

# The Hard Thing

## LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

**Theme:** Forgive even when it's hard

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:14-15

**Memory Verse:** For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. - Matthew 6:14

## The Children's Sermon

We've talked many times about the most important commandments: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. If God wants you to love Him with everything you have, how do you think you'll do that? How will you love your neighbor as yourself?

One of the ways to love God is to forgive. When your brother or sister or your even best friend hurts you, Jesus says forgive them. Oh, that's hard, isn't it? Maybe you want to get back at them and make sure they hurt too, but Jesus says forgiving is better. He says that God will forgive the things you do when you forgive those who hurt you. Maybe you think what your sister did is just the most wrong thing that could ever be done. Doesn't matter...Jesus says do the hard thing. Forgive her.

Jesus says love your neighbor. Does that just mean the lady who lives down the street? No, the word neighbor means one who is nearby. Who is near you right now? That person is your neighbor. You will have lots of "neighbors" today. And God says to love them—even if you don't know them. You may have neighbors who annoy you. Maybe they are loud or messy. Jesus says, "That doesn't matter—love them anyway." If you get

angry or hold a grudge against your neighbors, will you be loving them? Jesus asks you to do the hard thing. He says look beyond their noise and their messes. Forgive them. And as you forgive the hurts and bothers that others do to you, you will be loving them...as God loves you...with a forgiving love...even when you hurt or bother Him.

Now, let's talk more about forgiveness in Matthew 6. In the Bible, Jesus teaches us how to pray. He says, "When you pray, forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against." That means, before we even ask God for anything, we should forgive others. That's a big deal! Forgiving is like cleaning your heart so you can talk to God with nothing bad in the way.

Imagine you have a backpack. Every time someone hurts you, a rock goes into your backpack. Soon, it gets really heavy. Forgiving is like taking those rocks out so you can walk easier. Jesus wants your journey through life to be light and happy, not hard and heavy with a backpack full of rocks.

Sometimes, forgiving feels as hard as lifting a very heavy rock. You might think, "But they were really mean to me!" or "They did it on purpose!" It's okay to feel hurt, but Jesus wants us to let go of that hurt. He knows that when we hold onto anger, it's like holding onto a hot coal, hoping the other person gets burned. But really, we're the ones getting hurt.

Forgiveness in Matthew 6 is not just about saying "I forgive you." It's about letting go of the anger in your heart. It's choosing to be kind, even when you don't want to. It's praying for the person who hurt you. Yes, praying for them! Jesus did that, even when people were very unkind to Him. He prayed for them and forgave them.

You might wonder, "How many times should I forgive?" Jesus says not just seven times, but seventy times seven! That's a lot of times! It doesn't mean you count up to 490 and then stop forgiving. It means you keep forgiving, no matter what. It's like saying, "I will always forgive because that's what Jesus does for me."

Forgiving doesn't mean you let people keep hurting you. You can forgive someone and still tell a teacher, parent, or another adult if someone is being mean. Forgiving means you don't stay angry at them. You let God help you heal and maybe, with time, even help you be friends again.

When we forgive, we show the world what God's love looks like. It's like being a light in a dark place. People will see how you forgive and wonder how you do it. That's your chance to tell them about Jesus and how He helps you forgive.

Remember, forgiveness in Matthew 6 is not always easy, but it's always worth it. It makes your heart happy and light. It helps you love God and others better. And every time you forgive, it's like giving a gift to Jesus, saying, "I love You, and I want to be like You."

So, next time someone makes you mad or sad, remember forgiveness in Matthew 6. Think about the backpack with rocks and decide to take those rocks out, one by one. Ask Jesus to help you forgive because sometimes, we can't do it on our own. He will help you because He loves you very much.

Dear Father, help us to forgive one another as you forgive us. Help us to remember forgiveness in Matthew 6 and to take the rocks out of our backpacks. Thank you for loving us and helping us to forgive. Amen.

## Bible Memory Verse

**For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. - Matthew 6:14**

You Will Need:

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Markers or crayons

Get Ready:

- Cut the construction paper into heart shapes, one for each child.
- Write 'Forgive' on one side of each heart.

Do This:

1. Give each child a heart and ask them to think of a time someone hurt their feelings or made them upset. Have them write or draw it on the blank side of the heart.
2. Talk about how holding onto anger or hurt feelings is like carrying a heavy weight. Ask them how it feels to forgive and to be forgiven.
3. Lead a discussion on why it's important to forgive, using the memory verse. Then, have each child say, 'I choose to forgive' and let them tear up their heart paper, symbolizing letting go of the hurt.

## Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- Heart-shaped cutouts (enough for each child to have one)

- Markers or crayons
- Sticky notes
- A large poster board with "Forgiveness" written at the top
- Tape or glue

#### Get Ready:

- Before the class, prepare the heart-shaped cutouts and write each child's name on one.
- Set up a "Forgiveness Board" by placing the large poster board in a visible area of the classroom.

