

Forgiveness

To Give a
Person Another
Chance

“The weak can
never forgive.
Forgiveness is the
attribute of the
strong.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi ~



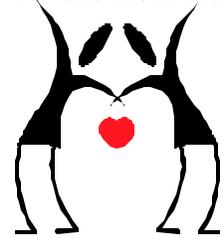
February Character Connection Theme: Forgiveness

Definitions

To forgive is to “excuse for a fault or offense; to pardon.” It is “to renounce anger or resentment against and “to absolve from payment of.” Forgiveness grants pardon without harboring resentment.¹ Forgiveness is giving a person another chance. Certainly, forgiveness is a valentine for and from the heart.

Here are some ways to incorporate forgiveness into our lives:

- *Remember everyone makes mistakes.
- *Share feelings with others.
- *Take responsibility for our mistakes and then forgive self.



Quotes

“If we say that monsters [people who do terrible evil] are beyond forgiving, we give them a power they should never have. . .they are given the power to keep their evil alive in the hearts of those who suffered most. We give them power to condemn their victims to live forever with the hurting memory of their painful pasts. We give the monsters the last word.” –Lewis B. Smedes

“Gandhi was right: if we all live by ‘an eye for an eye’ the whole world will be blind. The only way out is forgiveness.” –Lewis B. Smedes²

“Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.” –Lewis B. Smedes

“It takes one person to forgive, it takes two people to be reunited..” -- Lewis B. Smedes³
“To err is human, to forgive divine.” –Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

“Forgiveness is the only way to break the cycle of blame—and pain—in a relationship. . .It does not settle all questions of blame and justice and fairness. . .But it does allow relationships to start over. In that way, said Solzhenitsyn, we differ from all animals. It is not our capacity to think that makes us different, but our capacity to repent, and to forgive.”—Philip Yancey⁴

“Life is an adventure in forgiveness.” --Norman Cousins (1915-90)⁵

Activities

**Make a maze of large objects. Have a volunteer shut his eyes and walk backward through the maze. Have him repeat the process, this time facing forward with his eyes open. Discuss the two journeys through the obstacle course. *Talk about how focusing on the wrongs and injustices of the past and being blind to the good slows our progress.*

**Have each student place a penny or small pebble (signifying a grudge or an offence) in his shoe, then play a game of soccer. Afterward, talk about the big irritation that a small item can cause. *Grudge holding hurts the grudge holder the most. Forgiveness removes the irritation.*

**Have students make a valentine for someone who has offended them. Perhaps, students can write poetry on the changes that come in a relationship with forgiveness.

**Memorize verse such as this by Kipling:

Teach us delight in simple things,
And mirth that has no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And love to all men ‘neath the sun!

¹ from [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

² submitted by PGHS Character representative from www.vsg.cape.com/cgi-bin/ “Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We don’t Deserve”

³ submitted by PGHS Character representative from www.vsg.cape.com/cgi-bin/ “The Art of Forgiving: When You Need To Forgive And Don’t Know How”

⁴ submitted by PGHS Character representative from www.vsg.cape.com/cgi-bin/ “The Unnatural Act” (article, Christianity Today, April 8, 1991)

⁵ <http://www.io.com/~rga/cgi-bin/searchquote.cgi>

Stories



The Hay

In the middle of winter, Mr. Ansey went to his neighbor, Mr. Grassli, and begged to buy some hay. Bad health and several misfortunes had prevented Mr. Ansey from harvesting a full crop. Now, his stock needed food badly. Mr. Grassli perceived a chance to profit and set the price of his hay at an exorbitant price. Seeing no other alternative, Mr. Ansey drove his hay wagon over to Mr. Grassli's, paid the price and took the hay home.

A few years later Mr. Grassli's farm was beset with disasters and misfortunes. By the end of December he found himself very short of hay. Seeing no other alternative, he took his wallet, swallowed his pride, and walked over to visit Mr. Ansey. Mr. Grassli explained the problems of the summer before and asked to buy hay.

Mr. Ansey replied, "Mr. Grassli, we are neighbors, and I understand your predicament. You may have all of the hay you need. Don't worry about replacing it until your spring crop ripens. Let me get my wagon and we shall haul what you need to your farm right now."

Gandhi and Forgiveness

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in India. His parents belonged to the merchant caste of Hindus. He studied law in London and returned to India to practice law. In 1893 he went to South Africa to do some legal work and his initial one-year assignment turned into 21 years of work for Indian rights in South Africa. He briefly returned to India in 1896 and publicized the plight of the Indian people in South Africa. A garbled account of his activities in India preceded his return to South Africa and enraged the South African Europeans. When he arrived by ship in the South African port, he and the many other Indian passengers were quarantined on the vessel. They were encouraged to return to India. Gandhi quietly refused to be deterred from his destination.

When asked what he would do if he was forcibly prevented from landing, he said, "I hope God will give me the courage and sense to forgive them, and to refrain from bringing them to law. I have no anger against them. I am only sorry for their ignorance and their narrowness."

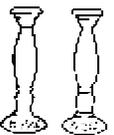
After three weeks of quarantine, the other Indian passengers were permitted to leave the ship. However when Gandhi disembarked, he found himself the object of kicking, rotten eggs, and brickbats. True to his word, he did not seek redress, but continued to use nonviolent resistance to win the rights of Indians in South Africa and later in India. Gandhi said, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."⁶

Victor Hugo's Forgiving Bishop

In *Les Miserables*, during Monsiegnur Bienvenu's morning walk, Madame Magloire worriedly informs him that the silver is missing. The bishop then notices the empty silver basket just as Madame sees the path of escape of the thief through the yard. They realize that the evening's guest, Jean Valjean, has stolen the silver. When Madame Magloire berates Jean Valjean for his thievery, the bishop quietly comments, "Now first, did this silver belong to us?" Later, just as the Bishop and his sister were rising from the breakfast table, a group of gendarmes brings in Jean Valjean, holding him by the collar. Before the gendarmes call Valjean to account for his possession of the labeled silver, the Bishop approaches.

