

# Getting Ready for the Story

## THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

*This week's story is Matthew 18:21-35.*

**The theme is Forgiveness.**

### WHAT ARE SOME DOORS INTO THIS STORY?

After you read the Bible text for this week's story, try one or more of these ways to enter the story further and prepare yourself to share it with kids.

#### **Mirrors**

When Peter asked Jesus why he had to forgive people so many times, Jesus answered, "We forgive each other because we love each other." Look in a mirror and try to see yourself as God sees you, as beloved. Ask God to help you forgive yourself—because you love yourself. Reflect on what you learn from the experience, and consider doing the same thing with the kids in your class. Encourage kids in a playful way to look in the mirror and say, "God loves you. God forgives you."

#### **Road Rage**

Do you commute to school or to your workplace? Memorize the last line where the king says, "Choose to forgive and love others like I did for you." Repeat this line again and again to yourself during your commute. How do the words about forgiveness resonate on busy highways or congested streets?

#### **Seven?**

Peter asks Jesus, "If someone is unkind to me, how many times should I forgive? One time? Two times? Seven times?" Jesus answers by multiplying Peter's seven into a whole lot more. Think about it . . . even if we forgave one, two, or seven people, lives would be changed. List a few people whom you need to forgive, and ask God to help you take a step in that direction.

## **WHY DOES THIS STORY OR THEME MATTER TO KIDS?**

Read about these ways to view the story and today's theme through a kid lens to help inspire you as you prepare for Sunday school.

### **Counting (PreK–Grade 2)**

Young kids will be drawn in by the math in this lesson because they are mastering counting. When we explore a story from a variety of angles, we use our imaginations and extend the learning for kids. It's one thing to tell kids Jesus wants us to forgive someone 490 times, but it is quite another thing to show the number 490 using props like toothpicks, crayons, cotton balls, or stickers.

### **Resentments (Grades 3–6)**

Older kids are aware that resentments can build between people, and they know how hard forgiveness can be. The story can point out that it's necessary and helpful to remember all the times and ways they have been forgiven. Older kids might be reticent to speak about their own experiences with forgiveness, but may be willing to write about or draw a picture to show times when they were given a second chance.

### **The Language of Forgiveness (All Kids)**

Forgiveness can be difficult to talk about. Bible stories and church liturgies remind us that asking for forgiveness and declaring forgiveness are important. Expressed forgiveness helps us move forward with clean slates, and our hearts are a little wiser for the next time. Kids will have many unique ideas about ways to show or say you're sorry, and ways to announce forgiveness to one another.

## **PRAYER**

Spend some time this week contemplating how forgiveness could change some of your key relationships. Ask God to share a vision of love for people from whom you are feeling disconnected. Simply be with God and listen for God's Spirit within you.

## **REMEMBER TO PREP**

Read through your leader guide, check your supplies, and make sure you have enough leaflets for the kids in your class.