

1

Recognize Wrongs

LUKE 15:11-24



GOAL

Children hear the story of the prodigal son and learn that the first step in forgiveness is knowing and naming the wrong that has been done.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Loving and forgiving God, thank you for always loving and forgiving all your children. Equip me to explore forgiveness with these children in my care, building them up in their faith. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session explores recognizing sin, the first step in the process and practice of forgiveness. It is impossible to ask for forgiveness or offer it to others until the need and necessity of forgiveness is acknowledged, which in turn means seeing the sin in the first place.

THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible story for all four sessions in this unit is the parable Jesus told in Luke 15:11–24 about a father and his two sons, although the focus is on the actions of the younger son. In this story of a family, the need for forgiveness is recognized and named by the younger son, then granted by the father. By recognizing and naming the wrong he has done and the relationship he has broken with his family, forgiveness and healing are made possible.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

For young children, forgiveness is about setting things right: apologizing to our sibling or friend when we hurt them or hurt their feelings, being hurt by another and expressing how and why we feel hurt, and learning the necessity of forgiveness in moving on in relationship. As children learn about their own actions, they also learn about the consequences of their, and others', actions. Knowing and naming the wrongdoing, however, is an important step in the act of forgiving or being forgiven. Without it, the apology may feel hollow and broken relationships can worsen.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “The Big Picture” (p. 8): Make a copy of Resource Pages 1 and 2. Cut out the picture from each page and tape them together on the back to form one large picture. Then cut the large picture into similar-sized pieces, one for each child plus a couple of extra pieces for unexpected children. Cut a piece of mural paper long enough for four big pictures, as you will be adding one reassembled big picture in each session of this unit.
- “Forgiving” (p. 8): To see a video of the signs for “forgive” and “thanks be to God,” use the YouTube videos “Learn How to Sign the Word Forgive” (bit.ly/FMASLForgive, 0:18) and “ASL Minute—Prayer, Thanks Be to God, Amen and Hawaiian Goose” (bit.ly/FMASLThanksGod, 4:04, starting at 0:41 and ending at 2:00).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “How to Apologize” (p. 11): Obtain *How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle (Candlewick, 2021) or use the YouTube video “How to Apologize by David LaRochelle and Mike Wohnoutka” (bit.ly/FMApologize, 5:44).



GETTING STARTED

- Prepared coloring pieces from Resource Pages 1 and 2
- Crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils
- Transparent tape
- Mural paper



Save “The Big Picture” mural for sessions 2–4.

THE BIG PICTURE

A C

Greet the children as they arrive and invite them to color part of a big picture that you will put together. Provide prepared coloring pieces from a copy of Resource Pages 1 and 2 and coloring supplies. Tell the children that they are seeing and coloring just a piece of the big picture, like a puzzle piece.

While the children are coloring, engage them in conversation, inviting them to tell you about something good that happened during the week. Wonder what mistakes anyone might have made. Be sure and share a mistake of your own. Assure the children that, even when we do something wrong, we are OK, and God loves us all the time. Tell the children that learning to see when we’ve done something wrong is an important part of growing up.

When the children have finished coloring their pieces, tape them together to make the big picture. Wonder what the picture shows. Tell the children that today’s story is about a boy who hurt his father’s feelings and needed to see what he had done wrong so that he could ask for forgiveness. Tape the big picture to the left end of a piece of mural paper and display it.

FORGIVING

AM QC

As an opening ritual for each session, teach the children the American Sign Language signs for “forgive” and “thanks be to God.”

- **Forgive:** Use the middle three fingertips of your right hand to brush twice across the palm of your left hand. Explain that the same sign is used for the words *forgiving* and *forgiveness* as well.
- **Thanks be to God:** Place your fingertips of your right hand on your lower lip and raise your hand out and upward. Then fold your thumb to your palm and bring your hand, palm facing left, back down, ending with your pointer finger at your lower lip.

Invite the children to join you in prayer, repeating after you and making the sign for “forgive” and “thanks be to God” when those words, or forms of them, are said.

