

LESSON

02

HOW CAN I FORGIVE WHEN I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT?

TODAY'S BIBLE BASE

Just for Teachers

Bold Bible Truth **GOD LOVES YOU.**

(John 3:16)

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

(1 John 1:9)

- **Jesus told Peter to forgive again and again.**
Matthew 18:21-22
- **God expects us to forgive others.**
Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:13
- **If another believer hurts us, we're to talk about it with the person.**
Matthew 18:15

Create a Bold Classroom Environment

Relationships don't last long without forgiving and asking for forgiveness. That's true of marriages, friendships, *and* your class. So be quick to ask for forgiveness if you accidentally exclude someone or put someone down. An adult asking them for forgiveness is something your kids will never forget.

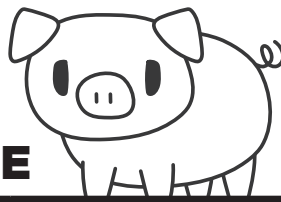
Pray for Your Preteens

Forgiving others isn't something everyone (preteen *or* adult) is willing to do. Pray that your kids be open to experiencing the power of forgiving others, receiving forgiveness themselves, and embracing a lifestyle of forgiveness.

Jot your prayer below:



Forgiveness is tough for us all—including preteens. Preteens are often emotionally fragile, so they are easily embarrassed and offended. They *need* to explore how to forgive so they can move past the emotional bumps and bruises that come with conflict and community. You'll help them find a path to approach forgiveness and give them language to express what they're experiencing.



THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

Section	What Preteens Do	Supplies	Easy Prep
Begin Boldly (about 10 minutes)	Enjoy a snack, review BE BOLD Values, report on Mystery Missions, and add questions to the whiteboard/poster board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BE BOLD Values poster• paper• markers• snacks• whiteboard or poster board and markers	
Game (about 15 minutes)	Play Liftoff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• about a dozen inflated balloons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blow up balloons and keep them out of sight.
Question of the Week (about 20 minutes)	Dig into the story of the Prodigal Son.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bibles• Bold Action Student Books• pens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tear out pages 5-6 from Bold Action Student Books.
Bold Action (about 10 minutes)	Fill in Forgive-O-Meters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bold Action Student Books• adhesive bandages• pens	
Bold Blessing (about 5 minutes)	Receive a prayer blessing and a Mystery Mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mystery Mission Cards• Mystery Mission Stickers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fold and seal a Mystery Mission Card for each preteen.



BEGIN BOLDLY (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

Arrival Activity

Greet preteens warmly as they arrive. Have healthy snack stuff on a table.

Have paper and markers available, and encourage kids to exercise the artistic side of their math skills by creating pictures drawn with only numbers. For instance, zeros can be eyes, a “7” a nose...They’ll figure it out.

Kids can draw anything, but announce there are extra points for the most realistic self-portrait. Affirm efforts as kids doodle, and allow for a time of show and tell.

As you’re ready to move on, remove the markers and paper from the room.

Welcome Kids

This week ask a willing reader to read aloud the BE BOLD Values from the BE BOLD Values poster:

You’re accepted just as you are.

We respect each other’s thoughts and struggles.

We're all in this together.

God is here, ready to be your friend because you matter!

Say: **We're all in this together—I love that phrase. Why? Because it's so true: We're all growing in our friendship with God, we're all here right now, and we all have the chance to explore God's Word together.**

I love being in this together with you!

Mystery Mission Reports

Say: **Before we dive into today's topic, let's hear how your last Mystery Mission turned out. I'll go first.**

My last Mystery Mission was...

Share a brief story of how *you* followed through with a bold mission, and then ask kids to partner up and share with one another.

Some kids may be first-timers, won't have remembered to do a mission, or simply can't picture themselves taking that sort of risk.

That's okay...but maintain a steady, positive expectation that a time will come when everyone's on board. Be careful not to shame anyone, but do express there's great fun in doing the missions.

Question Collection

Say: **Thank you! Hearing you talk about your Mystery Missions is a huge encouragement to me; I appreciate your sharing them.**

Today we're talking about this:

Write "Forgiveness" on the whiteboard.

