

*Good game for before the story: “Make Me Laugh”

What you need: Questions below or your own jokes or funny faces

- Tell the kids you are going to tell some jokes, but they have to try not to laugh.
- Guide kids to form a straight line facing you.
- Read the jokes from below.
- If kids laugh, they are out. The last serious kid standing is the winner.

What you say:

“Those were so hilarious! It is so hard being serious when everyone else is laughing and having fun. It almost feels like you are missing out on the joke. **[Transition]** Let’s head to Large Group to hear a story that we definitely don’t want to miss out on.

1. What do you call a dinosaur that is sleeping? ----- A dino-snore!
2. Why did the kid cross the playground? ----- To get to the other slide!
3. Why did the cookie go to the hospital? ----- Because he felt crummy
4. What did the little corn say to the mama corn?----- Where is the popcorn?
5. How do we know that the ocean is friendly? ----- It waves!
6. Why can’t Elsa have a balloon? -----Because she will let it go
7. How do you make an octopus laugh? ----- With ten-tickles
8. Knock Knock!--Who’s there?--Doughnut--Doughnut who?--Doughnut ask me, I just got here!
9. Why did they quit giving tests at the zoo? ----- It was full of cheetahs
10. What do you call a cow that eats your grass? ----- A lawn moo-er!

Activity 1:

BLOCKING THE FUN

What you need: Large stackable items such as blocks or books

What you do:

- Set out your stackable items.
- Have the child hold their arms out while you or their partner stacks blocks onto their arms. Don’t stack the blocks too heavy, but heavy enough to where it is a little tricky to move.
- Play some music and tell the kids holding blocks to try and dance.
- Give them a few minutes to try and dance holding the blocks.
- If you have multiple kids switch and give each child a chance to stack the blocks and dance.

What you say:

It is kinda tricky to hold the blocks and dance at the same time, right? In our story today, the older brother couldn’t celebrate forgiveness because he was too busy holding things against his younger brother. It is just like the older brother was holding lots of heavy blocks so they got in the way of him celebrating! When we choose to forgive others, it is like dropping all of this heavy weight. When we choose not to forgive, the heavy stuff keeps us from celebrating or simply having a good day.

Think about some times this might happen to us. Maybe you’re so mad that your little brother tore up your favorite book that you scream at him, then you get in trouble with your parents, and miss out on a play date with your best friend. Or maybe you’re so upset that your mom forgot she had a meeting when she had promised you would have family movie night tonight, and you spend the whole evening pouting and thinking mean thoughts about her instead of simply enjoying spending time with the rest of your family. Or what if you don’t get that really expensive gift you wanted for your birthday, so you refuse to play with the toys you DID get and won’t talk to anyone at your party? Remember that **when you don’t forgive, you miss out.**”

Activity 2:

MEMORY VERSE BUILDING

What you need: Large popsicle sticks, blocks or stackable items, a Bible marked at Colossians 3:13, “Memory Verse Phrases”, scissors, glue stick or tape.

- Read or ask some to read Colossians 3:13 aloud.
- Give child a set of “Memory Verse Phrases,” and scissors. Set the glue sticks or tape out.
- Instruct the kids to cut out the phrases and glue/tape each one onto a popsicle stick.
- Encourage kids to stack their sticks to “build” the verse. They can connect blocks, glue verse to paper or hang popsicle sticks with ribbon. (Put sticks in verse order on the table. Turn over, keeping them in order. Place long piece of ribbon/yarn in skinny rainbow shape over the top of the sticks with the ark of the rainbow above the first stick of the verse, tape ribbon onto each stick and now you have a hanger for the wall or door.)

What you say:

Forgiveness is important! And we know that’s true because God is the ultimate forgiver! This verse is such a great one to remember always. You can build this verse over and over/or hang it up as you remember to forgive as God forgives you. Let’s choose to forgive and fix the relationships with the people around us, with God’s help. Because **when you don’t forgive, you miss out.**”

Activity 3:

PARTY TIME!

What you need: Tablecloth; party hats or construction paper; Bible; treats to share; napkins

- Cover your Small Group area with the tablecloth.
- Encourage the kids to make &/or wear their party hats.
- Set the treats in the center of the tablecloth, but do not allow the kids to touch them yet.
- Talk about the choices the older brother in our story made today.
 - How did the father react when his son returned? (*He forgave him and threw a huge party*)
 - Where was the older brother when the younger son returned? (*Working in the field*)
 - How did the older brother react when he found out that the party was for his younger brother who’d returned home? (*He was angry*)
 - What did the older brother say to the father? (*“All these years I’ve worked, I’ve obeyed. You’ve never thrown me a party.”*)
 - Why do you think the older brother was SO mad? Can you relate to this?
 - Why do you think the father celebrated in such a big way?
- Pass out the treats and enjoy!!