Gracious God, /
we believe you forgive. /
Forgive us the times /
we hurt others and your creation. /
Forgive others, /
who also make mistakes. /
Help us be as forgiving to others /
as you are to us. /
Forgive us our sins, /
as we forgive those who sin against us. /
Thanks be to God. /



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

RIGHTY AND LEFTY LEARN ABOUT FORGIVENESS



Resource Page 3

Gather the children in a circle and tell a story of forgiveness with your hands using Resource Page 3. After the story, engage the children in conversation about the story and forgiveness using the following statements and questions. Reinforce the statements with the hand motions, inviting the children to repeat your words and actions.

The first step (*hold up pointer finger*) /
of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
is knowing (*tap head with right pointer finger*) /
and naming (*open and close right fingers and thumb together as if speaking with fingers*) /
that you did something wrong. (*fold right fingers in 90° angle*) /

- ➔ What did Righty do that was wrong?
- ➔ What did Righty's actions do to Righty's and Lefty's friendship?
- ➔ What did Righty tell God, and what did God do?

The second step (*hold up two fingers*) /
of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
is receiving forgiveness from God. (*spread right fingers wide, palm facing out and up*) /

- ➔ What did Lefty do when Righty named what they had done wrong?

The third step (*hold up three fingers*) /
of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
is forgiving others. (*spread left and right fingers wide, palms facing each other, then high five*) /

- ➔ How did Righty and Lefty mend their friendship?

The fourth step (*hold up four fingers*) /
of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
is building a bridge to mend the friendship. (*bring both hands together interlocking fingers*) /

Tell the children that today you are going to learn about the first step of forgiveness: knowing and naming when you have done something wrong.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

RECOGNIZING AND NAMING



Bible
 Resource Page 4

The Bible story throughout this unit will be the same story from Luke 15, but the children will experience it in a different way in each session.

Open the Bible to Luke 15 and tell the children that today's story is about a family, but mainly about a father and a younger son. Explain that this

is a story that Jesus told people to help them learn about God. Comment that the story has lots of emotions and feelings in it. Invite the children to practice showing emotions with their faces and bodies but without using words.

Have the children form pairs or triads. Explain that each person in the pair or triad will take a turn coming to you to hear an emotion or feeling you will name. Then they will go back to their partner(s) and show that emotion or feeling with their face or body for their partner(s) to guess. Use the following emotions, and add some of your own ideas as you wish: happy, surprised, sad, confused, angry, excited, scared, and worried.

Applaud the children's work and invite them to use their face or body when you mention an emotion or feeling and pause while reading the story. Read aloud the adapted Bible story on Resource Page 4.

Ask the children to use their face and body, but not words, to show forgiveness. Let the children wrestle with this one a bit and acknowledge that it may be difficult to show. Wonder what emotions or feelings may look like if we are asking for forgiveness (a combination of worried, sad, and/or scared) and what emotions or feelings may look like if someone asks us for forgiveness (possibly sad, angry, and/or happy). Ask the children to use words that might go along with forgiveness, when we are asking for it and when we are giving it to another person.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of Resource Page 5
 - Crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils

NAMING OUR MISTAKES

A C

Remind the children that the first step of forgiveness is knowing and naming what we have done wrong. Hand out copies of Resource Page 5 and provide coloring supplies. Invite the children to circle the pictures that show something wrong being done. Tell the children they can color the pictures.

Review the pictures with the children and have them name the wrong being done in the picture. Wonder who might forgive the person in each of these pictures. If God is not mentioned, tell the children that God forgives each person.

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- Worship bulletin
 - Newsprint and marker

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

C QC

Show the children a worship bulletin and tell them that the worship bulletin guides people through the worship service. Point out some of the different parts of worship, explaining just a bit about each one:

- Call to worship: gathering together to worship God
- Hymn: singing together
- Children's message: talking with children about the Bible story or faith
- Scripture reading: hearing a passage from the Bible
- Sermon: hearing a pastor talk about the Bible passage and how it applies to our lives
- Benediction: being blessed to go out and serve God

Tell the children that another part of the worship service is the prayer of confession and assurance of pardon (or declaration of forgiveness). Explain that this is when people pray together, telling God of any mistakes or wrongs

they have done and asking for God’s forgiveness. After the prayer, the pastor or worship leader tells everyone of God’s great love and forgiveness.