Say: **We're talking about forgiveness. The Bible talks a *lot* about forgiveness but doesn't answer every question we might have about it. For instance, one of my forgiveness questions is this:**

Briefly write a question about forgiveness on the whiteboard.

❓ What are *your* questions about forgiveness? Shout them out and I'll write them, or you can come up to the board and write your question yourself.

Gather kids' questions on the board. Be sure to have enough markers so preteens can write their own questions.

Say: **Forgiveness is a huge topic, and today we'll focus on forgiving others. We may end up answering your question along the way, but if we don't, you and I can talk about it later. I may not know the answer, but I'll listen—and then see what we can find out together.**

Before we jump in, let's play a game of Liftoff.



PRETEEN POINTER

The BE BOLD Values you read describe a culture of acceptance and affirmation. A culture like that is more caught than taught, so live out those values in your interactions with preteens. Your genuine curiosity about their thoughts and feelings goes a long way in setting up respectful, caring conversations.



PRETEEN POINTER

Since not every preteen comes each week, let kids talk about their last Mystery Mission—no matter how long ago it was.



GAME (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

Liftoff

Have kids stand and move to an area that's relatively clear of furniture if possible.

Explain the goal of the game is for kids to work together to keep balloons from touching the floor. They can use hands, feet, elbows, noggins, and whatever else helps them keep balloons airborne.

Say: **Two things as we play this game:**

First, if a balloon hits the floor, get it back into play as quickly as possible.

Second, I'll add balloons and give you instructions as we play, such as "If someone has ever lied to you, stop using your left arm." Obey instructions as they pile up—it will get ever harder to keep balloons in the air.

When I yell out, "All is forgiven!" go back to using your entire bodies to keep balloons up in the air.

Ready? Go!

Toss one balloon upward and then, in 10 or 20 seconds, another. Keep including balloons until your kids are scrambling to keep balloons aloft.

Call out these instructions within the first 90 seconds of play:

- **If someone has ever lied to you, stop using your left arm.**
- **If someone has told a lie *about* you, no touching balloons with your head.**
- **If someone has taken something from you, no touching balloons with your feet.**

Shortly after calling out the last instruction, shout: **All is forgiven!**

Continue playing, adding yet another balloon and, one at a time, shouting out these instructions:

- **If someone has ever cheated you, stop using your right arm.**
- **If someone has been mean to you, don't move your right foot.**
- **If someone has ever pushed you, close your left eye.**
- **If someone has hurt your feelings, close your right eye.**

Immediately call out: **All is forgiven!**

Continue playing, picking up the pace as you repeat all seven instructions listed above. When you finish, your preteens will be standing with their eyes closed. All balloons will quickly fall to the floor.

Say: **Open your eyes and, before you sit down again, let's talk about what just happened.**

❓ **What made this game hard or easy for you?**

Accept several answers from preteens.



PRETEEN POINTER

There's no "right" answer to these questions. Affirm responses and ask follow-up questions to help preteens dig deeper as they formulate their thoughts.

Say: **I called out things people do to us that hurt us. Lying to us, cheating us, and telling lies about us are all things we can forgive—or not.**

❓ **How was what happened during our game like what happens when we do—or don't—forgive people who hurt us?**

Accept several answers from preteens.

Say: **Thanks for your thoughts.**

When we don't forgive others, it gets in the way of us doing what we want and need to do in life. It can get in the way of being a friend of God. GOD LOVES YOU and is always ready to forgive you, but that's God. He's good at forgiveness, but us? Less so.

Sometimes it's hard to forgive others, and we may not even *want* to forgive them.

Let's see what the Bible can tell us about forgiving others who we don't want to forgive.

Gather up balloons and set them aside so they don't become a distraction.



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LIKE IT?**



QUESTION OF THE WEEK (ABOUT 20 MINUTES)

Distribute pages 5-6 from the Bold Action Student Books to each preteen.

Say: **Forgiving others is hard, and sometimes the easiest way to do something hard is to not do it at all. Let's see if we *really* have to forgive bullies and other people who hurt us.**

Form preteens into pairs and ask them to talk about this:

Say: **Tell about a time you needed to forgive someone. Place a line on your Forgive-O-Meter that best shows what you did when it came to forgiving that person.**

Let me tell you about something that happened to me...