What you say:

“I can relate to the older brother in this story. He’s right; he was the one who had stayed, the one who worked hard and honored his dad. But he missed out. Because he thought it was more important to be right than to forgive, he missed the opportunity to celebrate his brother’s return. Sometimes we do the same thing. We want to make a point or prove that we’re right and the other person is wrong. But in the end, your friendship is WAY more important than winning an argument. We need to offer forgiveness when someone apologizes. Because **when you don’t forgive, you miss out.**”

Activity 4:

HOLDING ON/MISSING OUT (Easier for older kids, but adaptable)

What you need: wrapped candy and cotton balls

- **Place** a wrapped piece of candy in front of each kid and **give** each kid a cotton ball.
- **Give** kids time to think of something they may be holding against someone. Maybe someone treated them unkindly or unfairly. Maybe someone flattened a tire on their bike or broke their favorite toy. Maybe they are angry at someone for not doing what they said they would do. Or prompt kids to think about how the older brother was holding onto his anger and resentment.
- **Explain** that the cotton ball represents something you're holding against someone.
- **Tell** kids hold on to the cotton ball with both hands and squeeze as tightly as they can.
- While squeezing the cotton ball with both hands, **challenge** kids to unwrap the candy using only their hands.
- **Tell** kids to open their hands so the cotton ball is resting on their palms.
- **Say;** Just like you cannot grab onto the candy while focusing on squeezing the cotton ball, when you are holding on to grudges and focusing on how you may have been wronged, you could miss out on a lot. (*e.g. friendships, good times with others, joy, even a party, etc.*)

Activity 5:

TO GRUDGE OR NOT TO GRUDGE (Easier for older kids, but adaptable)

What you need: plastic cups and sticky notes/scrape paper

- **Ask:** What can it look like to hold a grudge? What are things people do when they hold a grudge? (*silent treatment, trash talk about people or share things about someone you shouldn't, be angry or be bitter towards someone, post negative stuff on social media, spend time plotting ways to get even, etc.*)
- **Encourage** kids to write each example on a sticky note and place it inside their cup
- **Ask:** What could you miss out on if you choose not to forgive someone, to hold a grudge, or to get even with someone who has wronged you?
- **Discuss** their answers.
- **Give** out uninflated balloon. When you say "GO," kids blow up their balloon. Then pointing the "valve/mouth" end of the balloon at the cups, kids release the air, trying to knock the cups off the table, letting go of their grudges.
- After playing a couple of rounds, **give** kids a Bible. Look up Matthew 22:39 and read it together.
- **Ask:** How can forgiveness show others you love God?
How can forgiveness show others God loves them?
What opportunities can you miss out on when you choose not to forgive?
- **Tell** kids to write the verse reference, Matthew 22:39 on a card.
- **Encourage** them to write out the verse on the card.
- **Tell** them to place their card somewhere as a reminder that forgiveness is important to God.

PRAYER 1 hold a party hat

These hats are a good reminder that **when you don't forgive, you miss out**. But forgiving someone when we've been hurt—even when the other person is clearly sorry—is still hard. Let's pray and ask God to help us forgive so we don't miss out this week.

"Heavenly Father, thank You for always offering forgiveness to us, just like the father in this story Jesus told. When we feel like holding onto anger like the older brother, would you please help us choose to forgive instead? We definitely need Your help to do that. We love and trust You, God. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

PRAYER 2 hold a cotton ball

- **Remind** kids of the activity from earlier where they held onto cotton balls and couldn't open their candy wrappers.
- **Give** kids a moment to think about a time recently when they held onto a grudge or resentment toward someone for something they did. For those who are still holding grudges, encourage them to begin to let go of them and move toward forgiveness. Remember, **when you don't forgive, you miss out**.
- **Toss** your cotton ball into the trash.

"God, Thank You for Your forgiveness and Your love. We want to show others Your love! God, please give us Your power and Your strength to forgive others. Help us to let go of anything we may be holding against others so we don't miss out on the joy of Your forgiveness. Amen!"

Memory Verse Phrases:

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