

MORE THAN WORDS PART TWO

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: “I CAN’T ABIDE...”

This is an alphabetical word game. Ask the teens to be seated in a circle. The first person begins by saying, “I absolutely, positively, cannot abide: _____”, inserting a word that begins with the letter A (some examples might be air hockey, apologies, armpits, etc.). The next person in the circle must repeat the A-word, but add a B-word. For example, “I absolutely, positively, cannot abide: apologies and burping”. The exercise continues around the circle till all the letters of the alphabet have been used. The words chosen don’t have to fit together, they must only begin with the correct letter.

FOR SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY END UP GOING MULTIPLE TIMES AROUND THE CIRCLE. TO ADD AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITION FOR LARGER GROUPS, ANYONE WHO GETS STUCK OR TAKES TOO LONG IS ELIMINATED UNTIL THERE REMAINS ONE WINNER.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: UNFORGIVABLE

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- What qualities or actions in others do you find hard to forgive? Why?
- What qualities or actions *in yourself* do you find hard to forgive? Why?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Forgiveness doesn’t come easily to most of us. We all have things that “push our buttons” – ranging from minor irritations to major hurts. Some examples might include a family member saying something unkind or failing to help us when we really needed it, or a friend changing and becoming interested in things we dislike. If anything of a serious nature arises during the discussion, pause for a moment to pray. You may need to point out that forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same. It is possible to forgive people – to wish them no harm and to let go of retaliation – without putting yourself in a position which will result in repeated abuse.*
- *Some of us are hardest on ourselves. We may remember a particular time when we failed to be a good friend or we may be acutely aware of some way in which we feel we don’t quite measure up to the standard we’d like to. No*

MORE THAN WORDS PART TWO

matter what we've done, no matter what our "failings" or "deficiencies", we are loved by God, and if we repent, he will forgive. But we are also required to forgive others in the same generous way. More on this in today's lesson.

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 18

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

(IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE RAISED DURING THIS UNIT, WE RECOMMEND "DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: A HANDS-ON APPROACH, VOLUME 3: SPECIAL OCCASIONS" BY SUE CARELESS.)

The call to repentance is central to the Gospel. And this "repentance", this acknowledgment of sin, goes beyond merely feeling remorseful. Theologian and pastor J.I. Packer wrote, "The New Testament word for repentance means changing one's mind so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one's whole life is lived differently".

But if we have benefited from God's forgiveness, we also must be ready to *share* that forgiveness with others. "Those who have been greatly loved must show great love to others; those who live by being forgiven must themselves forgive... In a word, God's children must be like their Father and their Saviour" (J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*). And it was our Saviour who, from the cross, spoke the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

It is a part of human nature to remember when a harm has been done to us. When we are owed something, it's in our nature to be sure to collect what's owed. But Jesus showed us a better way. The Lord's Prayer, which Jesus taught his disciples to say, asks God to "forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them that trespass against us*". In this prayer the forgiveness we receive is linked to our willingness to forgive others! The same message comes through in the parable that we're going to look at today.

Refer to Matthew 18:21-35.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Why do you think Peter was asking this question? What sort of response do you think he was expecting?
- What does this parable teach us? About God? About ourselves?
- What does this mean for us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Peter had been Jesus' disciple long enough at this point to recognize that generous forgiveness was important. But he still wanted to find out when he had done enough. He still had an impulse to keep a record of the wrongs that were done to him against the day when he could say, "I'm done with forgiving you". It's also worth noting that Peter's focus was on the expectation that others would wrong him, without recognizing that he, too, would need forgiveness from time to time.*
- *Jesus often told parables – stories designed to explain truths about God in terms that his hearers could relate to. The context in which a parable occurs is important to note, especially in cases where the parable responds to a situation or question. Peter's question was about when it was okay for him to stop forgiving someone. Jesus' parable pointed out the reality that what we've been forgiven by God is beyond what we could ever hope to repay.*

MORE THAN WORDS PART TWO

God is powerful, holy, merciful and forgiving. We could never have earned our way out of the situation we were in. But he forgave. If, then, we show ourselves to be proud and judgmental and unforgiving of those who wrong us, we show that we have learned nothing; God’s compassion has not touched our hearts, and our own actions demonstrate contempt for his grace.

- *The teaching of Jesus is filled with warnings for those who judge others harshly and hypocritically (Matthew 7:1-5, 23:4). Believers are called to humbly remember that they are sinners who have received the compassion and forgiveness of God. We are to love others with this gracious love that reflects God’s own character, a love that 1 Corinthians 13:5 says is not “resentful” or in the words of another translation “keeps no record of wrongs” (NIV).*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer).)

Once again ask God to bring to your mind the things in your life that you need to repent of, but focus especially on any resentment that you may be harbouring towards those who have wronged you. Ask God for his help in forgiving these others in the same way that he has forgiven you. Close your time with the following prayer.

O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive: Receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us; for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen. (FROM PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS, BCP, P. 58)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

MORE THAN WORDS PART TWO

MATTHEW 18: **YOU'VE BEEN FORGIVEN. SO FORGIVE.**

²¹Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

²³“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”