"Ah there you are!" says he, looking towards Jean Valjean, "I am glad to see you. But! I gave you the candlesticks also, which are silver like the rest, and would bring two hundred francs. Why did you not take them along with your plates?"

After the gendarmes withdrew, the Bishop said quietly to a guilty, yet surprised Jean Valjean, "Forget not, never forget that you have promised me to use this silver to become an honest man."⁷ Read *Les Miserables* to see the final result of the Bishop's magnanimity.



⁶ <http://www.io.com/~rga/cgi-bin/searchquote.cgi>

⁷ Hugo, Victor, *Les Miserables*. (Charles E. Wilbour, translator) New York: Fawcett Premier, 1961. pp 37-39

Writing or Discussion Topics

** Nelson Mandela was born in 1918, the son of a Tembu tribal chief in Eastern Cape in Africa. He became a lawyer and joined the African National Congress, (ANC) a civil rights group. He was arrested in 1962 was sentenced to prison and became a worldwide symbol of the evils of apartheid. In 1990, South African President F. W. de Klerk released Mandela from prison. "Mandela assumed leadership of the ANC and led negotiations with the government for a new constitution that would grant political power to the country's black majority population. In 1991 the government repealed the last of the laws that formed the legal basis for apartheid. Mandela and de Klerk shared the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in establishing democracy and racial harmony in South Africa. In May 1994, after the country's first multiracial elections, Mandela became president of South Africa."⁸ In 1994, Mandela said, "From the moment the results were in and it was apparent that the ANC was to form the government, I saw my mission as one of preaching reconciliation, of binding the wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence." The former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu said, "Had Nelson Mandela and all these others not been willing to forgive, we would not have even reached first base."⁹ *What does forgiveness have to do with establishing peace and happiness in the home, community and in the world?*

** In the last few pages of The Hiding Place, read about Corrie ten Boom's encounter with her former Ravensbruck S.S. guard and her effort to reach out to him in forgiveness. Dag Hjalmar Agné Carl Hammarskjöld (1905-61), Swedish political leader, secretary-general of the UN said, "Forgiveness is the answer to the child's dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is again made clean." He also said, "Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who forgives you -- out of love--takes upon himself the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice."¹⁰ *Although not many have personally experienced the horrors of a concentration camp, the bombing of Vietnam, or other atrocities, most have experienced unkindness and evil in some form. Have students write about the difference that forgiveness has made in a relationship and in their own happiness.*

Role Plays

**In a heated basketball game Jeff elbows Scott. Scott falls to the floor and loses consciousness. Later he finds that he received a concussion which medical experts say will prevent him from fulfilling his dream of playing in the NBA. *What does forgiveness have to do with Scott being able to find success in life?*

**Hailey finds that her favorite doll is missing. The last time Hailey remembers playing with it was when Elenor was at her house. Through friends, Hailey learns that Elenor has her favorite doll. Elenor was Hailey's best friend. *How can forgiveness help to resolve this problem?*

Book List

A Regular Flood of Mishap by Tom Birdseye

Down the Road by Alice Schertle

Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco



March: **Respect**

April: Compassion/Caring

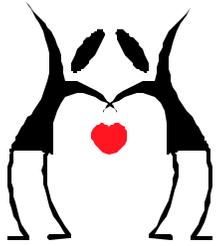
May: Loyalty

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⁸"Mandela, Nelson Rolihlahla," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation.

⁹ <http://www.cbn.org/living/christianwalk/columns/aikman-nelsonmandela.asp>

¹⁰ <http://www.io.com/~rga/cgi-bin/searchquote.cgi>



Name _____

Forgiveness

In the puzzle below, find the words. As you find the words, cross out the letters. The first word, *forgive*, is found for you. Once a letter has been used for one word, it will not be used again in another word. The remaining five words in the puzzle will complete the quotes below:

E X O N E R P O L O G Y A V I N D I C A T E O
 P A R D O A A E F O R A C Q S T R O N G R F V
F-O-R-G N T E S P L E G B U T E U N D E S U E
 O I L I E X C U E M A N E S I V C D N A T T R
 C R **V-E** F R C L P I E C Y T O L O M P R E U L
 L E S E A E E Y T M E R C Y D R A S I D H R O
 E L E A M N E S T Y L E N E C Y G R D N E E O
 A R A B S O L U T I O N I N N O E N O B L E K
 R E L A T I O N S H I P S M O I S S A P M O C
 S Y M P A T H E T I C K I N D D E R A T I O N

- forgive
- pardon
- excuse
- forget
- absolve
- exonerate
- apology
- plea
- acquit
- vindicate
- overlook
- understand
- comprehend
- disregard
- clear
- release
- free
- clemency
- pity
- mercy
- absolution
- amnesty
- leniency
- compassion
- kind
- moderation
- sympathetic



"Forgiveness is the ___ of _____."
 --Josh McDowell.

"Never does the human soul appear so _____ and _____ as when
 it forgoes revenge and dares to forgive injury."
 --Edwin Hubble Chapin

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the
 _____." --Paul Boese

Answers to Forgiveness Puzzle

"Forgiveness is the oil of relationships ."

--Josh Mcdowell.

"Never does the human soul appear so strong and noble as when it forgoes revenge and dares to forgive injury."

--Edwin Hubble Chapin

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future ." --Paul Boese