Comment that, individually, we make mistakes and do wrong, but the prayer often mentions things that we all do that may hurt others or God’s creation. Read one or two things that are mentioned in the prayer in your worship bulletin, if age appropriate for understanding.

Brainstorm and create a prayer together. Wonder together what mistakes or wrong we have done this week, when we have hurt another person’s feelings or hurt God’s creation. Write responses on a sheet of newsprint.

Remind the children that the first step of forgiveness is knowing and naming what we have done wrong, so we pray, telling God these things. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Dear God, /
We do not always do the best thing or the right thing. /
Sometimes we make mistakes or poor choices, like . . . /
(name items listed by the children, one by one) /
We know you love us no matter what. /
Thank you for always being with us. /
Amen. /

Then assure the children of God’s forgiveness by saying, “The good news is that God forgives us and loves us. Thanks be to God!”



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

HOW TO APOLOGIZE



Read aloud *How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle or show the YouTube video “How to Apologize by David LaRochelle and Mike Wahnoutka” ([bit.ly/FMApologize](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMApologize), 5:54). Talk together about times that the children have apologized for something. Wonder what they said and if they named what they had done wrong.

Invite the children to practice apologizing by using the scenarios provided below, or some of your own choosing. Form small groups or work together as one group. Remind children to know and name what has been done wrong in the apology.

- Someone colors on another person’s picture.
- Two or three children leave out another child in a game.
- A child breaks something at home and does not tell the truth about it.
- A child pushes other children to be first in line.
- Two children, who are friends, get angry with each other and call each other names.

THE FOUR STEPS OF FORGIVENESS

Tell the children that there are four steps of forgiveness. Use the following directions, repeated from “Righty and Lefty Learn about Forgiveness” (p. 9), inviting the children to echo your words and motions:

The first step (*hold up pointer finger*) /
of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /

- *How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle (Candlewick, 2021) or internet-connected device



This activity will be repeated in each session of this unit because it builds on the steps involved in forgiveness, just the way the sessions do. Repetition is an important way that young children learn.

is knowing (*tap head with right pointer finger*) /
 and naming (*open and close right fingers and thumb together as if speaking with fingers*) /
 that you did something wrong. (*fold right fingers in 90° angle*) /
 The second step (*hold up two fingers*) /
 of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
 is receiving forgiveness from God. (*spread right fingers wide, palm facing out and up*) /
 The third step (*hold up three fingers*) /
 of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
 is forgiving others. (*spread left and right fingers wide, palms facing each other, then high five*) /
 The fourth step (*hold up four fingers*) /
 of forgiveness (*brush twice across the palm of your left hand with the middle three fingertips of your right hand*) /
 is building a bridge to mend the friendship. (*bring both hands together interlocking fingers*) /

Encourage the children to use the four steps when they need to ask for forgiveness or offer it to another person. Suggest that they share the four steps with family members.



FOLLOWING JESUS

FORGIVENESS PARTY



Have the children gather in a circle, and invite them to repeat after you in an open-eyed prayer.

Dear God, /
 I am sorry /
 for times I hurt another person /
 or hurt God's creation today. /
 Amen. /

Then turn to the person on your right and say, “(Name), God loves you and forgives you!” Have that person turn to the person on their right and repeat the declaration of forgiveness. Continue around the circle until the declaration comes back to you.

Remind the children that, when the younger son returned home and apologized, his father was so happy that he had a party to celebrate. Play one or more of the following YouTube videos and have a dance party.

- “Forgive Me (Show Version)” (bit.ly/FMForgiveMeSong, 2:24)
- “Love the Lord—Kids Worship Motions with Lyrics—CJ and Friends” (bit.ly/FMLoveTheLord, 3:21)
- “Jump Around—Preschool Worship Song” (bit.ly/FMJumpAround, 1:55)
- “Every Move I Make—Dance-a-Long with Lyrics—Kids Worship” (bit.ly/FMEveryMove, 3:18)

Know and Name



tape Resource Page 2 here





This is the story of Righty (*wave right hand*) and Lefty (*wave left hand*).

