

ALLEY SG – March 18-20, 2023

Today's Bible Story: Mercy Mercy Me (The Story of the Unmerciful Servant) • *Matthew 18:21-35*

Today's Key Question: What keeps you from forgiving?

Today's Bottom Line: Forgive others because God forgives you.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Put up with one another. Forgive one another if you are holding something against someone. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13 (NIRV)*

1. Bible Story Extension

What You Need: Floor tape, "Story Timeline" Cards (1 set of 10 per group)

What You Do:

- Use floor tape to create a long line that will act as a timeline on the floor.
- Invite kids to take turns choosing one of the "Story Timeline" cards.
- They should read the card out loud and then decide where on the timeline that portion of the story belongs.
- Once all the cards have been placed, review the timeline as a group and discuss whether or not the cards are in the correct order.
- Ask the following questions to prompt discussion:
 - If the servant had not borrowed money to begin with, would he have ended up in prison?
 - If the servant had forgiven the person who borrowed from him, how may the story have ended differently?
 - If the king hadn't chosen to forgive the servant of his debt, what do you think would have happened?
 - Who was the king supposed to represent in the story?
- Explain that God has offered forgiveness to all of us, even when we do not deserve it.
- To prompt discussion, ask:
 - Knowing that God forgives us no matter what, how should that affect the way we choose to forgive others?
 - When we know we need to forgive someone, but we don't feel like forgiving, what can we do?

2. Verses to Take with You

What You Need: White board (one per group), dry erase marker/eraser , "Verse Puzzle" Pieces (2 sets per service), sticky notes

What You Do:

- Write the following Bible verse references on the white board:
 - 1 John 1:9
 - Lamentations 3:22
 - Romans 5:8
 - Psalm 103:12
 - Colossians 1:13-14
 - Micah 7:18
- Divide kids into two teams and have each team together on one end of your group space.
- Hand each team a Bible and 10 sticky notes.
- Place each set of "Verse Puzzle" Activity Page pieces on the opposite end from the two teams.
- Explain that you will have a relay race where they will be looking up each verse on the board and will also retrieve the puzzle pieces, one by one.
- When you say, "Go!" teams will use their Bibles to look up the first verse on the board and read it out loud together. They will place a sticky note on the page to mark their spot.

- Once they have read the first verse, one teammate will race to the opposite end, and grab one puzzle piece.
- They will run back to their team and then look up the next verse on the board, placing another sticky note on the page.
- Teams will repeat this process until every verse has been looked up and every puzzle piece has been retrieved.
- Once the teams have every puzzle piece, they must work as a team to put the puzzle together.
- The first team to complete their puzzle wins!
- After both teams have finished, take turns recruiting kids to re-read each of the verses from the board out loud for the entire group. (Verses should already be marked in Bibles with the sticky notes they used during the game.)
- Explain to kids that, through Scripture, we see again and again that God loves us and chose to forgive us first. Sometimes when we are dealing with conflict, life can feel messy, like a stack of puzzle pieces. Sometimes we aren't sure how it's all going to fit together. But we have God's Word to encourage us and guide us through life and remind us that God's here to help it all make sense.

3. Discussion Questions

Ask:

- What keeps you from forgiving? When is it difficult to forgive?
- When there's someone you need to forgive, but you're not willing to forgive them, how does that affect you?
- What do you do if you've forgiven someone for the same thing multiple times? (*This could be a sensitive question for some kids. Be mindful of those who may be experiencing difficult situations with tough friends or even family members. Remind kids that God wants the best for them, so forgiveness does not mean they continue to allow someone to hurt their feelings or treat them poorly. Seek immediate assistance from your children's ministry staff if a kid shares something that reveals they're in a dangerous situation.*)

4. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: "If/Then Story" Cards (1 set of 5 per group), paper (5 per service), pens

What You Do:

- Ask kids to get in groups of two or three and explain that they will be working together to write their own "If/Then"
- Hand each group of kids one of the "If/Then Story" cards and explain that it will give them some direction when they are writing.
- Give kids time to write their stories and then let each group read their story out loud for everyone.
- Be sure to encourage all kids that their stories were creative and unique!
- Remind kids that the parable Jesus shared about the unmerciful servant was an example of an "If/Then" story because the main character made decisions that impacted his future.
 - We can learn from this story by remembering that IF we actually consider how God has forgiven us and we allow that to affect and motivate our actions, THEN we will find it easier to forgive others.
- Ask the following questions for discussion:
 - Can you think of an "If/Then" statement that describes something that recently happened to you? (i.e.: If you practice really hard and work together as a team, then you will perform well in your soccer game on Saturday.)
 - Can you think of a time when your actions were recently motivated by something that someone else did for you? (i.e.: My brother gave me a pack of gum, and I decided to share some pieces with the kids next door.)

5. Make it Personal with Prayer

What You Need: jumbo craft sticks (7 per kid), envelope (one per kid), permanent markers,

What You Do:

- Have kids sit in a circle or at a table where everyone can reach supplies to share. Spread out the markers.
- Give each kid 7 craft sticks
- Explain that you will be making “Prayer sticks”
- On each of the craft sticks, instruct them to write one of the following prayer prompts with a permanent marker.
 - Ask for forgiveness.
 - Ask for help to forgive.
 - Pray for someone who is struggling.
 - Pray for a family member.
 - Pray for a friend.
 - Thank God for forgiving you.
 - Praise for something God’s done.
- Encourage kids to put the sticks in an envelope to take home and use them to help them know what to pray about. Explain that they don’t have to use every stick every day. They may want to pick out two or three whenever they are spending time praying. Or since there are seven sticks, they could choose one every day of the week.
- Ask if anyone would like to close in prayer (or say a quick sentence prayer), using one of the sticks they just created.
- Close the group in prayer, praying that kids would remember that they can trust God no matter what.