Briefly tell about a time you needed to forgive someone. Tell what you had to forgive, and what you did. Be authentic; it will be most helpful (and give your kids permission to be most honest) if you share an age-appropriate situation in which you couldn't immediately completely forgive the other person.

Say: **Your turn now. Tell your partner about a time you needed to forgive someone. Explain why you placed the mark on your meter where you placed it.**

Allow time for pairs to talk.

Say: **Forgiving others is *hard*. It's hard when someone who hurts us is sorry and apologizes. It's *really* hard when the other person doesn't care or even laughs about hurting us.**

Sometimes we just don't want to forgive people...but do we have to?

Ask pairs to read the four passages on page 5 of the Bold Action Student Book. Then ask the whole group:



PRETEEN POINTER

Before you lead this lesson, speak with the appropriate church leader so you know when you need to report possible abuse to authorities and how to go about doing so. Might child abuse be happening to your kids? Sadly, yes.

- ❓ **What do you think? Is the Bible telling us we need to choose to forgive no matter what? If so, why?**

After kids respond, continue.

Say: **Here's what I think we've discovered: God wants us to forgive people, even people we don't want to forgive. But that doesn't tell us *how* to forgive those people.**

So, let me just ask:

- ❓ **What helps you forgive people who hurt you?**

Allow several responses.

Say: **Thanks. I know sometimes people hurt each other in big ways. If someone's hurting you in a way that makes you feel unsafe, please tell me about that before you leave. I'll see if together we can get you help.**

But most of our forgiveness challenges are about smaller stuff...though that doesn't make forgiving others easy!

Let's see what choosing to forgive looks like in a story Jesus told. We may pick up some pointers.

Recruit three kids to join you up front. Explain they'll silently act out the parts of Father, Older Son, and Younger Son. Everyone else will provide pig sound effects.

Then ask a willing preteen to read aloud the "Here, Piggy, Piggy" story on page 6 of the Bold Action Student Book. Pause often to allow actors to strut their stuff.

Following the story, applaud your actors and sound-effects people and then, as a whole group, discuss:

- ❓ **Where did you see forgiveness in this story?**

- ❓ **Where did you see a lack of forgiveness?**

Say: **Both Father and Older Son had to choose whether to forgive Younger Son. Father chose to forgive; Older Son didn't—at least, not at first.**

Following the story, form your preteens into three groups. If you have a small class, it's okay if a "group" is as small as one person.

Have each group discuss one of the three questions on page 6. After they talk, have groups share what they talked about with the whole group.

Say: **This story is a great example of something we know for certain about God: Just like this father loved and forgave his Younger Son, **GOD LOVES YOU** and is always ready to forgive you!**



BOLD ACTION (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

Quickly sum up what your class has discovered thus far about forgiving others:

- The Bible says forgiving others is a big deal. God wants us to do it.
- We can choose to forgive—because forgiving is a choice. We can decide to be loving and forgiving even if we don't feel like it.

Say: **When it comes to forgiving others, here are three other things I want you to know:**

First, you're not in this alone. You can talk to God about helping you forgive others. You can ask people like me pray for you, too.

Second, like the Bible suggests, we can talk with people who hurt us. They may not care that we're hurt, or apologize, but we don't have to suffer in silence.

And third, we can choose to move on, letting go of our anger. We may not choose to trust the other person, but we can quit being mad. We can quit bringing up how much we were hurt.

Let's get some forgiveness practice now.

Distribute adhesive bandages—one per preteen. Ask kids to spread out so they can each be away on their own but still hear your voice.

Once kids are separated, ask them to unwrap their bandages.

Say: **Think of someone who's hurt you, someone you haven't forgiven yet. Once you have a name in mind, place your bandage on the back of one hand.**

Once kids have bandages in place, continue.

Say: **You can choose to ask for God's help with forgiving that person. Silently do that now, and then I'll wrap up our prayer time.**

After 30 seconds, thank God for always being ready to forgive you, and ask that God help all of you choose to forgive the people represented by your bandages.

Say: **You can decide to forgive the person you're thinking about. It's a choice you can make even though the other person may not deserve forgiveness or even be sorry.**

In the next few moments of silence, ask yourself: Will you make that choice?