They were friends (*shake hands—both palms facing you with thumbs up, turn right palm out and grasp left palm*).

They loved to play basketball together (*pretend to shoot a basket with both hands*) and make music (*pretend to play the piano*), even when there wasn't an instrument (*use both hands to pat thighs in a funky rhythm*).

They cleaned up together (*pretend to wash hands*). Lefty was the only one who could scratch Righty's back (*use right fingers to scratch the back of left hand*), and Righty was the only one who could make sure Lefty was well groomed (*pretend to file and polish nails*).

One day, Righty and Lefty were building a tower out of blocks (*pretend to place blocks*). Righty got frustrated, knocked over the tower (*use right hand to pretend to knock over blocks*), and yelled at Lefty (*open and close fingers and thumb together as if speaking with fingers*).

Lefty was surprised (*spread left fingers wide, left palm facing right*), and then sad (*fold left fingers in 90° angle*), and then angry (*make a fist with left hand*), and then Lefty left (*drop left hand to side*).

Righty knew they did something wrong (*fold right fingers in 90° angle*).

Righty talked with God (*face right palm out and up*) and said, "I did something wrong, something that hurt my friend's feelings" (*fold right fingers in 90° angle*).

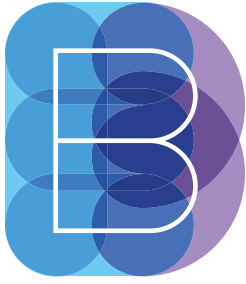
Righty received forgiveness from God (*spread right fingers wide, palm facing out and up*).

Righty went to Lefty (*have right hand with fingers spread wide facing left fist*) and said, "Lefty, I'm sorry I knocked over our tower, yelled at you, and hurt your feelings. I was not being a good friend" (*fold right fingers in 90° angle*).

Lefty slowly looked up (*uncurl left fist*) and said, "I forgive you!" (*spread left and right fingers wide, palms facing each other*). They both shouted, "Yay!" and high fived each other (*high five*).

Then Righty said, "Let's build a bridge together" (*bring both hands together interlocking fingers*). And Lefty said, "Forgiveness brings us back together" (*place interlocked hands in lap*).





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 15:11–24

Once there was a parent with two children. One day, the younger child, feeling very **excited** (*pause*), said to their father, “Give me all the money I’d get someday when you die. I don’t want to wait.” The father was **sad** (*pause*) about what their child asked of them. But the father loved their child, so he gave his son the money. The son was **happy** (*pause*), but the father was very **sad** (*pause*).

The younger child gathered all his possessions and left home. He was **thrilled** (*pause*) to go far away and live his own life. He had no worries.

He traveled to a city and ate, and drank, and partied all he wanted. He was **surprised** (*pause*) when all his money was gone. He was **confused** (*pause*) when all the people he thought were friends left him, but there were no more parties or food or drink.

Then bad times hit the city, and there was no food and no jobs. The son was **worried** (*pause*). He didn’t know what to do. He finally found a job feeding a man’s pigs. It was dirty and smelly, and even then the pigs were eating more than he was. The son was **hungry** (*pause*), **tired** (*pause*), and **scared** (*pause*).

The son realized that everyone who worked for his father had plenty to eat and a place to live. He came to his senses and knew he had done something wrong. He felt **sad** (*pause*) that he had left home and hurt his father’s feelings. He knew what he had done was wrong, and he knew he needed to tell his father. He was **worried** (*pause*) about what his father might do since he had wasted all of his money. He decided to say that he didn’t need to be treated like a son but as one of his father’s workers.

So he got up and traveled home. While the son was coming up the road, but still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with so much **love** (*pause*). The father ran and put his arms around his child and kissed him. He was so **happy** (*pause*) that his son was home safe and sound. The son told his father what he had done was wrong and hoped he could be one of his father’s workers. He asked to be forgiven.

The father was **happy** (*pause*) to hear that but much **happier** (*pause*) that his son was home. He called to everyone and said that there would be a big party to celebrate his son’s return, for he had thought his son was dead, but he was alive! The father forgave his son.

