**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# The unforgiving servant

### MEETING AIM

To explore the idea of forgiveness.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 18:21-35

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Jesus tells this parable in response to Peter’s question about forgiveness: “How many times should I forgive someone…” (v21). While our children won’t be familiar with being in debt and the desperateness this can bring, they will be starting to understand the need to be sorry and to forgive. As children play, share and learn how to form relationships, they can start to explore the act of forgiveness needed to be friends.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children and share any refreshments you have. Ask the group what most excited them in the week just past.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** toys that encourage playing together or that can be shared

Before you start, find some games that might encourage playing together well. If the children have started to play board games, these would be ideal, as these involve taking turns, waiting for others and coping with triumphs and disappointments. If board games aren’t possible, then use toys that require cooperation – maybe water play (if you have the facilities and the weather is nice) or building blocks, where you build something together.

Let the children lead the play and join in where they guide you. As you play, ‘catch’ the children showing patience and forgiveness, and praise them for it.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bible

Show everyone the Bible and Matthew’s Gospel. Say that this story is one told by Jesus about how we should forgive each other. Ask your children if they know what forgiveness means. If not, try to explain in a way that your children will understand – use examples from your own family’s life and relationships to help you. Then go on to read this story, which is an interpretation of Jesus’ parable:

Olivia and Noah were playing with the Duplo. They were trying to build a big tower, but Noah kept taking all the bricks that Olivia wanted to use.

“Give me those,” Olivia shouted. “I want them!”

“No!” said Noah. “I’m using them.”

“But you’ve got all the best bricks.”

Just then, Mummy called from the kitchen. “Olivia, can you come in here?”

Olivia frowned at Noah and went to see Mummy. Mummy was sitting at the kitchen table, a tin of chocolate cupcakes in front of her.

“Olivia, did you take some of these cakes? You know that we were going to share them later. I told you not to take any.”

Olivia started to cry. “I’m…sorry, Mummy. They looked…so tasty and I…I couldn’t wait! I’m…really…sorry.”

Mummy looked at Olivia. She knew she was sorry. “OK. Thank you for being honest. You can go and play again.”

Olivia went back to Noah and the Duplo. While she had been in the kitchen, Noah had taken all the bricks and built them into his own tower. “That’s not fair! You’ve taken all the Duplo!” she said.

“Sorry,” said Noah. “I thought you’d gone.” Noah started to take blocks off his tower to give to his sister. Olivia ran over to him and pushed him. He fell onto his tower and it all fell down. Noah started to cry.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* Who is being fair in this story? Olivia? Noah? Mummy?
* What does it mean to be sorry for something you have done?
* What does it mean to forgive someone?
* What might this story tell us about Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bible: art materials; paper

Read Matthew 18:21-35 and remind the children what happened in the story of Olivia and Noah. What is the thing that they remember most about that story? What about Jesus’ story from the Bible?

Share out the paper and art materials and encourage everyone to create a picture depicting what they remember most about either story. As you work, continue to chat about forgiveness. What does it mean to the children? What does it mean to you? It might be worth telling a story from your own life that explores the idea of forgiveness in a way that the children can identify with (think about how to tell it before you start). What does it mean to you that God forgives you? How does this affect the way you forgive others?

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** small pieces of paper (or Post-it notes); felt-tip pens or crayons

Ask the children if they have anything that the need to say sorry for. Encourage them to write or draw that on a slip of paper. Hold these pieces of paper in your hands and say a simple sorry to God. It might be that they need to say sorry to someone in the room – help them to do so, if possible.

On a different piece of paper, ask if there is someone that the children need to forgive someone else for. Again, write or draw that and hold those pieces of paper while you say a prayer asking God to help you forgive that person. Again, if that person is in the room, provide space for that forgiveness to take place.

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