After 15 seconds, continue.

Say: **You can choose to talk with the other person. You can say that you're hurt, and why. In the next few moments, silently tell Jesus what you might say to that person you're thinking about. Ask Jesus what he'd have you say.**

After 20 seconds, continue.

Say: **You can choose to move on, to not expect the person who hurt you to pay for what he or she did. You can let go of your anger. You can decide to forgive others the way Jesus has forgiven you.**

Remember: Jesus said that if we don't forgive others, the Father won't forgive us. That's a reason to move toward forgiveness as you're able.

In the next few moments, think about whether you're ready to move on with the person you have in mind. Be honest—maybe you're not ready yet. But you can decide to try.

After 20 seconds, continue. Ask kids to join with their partners again and for each preteen to get a pen and page 5 of the Bold Action Student Book.

Say: **On your How to Forgive-O-Meter, draw a line that shows your next step in forgiving the person who you've been thinking about. Maybe it's talking with God about it—that's always a great place to begin—or maybe you're ready to take another step. Draw a line now on your How to Forgive-O-Meter.**

Pause, then continue.

Now, with your pen, write on your partner's bandage these words:

Write on the whiteboard: With God's help.

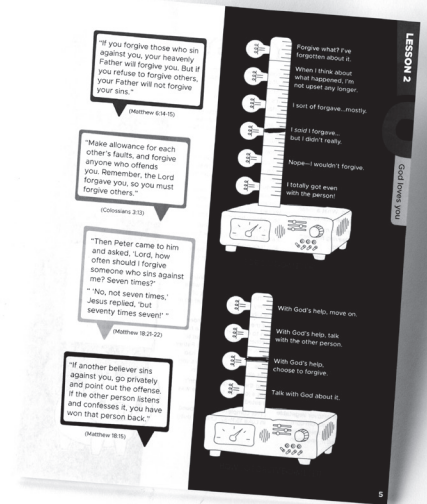
Say: **With God's help. Write those words because sometimes forgiving others is just too hard to do on your own. You need the help of God to be like the Father in Jesus' story.**

Do that now.

Pause, then continue.

Our Bold Action today is silently praying for God to give us the courage to take a next step toward forgiving the people our bandages represent.

Let's do that now.



BOLD BLESSING (ABOUT 5 MINUTES)

Pray

Say: **Instead of praying for yourself, I'd like you to silently pray for your partner to be able to forgive. You'll do that for the next few moments, and then I'll finish.**

After 20 seconds, continue.

Pray: **God, thank you that you forgive us. Thank you for helping us forgive others. Give our friends the courage to do what you and that farmer father have done: to forgive.**

In Jesus' name, amen.

Say: **Wear your bandage home today. Let it be a reminder that with God's help, you *can* forgive others...starting with the person your bandage represents.**

That's being bold because forgiveness is bold!

You prayed for each other; now I'd like to pray for you.

Hold up your hand that has the bandage on it as I pray.

Pause.

Pray: **God, you see the hands raised in our room. You know what's behind those bandages. There's hurt. Disappointment. Maybe anger.**

Help us forgive all that and move on.

Your healing is bigger than any hurt that's been done to us. Help us forgive and feel that healing.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Send-Off Cheer

Have kids stand in a circle with their hands in the center, like a sports team. Tell them that when you finish the Bold Blessing, they'll raise their hands and shout "Let's be bold!"

Say this Bold Blessing: **A Bold Blessing for you to carry home with you today: May you be bold in forgiving others—even when you don't feel like it. May you forgive others as God has forgiven you. And may they know that the power they feel in being forgiven is the power of God flowing through you. Say it with me: *Let's be bold!***

Mystery Mission

Say: **We discovered today that **GOD LOVES US** and is always ready to forgive us.**

And we discovered that with God's help we can choose to forgive others, too, even when we don't feel like it.

Keep that in mind as you take on your Mystery Mission this week!

I'll now give you a sealed card that contains your top-secret mission. Don't open it until you get home.

We'll talk about what happened the next time we get together.

Distribute a Mystery Mission Card to each preteen. Take your own card home and complete the challenge, too!

