one out for each child. Give each child a sandwich baggie and ask them to go over to a tub of sand and scoop some into their bag filling it about halfway. Have them also grab a paper plate and return to their seat to wait until everyone is finished filling their baggies. Now tell them that all they have to do is count the grains of sand they have. They will probably protest, but some will try it. Before they get too far, stop them and tell them the point is not to know how many there are but to realize that even this little amount is more than they have time to count. These little baggies are for them to see and remember God’s forgiveness to us.

Hand them copy of the verse. Have them hole punch the corner and close up the baggie by threading the card on a piece of cording using it to tie the baggie closed.

**Younger Children:** Fill the baggies prior to class and close them each with a twist-tie. Explain what the sand is to help them remember. Give them ribbon or cording and help them to hole punch the cards and tie them on.

Materials: cardstock copies of the verse; crayons or markers; sandwich baggies; sand; cording or ribbon; hole punch; paper plates

**Activity: Sharing M&M’s** – Remind the kids that today we learned that those in God’s kingdom must forgive others to be forgiven by God. Help them to remember that we are giving only a very small portion of forgiveness to others compared to the enormous debt that was paid by Jesus for us.

Ask for a volunteer who really likes chocolate. Tell them that you happen to have just one piece of candy. Choose one person to come up with you. Give them one M&M but tell them not to eat it yet. Then ask for another volunteer who also loves chocolate. Tell them that they can have an M&M but they have to ask the first child for it. Ask the first child if they really want to give it away or keep it. Ask them if it would be an easier thing to do if they knew that you would give them another one if they gave theirs away. Then pull out the whole bag of M&Ms and ask them if it would be easier to share if they had the whole bag in their hands. Thank them for helping you and give them an M&M for their help.

Tell them that it’s hard to give things up when we don’t have much...but it’s a lot easier to give it away when we know we will have a whole lot left for ourselves. Or it’s *supposed* to be. But when it comes to forgiveness, that’s not always true. When we’ve been hurt we stop thinking about all of the people we’ve hurt, and we start thinking a lot about all of the bad things that people do to us. Just like when he was holding that bag of M&M’s, he knew that he had so many, it wouldn’t hurt to share...but when he thought he only

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had one, it was hard. We've been forgiven for so many sins...which means, we have a bag full of the millions of times God's forgiven us. But when others harm us, we forget about that...and act like they're trying to take our last M&M.

Sure, they really did harm you. They really are wrong. They really do owe you. That's all true. But it's also true that God really has forgiven you far more than you will ever forgive anyone else...ever. Those who are a part of God's kingdom must stay so grateful for that forgiveness that we forgive others quickly and with a great attitude.

Materials: M&M's in a bag