

LESSON PREP

This week, we will seek Philemon's perspective as the master who forgives Onesimus. In this amazing story, students will consider a truth that is talked about in several places throughout Scripture: Forgiven people are forgiving people. As you prepare for this lesson, pray for your students. For many of them, this may be a difficult lesson, as it will force them to come face to face with their unforgiveness. If there are any non-Christians in your group, this is a great opportunity to speak about the hope and forgiveness that God wants to extend to them. Pray for clear articulation of the gospel as you communicate this week.

PRE LG TEXT

MESSAGE QUESTIONS

Forgiven people forgive people—do you agree? Share your thoughts with the group tonight.

Have you ever thought, "I could never forgive that person"? What if God said that to us? Find out why forgiveness is so important tonight.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Ephesians 4:32

10N1 FOLLOW UP

Pray for each other that God's grace would grant the ability to extend forgiveness when it is needed. For further study use Joy Schroeder's "Forgiveness" study in Tools for Mentoring.

INTRODUCTION

In her New York Times best-selling book *Unbroken*, Laura Hillenbrand documents the amazing life story of a man named Louis Zamperini—an Olympic runner, World War II fighter pilot, Japanese POW, and motivational speaker. Watch this short video about his life. There are many news clips about Zamperini on YouTube®. Here is the one you might want to use, or you can search for a different version: [youtube.com/watch?v=I9O5yVzc0vQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9O5yVzc0vQ).

- Did you catch the small part in that video about Zamperini going back to Japan to forgive the soldiers who abused him? Do you think you could do the same? Why or why not?
- What other amazing stories of forgiveness have you heard? Share with the group.

1. God has forgiven us, so we can forgive others

- Look closely at verse 21. Why do you think Paul was so confident that Philemon would forgive?
- Are there things that you believe are unforgivable? Lying? Stealing? Murder? How many times should you forgive someone if they keep hurting you?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35. When Jesus responded to Peter's question, he was basically saying there is no limit to how many times you ought to forgive. Does this seem a bit extreme to you? Why would Jesus say we ought to forgive so much?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *In essence, Jesus said that he didn't just come to raise the standard of forgiveness. He came to abolish the human standard. He came to start a new system of forgiveness. This is a new way of living. This is a lifestyle. The idea here is not to just forgive a little more. Jesus says there is no limit to the quantity of our forgiveness. There is no limit to God's creative capability to transform your heart into one that forgives greatly. Because you have been forgiven much, you can now forgive much!*

2. Un-forgiveness is unbelief in the power of the gospel

- Read Colossians 2:13-15. What does this passage reveal to you about who God is? Do you actually believe that God has forgiven you?
- Do you believe that God has the power to forgive those people who have hurt you? What if they continue to hurt you over and over again?
- Do you feel like justice was served when God freely forgave you? In other words, did you get what you deserved for your sins against God?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *I know there might be a few of you sitting here who may be thinking, "But what they did to me was so hurtful and wrong, I could never forgive them." But what if God said that to us? There is something in all of us that wants to scream out, "But they don't deserve to be forgiven!" Well, isn't THAT the point? Because on the cross, Christ gave us precisely what we didn't deserve: forgiveness. Someone who does not grant forgiveness to others shows that they do not fully comprehend their own forgiveness. When you hold on to the debt that someone owes you because of a pain they've caused you and you do not forgive them, what you are inadvertently and perhaps unintentionally saying to Jesus Christ is that his death on the cross was not a good enough payment for the sin that they committed against you—but it was.*

3. Choosing to forgive requires full reliance on Christ

- Why is forgiveness so difficult to offer to someone?
- Should you extend forgiveness to someone who hasn't apologized? Why or why not?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *You can either look back or look up. You can either look back at the pain they caused and relive all the emotion, and relive the circumstances and stir up all the anger and hate that they caused you, or you can look up to Christ and follow his example on the cross and give them exactly what they don't deserve. I want to encourage you to follow the example of Christ and extend to them forgiveness.*

APPLICATION

Are you still harboring un-forgiveness toward someone? What will it take for you to choose to forgive them? Consider closing the lesson by praying as a group. Pray that participants will have strength and peace as they move forward in forgiveness. Pray specifically for those who had the courage to share a personal story.

