

Each month we have a special memory verse and Life App.
All of our stories revolve around those.

This month's Memory Verse is:
***"Bear with one another and forgive one another
if any of you has a grievance against someone.
Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
Colossians 3:13, NIV***

This month's life app is
Forgiveness
"Deciding that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay."

Weekly, we have a different bottom line that goes with our story and Life App.

So far this month our bottom lines have been:

- 1) Forgive others because God forgives you. (The unmerciful servant)
- 2) When you forgive others, it can change them. (Zacchaeus)
- 3) Take the first step to forgive others. (Jesus teaches on Forgiveness)

Our story for this week is about The Lost Son. (Luke 15:11-24)
The **Bottom Line** this week: 'Everyone needs to be forgiven.'

**Today we've got a story about siblings—two brothers, to be exact. It's a parable that Jesus told as a way to help people understand something important.

"As you may remember, Jesus did and said so many things that crowds of people would follow Him everywhere. Most of the time, He'd take care of their needs—He'd teach them, heal their sicknesses, or even feed them. But sometimes, even Jesus needed a break. And He'd have to climb mountains or sail away in a boat just to get a moment to Himself!

"But then there were the religious leaders: the Pharisees. They were angry that Jesus cared about ALL people—even the ones who didn't seem to be following all the rules. You see, the Pharisees believed that if they followed the rules, that made them closer to God than anyone else. So, Jesus told them a parable to teach them a lesson.

There once was a man with two sons.

One day, the younger son went to his father and said . . .

'Father, give me my share of the estate.' (*Luke 15:12 NIV*).

This was a strange request, usually a son wouldn't get his share of the family property until the father had died. The father wondered Why? But he went ahead and agreed.

He divided all of the property and money between his two sons

The younger son was so excited. He thought he had it made,
So, he packed up and moved to a faraway country.

Unfortunately, in this faraway country, the younger son wasted all his money.

Maybe like... "Let's see . . . I want some candy . . . and some video games . . . and some pizza. Yeah. Pizza.

But the money didn't last forever. Jesus said it this way.

"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs." *Luke 15:14-15 (NIV)*

But still, the son was SO hungry. He looked at the slop the pigs were eating and wondered if he might take a bite!

“Um . . . gross.”

Finally, the son came to his senses.

This is crazy! Even my father’s servants have plenty of food, but here I am starving to death! I know what I’ll do!

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’
(Luke 15:18-19 NIV).

So, the son got up and went home.

When the son could barely see his home in the distance, his father noticed he was coming. The father’s heart filled with love & joy. He ran straight toward his son and threw his arms around him.” “My son! You’ve come home!!”

The son knelt down in front of his father and said “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”

But the father was so happy to see his son had returned that he called for the servants.

“Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So, they began to celebrate. *(Luke 15:22-24 NIV).*

Wow!! They celebrated because the lost son had returned.

(Well not EVERYBODY celebrated, but we’ll find out more about that next week.)

There’s a reason why Jesus told that story. He wanted the religious leaders to understand that it isn’t that some people are good and some people are bad and that God only loves the good people. That’s not right at all. God loves ALL of us. No matter what. He wanted them to understand that ALL of us need God’s forgiveness.

“Everyone needs to be forgiven”

Here’s the great news. God is ALWAYS ready to forgive! He loves us. No matter what we’ve done, He’s waiting to welcome us home—just like the father in the story.

Let’s pray and thank God for loving us the way He does.

PRAY

“God, we are so thankful for Your love and Your forgiveness! It’s true that all of us mess up. All of us need to be forgiven. But You never turn your back on us, no matter what we’ve done. You’re ALWAYS there to love us and forgive us when we turn to You. Thank You for this reminder of Your great love for us. Help us to share Your forgiveness with the people around us, too. We love You, and we ask these things in Jesus’ name, amen.”

*Real life can be pretty dramatic. There are definitely times when I mess up and need to be forgiven. There are people who I need to forgive, too—and that’s not always easy.

The truth is . . .

. . . **everyone needs to be forgiven.** It’s easier to forgive when we remember how forgiving God is toward US!

“You see, God is just like the father in the story Jesus told. And all of us are like the younger son. We all make bad choices and run from God sometimes. But when we come to our senses, we remember that **we can trust God no matter what**. We remember that we can always come back to Him and find His perfect love and forgiveness. He’s always waiting to forgive us when we mess up.

