Character First Lesson

Forgiveness

Today we will be talking about Forgiveness and why this is an important Godly character trait that we should all strive to possess!

Determining the Definition

Questions to ask the group:

- What is a definition that you would give for forgiveness?
- Who does it mean to forgive someone?

Dictionary Definition of Forgiveness -
verb – action word
1. to grant pardon for or remission of (an offense, debt, etc.); absolve.
2. to give up all claim on account of; remit (a debt, obligation, etc.).
3. to grant pardon to (a person).
4. to cease to feel resentment against: to forgive one’s enemies.

** A Forgiving person is one who clears the record of those who have wronged them and they do not hold a grudge.

- How are you on Forgiving people? (Silent Answer)
- When you say you Forgive someone, are you inwardly still angry at them? (Silent)
- If someone spread lies about you around school, would it be easy for you to forgive them? (Open Discussion)
- How do we learn how to truly forgive someone even when they have really hurt you?

Reality of Forgiveness

Two Sides to Forgiveness

There are two sides of forgiveness which are vital for everyone to understand. Not only should forgiveness be shown to an offender, but a person must ask for forgiveness for the wrong he or she has done to someone else. It takes humility to admit a wrong action, statement, or thought,
but the trust that is established is well worth the effort. Healthy relationships are built on a willingness to both forgive and to ask for forgiveness when offenses occur.

Those who have a prideful attitude, supposing they do not need forgiveness, tend to be more critical and judge others more harshly. In order to maintain a "high" self-esteem, they tend to find faults that put others down.

On the other hand, people who realize they are wrong and ask for forgiveness develop a rich understanding of being forgiven. It is out of the experience of needing forgiveness that a person learns how to truly forgive those who hurt him or her.

** This is a clear picture of Forgiveness! All of us could come up with an example of a time someone hurt us and how hard it was to truly forgive them, but we also need to look at the times we have hurt someone and how it is just as equally hard to ask for their forgiveness. To possess the Godly character quality of Forgiveness we must be able to do both! Can you think of a Biblical example that shows Forgiveness?

**Biblical Example**

*The Parable of the Lost Son*

*(Read Luke 15: 11 - 24 in preparation for this)*

**Background Story**: At this time in the story, Jesus had been teaching to the crowds. When He taught He would talk to them in parables, that is stories that had deep truth and meaning behind them. This was the Lord’s clear way of expressing how great Forgiveness is!

Read to the group the story: Luke 15: 11 - 20

- Do you think his father should forgive him for spending all his money on wild living?
- If you were his dad, would you forgive him?

Read how the story ends: Luke 15: 21 - 24

- How do you think the son felt when his dad responded this way?
- Did his dad have to go this extent (party, gold ring, fine robes) to forgive his son?
- How does this truly show the character quality of Forgiveness?
- Is there someone that you need to forgive?
- How can you show this same kind of attitude to them?
Application

Now you get the opportunity to show the character quality of Forgiveness in your life! The Lord is with you and will provide and protect you. Be bold and stand up for what you know is right! Go out of your way to show forgiveness to someone who has wronged you and don’t be afraid to ask for Forgiveness when you have hurt someone. Once you do this you will be like the Lost Son in the parable and your heart will be healed and filled with joy!

**Practical applications to show Forgiveness in your life:**

1. **Talk to the Lord and Others About It** – Confess to God your bitterness towards others and declare to Him that you do now choose to forgive them for each specific offense. Many times, you can resolve problems by talking with those involved. Acknowledge what you did wrong, and give to others an opportunity to explain their side. Get help from someone you trust.

2. **Let Go of Anger** – When you focus on what someone does to you, your life will revolve around the other person and how you can get even. True forgiveness begins when you give up your desire to see an offender suffer.

3. **Heal The Wounds** – Forgiveness involves your willingness to work through the process of restoring a relationship. This does not mean the offender will become a close friend, but it does mean you will not harbor any bitterness.

4. **Invest In Others** – Show kindness and respect to those who hurt you. Write a note, give a gift, or do something nice. Investing in others reinforces forgiveness, but retaliation only reinforces anger and selfishness.

5. **Move On** – Once a person acknowledges his or her wrong and asks for forgiveness, do not bring up the offense again, and do not allow yourself to dwell on what you lost. Purpose to forgive your offenders completely, and move on

**Remember: You are the Light of the World so let your Light Shine through Forgiveness!**

Adapted from Character First – Intermediate Student Guide