



**MARCH THEME**

**DIY**

**Forgiveness Is Up To You**

**BIBLE STORY**

**Matthew 18:21-35**

Mercy Mercy Me | The Unmerciful  
Servant

**BOTTOM LINE**

Forgive others because God forgives  
you

**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, NIV

**LIFE APP**

**Forgiveness** | Deciding that someone  
who has wronged you doesn't have  
to pay

**BASIC TRUTH**

I should treat others the way I  
want to be treated

**FOR LEADERS ONLY**

**GOD VIEW:** the connection between **FORGIVENESS** and God's character, as shown through God's big story.

**Key Question: Why does forgiveness matter?** As we grow up, we're used to adults telling us to say we're sorry or that we're forgiven. However, it's also important to learn why choosing to forgive others is important. We hope that families start to understand that the way they forgive others can reflect how much God forgives us.

We start the month with one of Jesus' parables recorded in **Matthew 18:21-35**. Jesus told this parable because Peter asked a question about forgiveness. Peter might have thought he was doing pretty well to say he'd forgive someone seven times, but Jesus raises the stakes and says we ought to forgive others even more. Jesus shows what this means with a parable about a servant who is shown incredible forgiveness yet doesn't do the same in return.

**Bottom Line: Forgive others because God forgives you.** God's love for us is huge. That love drives God to forgive us when we do something wrong. When we realize how much God has forgiven us, we can turn around and forgive others. This might be difficult, but God can give us the help we need to love others and show forgiveness.

**SOCIAL: PROVIDING TIME FOR FUN INTERACTION**

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today's story.

Before kids arrive, **PRAY** for each group member by name. Ask God to help kids understand the very big and abstract concept of forgiveness. Thank God for first forgiving us. Pray that your group would be encouraged to forgive others as a response to being forgiven by God.

**•• EARLY ARRIVER IDEA**

**Made to Connect** | An activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

**What You Need:** 2 decks of cards

**What You Do:**

- Welcome kids as they arrive and ask about their week.
- Set the cards in the center of your table.
- Instruct kids to count out seven cards.
- When everybody has seven cards in front of them, instruct kids to put all of the cards back in the center.
- Challenge the group to another round of counting—this time to 77.

**•• ADD 'EM UP**

**Made to Play** | An activity that encourages learning through following guidelines



*and working as a group*

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

**What You Do:**

- Encourage kids to select a partner.
- Partners will stand, facing each other, with their hands behind their backs.
- Say, “Get ready, get set, SHOW!”
- On “SHOW!” each kid must hold up one to five fingers on one hand.
- The other hand must remain behind their back.
- Pairs will add up the two hands (*one from each player*). If the total for both is seven, that pair is out and must sit down.
- For example: If one child holds up three fingers and his partner holds up four fingers for a total of seven, the pair is out.
- Repeat with remaining pairs, calling out, “Ready, Set, SHOW” for each round, as time and interest allow.
- (*Note: if your group figures out that holding up one finger is the trick to avoiding seven, you can make a rule that one is not allowed. Or, make a rule that you can’t do the same number twice in a row.*)

**What You Say:** “What number were you trying to avoid? (*pause for responses*) Yes! The number seven. **[Transition] Today in Sunday CM Worship/WOW Family Worship, we are going to find out/we found out why SEVEN is the wrong answer.**”

*[Sunday Leaders: Lead your group to Fellowship Hall for Children’s Ministry worship. Wednesday Leaders: Continue with the study.]*

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## GROUPS: CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO CONNECT

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

**•• FORGIVE OR NOT FORGIVE?** [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

***Made to Imagine | An activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment***

**What You Need:** Two pieces of copy paper, markers

**What You Do:**

- Write “FORGIVE” in large block letters on one piece of paper and “NOT FORGIVE” on the other.
- Set the signs a few feet apart from each other, somewhere in your Small Group area.
- Gather the kids to stand between the two signs.
- Point them out and let the kids read them aloud.
- Read the review questions and forgiveness scenarios below.
- Kids will decide if the statement indicates a choice to “forgive” or “not forgive,” and they’ll move to the corresponding sign.
- Make sure the kids return to the center before you ask the next question or scenario.