#### Do this:

1. **\*\*Introduction to Forgiveness\*\***: Start by reading Matthew 6:14-15 to the class, explaining that forgiving others means letting go of anger or sadness when someone has hurt us, just like God forgives us when we make mistakes.
2. **\*\*Sharing Time\*\***: Give each child a sticky note and ask them to think of a time they felt hurt or upset by someone but chose to forgive them. They don't need to write names, just how they felt and what happened when they forgave that person. If they haven't had such an experience, they can write about a time they were forgiven. Collect the sticky notes.
3. **\*\*Heart Activity\*\***: Hand out the heart-shaped cutouts with their names on them and markers or crayons. Ask the children to decorate their hearts while thinking about people they need to forgive or wish to ask forgiveness from. Explain that holding onto anger makes our hearts heavy, but forgiveness helps our hearts feel light and happy.

4. **Creating the Forgiveness Board**: Once they've finished decorating, help each child to attach their heart and sticky note to the "Forgiveness Board" using tape or glue. As they place their hearts on the board, encourage them to say, "I choose to forgive," or "I ask for forgiveness."
  
5. **Group Reflection**: Gather the children around the Forgiveness Board and reflect on how it looks with all the hearts and notes. Discuss how the board represents a community of forgiveness and how it makes the room and their hearts feel lighter and happier.
  
6. **Closing**: Conclude by reminding them that forgiving can be hard, but it's important for keeping our hearts happy and full of love, just like Jesus teaches us. Encourage them to practice forgiveness not just today, but every day.

## Snack Activity: Heart Sandwiches of Forgiveness

You'll Need:

- Bread (white or whole wheat)
- Peanut butter (or any nut/seed butter for allergies)
- Jelly (any flavor)
- Heart-shaped cookie cutter
- Plastic knives
- Plates

Get Ready: Make sure the table is clean and each child has a plate and a plastic knife. Place the ingredients in the middle of the table so everyone can reach them.

Do this:

1. Tell the children that today we're learning about forgiveness, even when it's hard, just like Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:14-15. Explain that forgiving someone is like giving your heart to them, showing love even when it's tough.
2. Have each child use the heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut out two heart shapes from their slices of bread. Explain that the heart shape reminds us to keep our hearts open to forgiving others.
3. Spread peanut butter on one heart and jelly on the other using the plastic knives. As they do this, discuss how sometimes we might feel 'sticky' or 'sweet' about forgiving someone. Put the hearts together to make a sandwich.
4. Before eating, encourage each child to think of someone they can forgive or show kindness to this week, just like putting two pieces of a sandwich together brings harmony. Remind them that forgiving is an important part of being friends with others and with God.

## Game Activity: Forgiveness Garden Hop

You'll Need:

- Sidewalk chalk
- A wide, open space (like a driveway or a sidewalk)
- Small stones or beanbags

Get Ready: Use the chalk to draw a series of large squares on the ground to form a path. Each square represents a step in the forgiveness process. Label them as follows: 'Hurt', 'Angry', 'Talk', 'Listen', 'Understand', 'Forgive', and 'Peace'.

Do this:

1. Explain to the children that sometimes people hurt our feelings or make us angry, just like the 'Hurt' and 'Angry' squares. It's normal to feel this way, but what we do next is very important.
2. Have the children stand at the 'Hurt' square. They toss the stone or beanbag to the next square before hopping to it, but they can only move forward if they say something kind or forgiving about someone (it can be real or imagined). This teaches them that moving from hurt to peace requires effort and kindness.
3. When they reach the 'Peace' square, they share a time they forgave someone or were forgiven. This reinforces the lesson from Matthew 6:14-15 about the importance of forgiveness, even when it's hard. If a child struggles to hop to the next square, encourage their peers to offer words of encouragement, showing forgiveness and support in action.

## Craft Activity: Heart of Forgiveness

You'll Need:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Scissors
- Markers or crayons
- Glue stick
- Template of a heart

Get Ready: Print or draw a large heart template that can be cut out by the children.

Do this:

1. Begin by discussing Matthew 6:14-15, explaining that forgiving others is what God wants us to do, even when it's hard. Emphasize that when we forgive, our hearts feel lighter and happier.



2. Give each child a piece of construction paper and ask them to trace the heart template onto it. Then, have them cut out the heart shape with scissors.
3. On one side of the heart, ask the children to write 'Forgive' and on the other side, to draw or write names or situations where they need to offer forgiveness. Encourage them to think about times they felt hurt or upset and how they can choose to forgive.
4. Finally, have the children fold the hearts in half, symbolizing their willingness to let go of hard feelings and open their hearts to forgiveness. Share that just like the heart opens, when we forgive, we open up to God's love and peace.

## Prayer Activity: Heartfelt Forgiveness Balloons

You'll Need:

- Balloons (one for each child plus a few extras)
- Permanent markers
- Small pieces of paper

Get Ready: Write Matthew 6:14-15 on a board or large piece of paper where all the children can see it.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Matthew 6:14-15 together. Explain that forgiving others can be hard, but it's important because it frees our hearts from holding onto anger and sadness. Just like Jesus forgives us, we should forgive others.
2. Give each child a small piece of paper and ask them to think of a time someone hurt their feelings or made them upset. They don't need to share it out loud but write a symbol or word that represents that situation.

3. Have each child fold their paper and put it inside a balloon. Then, they blow up the balloon and tie it. Explain that the balloon represents their heart holding onto those hard feelings.

4. Lead a prayer asking God to help everyone forgive those who have hurt them, just as we are forgiven. After the prayer, let the children release or pop their balloons outside (if possible) to symbolize letting go of those hard feelings and forgiving others. Remind them that when we forgive, our hearts feel as light and free as the balloons flying away.