God has had a rescue plan for all of us since the very beginning—ever since Adam and Eve first sinned in the garden. When the time was right, God sent Jesus to be our Savior and Jesus carried out God’s plan by taking the punishment for the things we do that are wrong. All you have to do is believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He came to die for YOUR sins. Then your sins—every single one—will be forgiven. God offers us forgiveness once and for all because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

“Everyone needs to be forgiven” That’s why Jesus died for us. Anytime you mess up, you don’t ever have to wonder if God will forgive you. You know He will! All you have to do is ask. You can come back to Him and find His love and forgiveness every time!

All activities should be adaptable for any age

Activity 1:

BALANCING ACT

What you need: Prepare tape lines on the floor

- Have kids take turns walking on the lines and trying to balance without touching the floor where there’s no tape.
- After kids have each had a turn, make it harder by challenging them to hop on one foot or jump along the lines.
- **Afterwards, you can say:** “That was hard balancing on the lines. Sometimes you fell off or made a mistake. You and I make mistakes all the time—sometimes every day—just like the son in our story made mistakes. Was he forgiven by his dad? *(Pause.)* Was he forgiven by God? *(Pause.)*

“We can also be forgiven when we make mistakes. Tell me about a time when someone forgave you? *(Some prompting may be needed. Maybe a parent forgave them for yelling mean things or for being disobedient. Or perhaps a friend forgave them when they accidentally broke the friend’s toy.)* It’s such a great feeling when someone forgives us, isn’t it? And it’s also a great feeling when we forgive someone else. Let’s remember that the next time we need to forgive someone. **Everyone needs to be forgiven**—and that includes you and me!”

Activity 2:

VERSE HIDEAWAY

What you need: Bibles, paper scraps, and pens

- Instruct two kids to look up Colossians 3:13 and read it aloud to the group.
- As they are reading, write out the verse on the paper scraps—two or three words per scrap of paper. Count the paper scraps.
- When you finish, fold the papers in half and ask the kids to cover their eyes as you hide them.
- Once all the words are hidden, challenge your kids to find all of the paper scraps and put the verse in order.
- Review their work by repeating the verse together as a group.

You can say: “One BIG truth about forgiveness is that everyone needs it! We all mess up. When we do, we can be sure that God will ALWAYS forgive us. Our verse for this month reminds us to forgive because God has forgiven us. If you find yourself refusing to forgive this week, ask God to help you remember that **everyone needs to be forgiven.**”

Activity 3:

STORY BOARD

What you need: Construction paper, crayons, tape

- Give kids construction paper.
- Assign each piece of paper a part of the story to be drawn:
 1. The father gave the son all of his inheritance.
 2. The son left home and spent all his money.
 3. The son ended up eating with pigs.
 4. The son decided to go back home.
 5. The father saw his son coming home and ran toward him to give him a hug.
 6. The son asked for forgiveness.
- Remind kids of what happened if needed.
- Once the drawings are all finished, have kids explain each drawing in order as it happened in the story.
- Give kids a piece of tape so they can hang their drawing up in story order. Now they can tell anyone the story who asks about their pictures!

What you can say: “Great job working putting all of our story pieces together. The son in our story made some bad decisions, but he still came back to his father to ask for forgiveness. What did the father do when he came back? *(He threw a party!)* The story today reminds us that even when we make really big mistakes, **everyone needs to be forgiven.**”

“What are some things that kids your age might need to be forgiven for?”

(Encourage responses, such as: telling a lie, disobeying my parents, yelling at my brother for messing up a video game, using my sister's stickers without asking, etc.) Those are the kind of things we all do sometimes, and they're

things we need to ask forgiveness for. Some of those things might also be done TO us, and we need to forgive the other person, even if we're angry and even if they don't ask for forgiveness. **Everyone needs to be forgiven.**”

Activity 4:

What you need: Uninflated balloons, thin markers or pens, basket

- **Encourage** kids to think of examples of things people do that “wrong each other,” things that might need forgiveness.
(say mean things, cheat on tests, lie, say things about other people we shouldn’t, get angry when we don’t get our way, exclude people, forget to do what we say we will, lose our temper, etc).
- **Give** kids an uninflated balloon and tell them to write 1-3 of these examples on their uninflated balloons.
- **Suggest** kids pick out a key word for these examples such as: lie, gossip, anger, mean, ignore, etc.
- **Tell** kids to blow up their balloons and knot the stems.
- **Discuss** the examples.
- **Direct** kids to shoot their balloons into the basket. Those sins are gone as soon as we ask for God’s forgiveness. God forgives us just like the father who forgave his lost son. No one is perfect, **everyone needs to be forgiven**. God is always there, waiting for us to come to Him with love & forgiveness.