**Questions...**

- When the servant came before the king, owing a large sum of money, what did the king do? Did he choose to forgive or not forgive the debt? (*Instead of throwing him into jail or insisting that he repay him, the king chose to forgive the debt completely.*)
- When the now-forgiven servant saw the man who owed him a small amount, what did he do? (*He did NOT forgive. He refused to cancel the other man’s much smaller debt.*)

**Scenarios...**

- Your little brother takes something without permission and loses it. You scream and yell and tell him he can’t ever come in your room again. (*Not forgive*)
- A friend tells you she’ll play with you at recess but ignores you the whole time. Later, she remembers her promise and apologizes for not playing with you. You accept her apology. (*Forgive*)
- A kid on the playground makes fun of your shoes. You make fun of his, too. (*Not forgive*)

—Your teacher forgets to include your name on the school program and apologizes when he realizes his mistake. You say, “No problem!”  
(*Forgive*)

**What You Say:** “The reason today’s Bible story seems so unfair is that the servant wasn’t willing to do something that had been done for him. He refused to forgive the debt he was owed even after his own much larger debt had been forgiven. Why do you think he refused to forgive? What do you think you might have done in this situation if you were that forgiven servant? (*Allow a few moments for discussion.*)

“God is like the king in this story Jesus told. God will always forgive you, no matter what. Forgiveness isn’t easy. But we CAN choose to forgive when we remember that we’ve been forgiven first. Let’s choose to **[Bottom Line] forgive others because God forgives you.**”

●● **YOU BREAK IT, I’LL FIX IT** [Live for God | Application Activity]

**Made to Play | An activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group**

**What You Need:** Deck of Cards

**What You Do:**

- Set the deck of cards in the center of the small group table.
- Have your group members take turns picking the top card and setting it in front of them. Kids should count as they go. (*First person picks a card and says “one”, second person picks a card and says “two”, etc.*)
- Inform your group that the seventh person should, instead of picking one card, pick up the whole deck and scatter the cards all over.
- After the seventh person makes a mess, encourage everyone in the group—EXCEPT for the person who caused the mess—to clean it up and re-stack the cards.
- Repeat for additional rounds if time allows.

**What You Say:** “Usually in life, when someone breaks something, we say, ‘You break it, you fix it.’ But that’s not how God treats us. Because God is perfect and we’re not, God made a way for us to have a relationship with God forever. It’s like God said, ‘This is broken, but I’ll fix it! I’ll send Jesus, my only Son, to fix this broken relationship so that you can be forgiven.’ Forgiveness is the way God chose to fix it! And the same is true for us. Forgiveness fixes it.

“How does knowing you’ve been forgiven help you forgive others? This week, if you’re tempted to stay angry or you find yourself refusing to forgive, remember re-stacking these cards for someone else. Think about how God fixed our broken relationship with God by forgiving us. You can **[Bottom Line] forgive others because God forgives you.**”

**[Make It Personal] (Tell your few about a time when someone forgave you. How did it make you feel to know you’d been forgiven? How does knowing God forgives you—no matter what—help you to forgive the people around you?)**

●● **MEMORY VERSE TEAMWORK** [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

**Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body**

**What You Need:** Bible

**What You Do:**

- Look up the memory verse using the tips below and read it twice together as a group.

**Finding verses with second + third graders:** Open the Bible to the front and show them the table of contents. Show them how to find Colossians in the list under “New Testament.” Show them how to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Colossians. Open the Bible to the correct page. Explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 3. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 13 in chapter 3.

- Teach the group the motions (*suggestions below*) for the entire verse. Do this a few times, prompting them to copy you as you say the verse.

