



Harmonychurch.life

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

This month's Memory Verse is:

**"God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ.  
Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift."  
Ephesians 2:8**

This month's life app is

**Faith  
"Believing what Jesus did can change me."**

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

Week 1: **"The story of Jesus is for everybody."**

Week 2: **"The story of Jesus is bigger than every other story."**

This week's bottom line is;

**"The story of Jesus changes how I forgive others."**

Our story for this week is a Forgiveness Principle. (Ephesians 4:32)

*<Today's lesson includes also includes a visual aspect.*

*Use a dry erase board & dry erase markers, a mirror or glass and some washable markers.*

*Section board/mirror into 3 parts. Left to right. Each section will have a picture in it. Draw ahead of time.*

*1) Red, fiery flames 2) Large, green, angry eye 3) Black tornado or swirls*

*Cover each section with a piece of paper, to be revealed separately.>*

\*\*Last week, the main character in our story had been in jail... His name was Paul. He used to be known as Saul, he actually started off as a Jesus-hater..... At first, he hunted Christians and arrested them. But then God spoke to Paul and changed his entire life. Paul went on to become one of the most famous and important Christians of all time.

For our story today, Paul had been arrested. Only this time Paul is under house arrest. Again, he was arrested for NO good reason at all. He had committed no crime except talking about Jesus. For YEARS Paul was under house arrest. Can you imagine? How mad would you be? How furious? I'd probably have steam coming out of my ears like a cartoon character. But not Paul. While he was under house arrest, Paul did a lot of letter writing. He wrote to many of the churches he had visited, giving them advice and encouraging them. In fact, several of these letters are now part of the New Testament in the Bible.

One of these was a letter to the believers in Ephesus. And considering the fact that Paul was under arrest BUT innocent, I think you'll find Paul's words to them very, very surprising.

He said. 'I want you to find the men who have gotten me arrested, and I want you to make them pay.'

Do you think that is what Paul said? No, of course he didn't say that. But maybe he said something like...Why don't you visit me more? No one cares that I'm suffering. No one even cares that I'm stuck here.

Well, that's not what Paul said, either. What Paul REALLY said is...

**'Get rid of all hard feelings, anger and rage. Stop all fighting and lying. Don't have anything to do with any kind of hatred. Be kind and tender to one another. Forgive one another, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done.'**  
*(Ephesians 4:31-32)*

Did you hear that? Paul said, **'Forgive each other, just as God forgave you'**. Isn't that incredible. It's hard to believe that Paul would write that from jail. JAIL...where he had been put even though he had done Nothing wrong. And then to say, **'Show each other complete grace. Don't get mad. Don't talk bad about people. Keep your heart soft. And just forgive.'** Unbelievable!

Sometimes it's hard just to have a good attitude. It's hard to forgive people when they have wronged you. And we're not even in JAIL. But Paul tells us to do all these things. He also says there's a reason why we do it. It's the last few lines of the verse: **'just as God, through Christ, has forgiven you.'** Basically, Forgive, because God forgives you."

*<Get you board/mirror and uncover section 1-flames>*

When we lose our temper, we can do some pretty awful things. We say stuff we don't mean. We might slam doors. Yell. Call names. Anger can make it feel like our insides are on FIRE. The Bible says,

**'The words of thoughtless people cut like swords.'**  
*(Proverbs 12:18a)*

But when we're angry, sometimes it is so hard to control what we say. When's the last time you got that mad? Maybe your brother took something of yours without asking. Or maybe your mom was late to picking you up. Or maybe you got angry at a video game or phone. I've seen people get really mad at screens, which is kinda funny, because I'm pretty sure the screens don't care if we're mad at them or not.

When God looks at us, He sees our anger, and He sees the sin that our anger leads us to. He sees that fire raging inside of us. But He doesn't hold any of that against us. *<Start erasing flames>* Because when we put our faith in Jesus, God wipes us clean, just like this board. And that's what God chooses to see in us: perfection.

*<Uncover section 2-eye>*

Have you ever heard the phrase 'green with envy'? It means you're jealous. I'm sure we've all felt jealousy at one time or another, even if we don't like to admit it. I know I have felt jealousy or envy before. We feel envious when someone gets something that we want. Whether it's the starting position on the team, a new iPod®, a pair of shoes, or attention. We humans can get jealous about anything. The Bible says,

**'A peaceful heart gives life to the body. But jealousy rots the bones.'**  
*(Proverbs 14:30)*

Wow. Jealousy is like a sickness that makes can be really, really bad. Maybe you feel jealous because you feel like your mom always sides with your sister, and you're convinced she's the favorite. Maybe you think your best friend has more friends than you, and it secretly drives you crazy. When we feel jealousy like that, it's poisonous. And it's a sin.

Thankfully, all we have to do is ask God to forgive us. *<Begin erasing>* We can ask Him to make our hearts as clean as this board is now. And because of Jesus' death on the cross, He will. It's true: God will forgive us again and again and again. And Paul says that knowing this should make us willing to forgive others regardless of what they do to us.

*<Uncover section 3-tornado>*

When someone hurts us, it can make our hearts feel like this. *<Point to picture>* Dark. Alone. Angry. Sad. Confused. And when we hold onto those feelings, it's called unforgiveness. And the Bible says unforgiveness is a sin.

Don't get me wrong. You're going to feel angry, and sometimes for good reason. Sometimes people deserve our anger, like when a friend promises to keep a secret and then doesn't, or when a classmate does something irresponsible and the entire class gets in trouble because of it, or when we pray and pray for something to happen, but God doesn't answer the way we wanted Him too. We can have unforgiveness toward our friends, toward our family, and even toward God.

But the end result is this *<point to picture again>*—a heart that feels black. But remember what Paul tells us in Ephesians? Because God forgives us *<motion to first two sections>*, we should do the same for others. *<Erase the tornado>*

We all know; this is not always easy. In fact, it can be really, really hard to forgive people. It can be confusing, too. Because we might still FEEL angry, but we also WANT to forgive.

Think about Paul for a second. He was arrested for no good reason, all alone, couldn't go anywhere or do anything about it. But instead of giving up, he relied on God. The story of Jesus changed Paul. Paul could find the strength to forgive others and continue sharing the message of Jesus with others.

The same can be true for us. Today's Bottom Line is.

***"The story of Jesus changes how I forgive others."***

When we are forever changed by the story of Jesus, we begin to realize something: We don't forgive others because they deserve it. We forgive others because Jesus forgives us, even though WE DON'T deserve it either.

That's why we ask God to help us. God can change our hearts and helps us find the strength to forgive. We ask Him to help us let go of the feelings of anger and hurt. We ask Him to help us stop speaking badly about the other person. We ask Him to help us stop replaying what they did to us over and over again in our heads. We ask God to help us wipe their slates clean, *<show board/mirror>* because that's what He did for us. We need to forgive each other, because God forgave us. Let's pray."

#### **PRAY**

Dear God, thank You that the story of Jesus can change us forever. Thank You for making it possible for our sins to be forgiven. God, please help us forgive others when they hurt us. Help us put Your love into practice and treat others the way we would want to be treated. We love You Lord. Amen.