

Lesson 8 / July 25, 2010

Three Hard Words

for use as

STEP 1

Lesson 8 Focus:

We need to forgive others as God forgives us.

Lesson 8 Bible Basis:

Matthew 18:21-35; 6:12

Students will listen to a story about forgiving others.

Corrie ten Boom is the author of many books, but most notably, an autobiography titled, “The Hiding Place”. Corrie’s family harbored Jewish refugees during World War II and, though the ten Booms were Dutch, they were eventually arrested by the Nazis and taken to a concentration camp. Her book documents the entire story.

Corrie ten Boom was a clockmaker’s daughter. When she was 52, she was still single, living at home with her father and her sister, Betsie, tending the shop and leading a quiet life.

That’s when the Second World War started. And suddenly, everything changed. Corrie, Betsie and their father started to take in Jews and hide them in a secret closet, built behind a cupboard in Corrie’s bedroom. The hiding place was only 30 inches deep. (Have a tape measure handy and ask for two volunteers to illustrate the depth to the rest of the class.)

Every few days, the family practiced a special drill. They pretended the German soldiers were in the house and they timed themselves, working on speed and silence, as they crawled in through the cupboard and into the secret place.

One night, Corrie was sick in bed with a high fever and a cough when suddenly, she heard something that made her sit up straight. It was the sound of footsteps dashing up the stairs, towards the room where she slept. “Is this another drill? We didn’t plan a drill,” she thought with panic. That’s when she realized it wasn’t a drill at all.

Nazi soldiers were in the house. The Jews were coming up to hide.

She jumped out of bed and started to help them crawl into the cupboard. They were just fast enough: Corrie put the cupboard door back into place just seconds before the soldiers burst into the room! Nothing looked suspicious, but one of the old women had asthma and Corrie could hear her wheezing through the wall. Corrie thought her heart might beat out of her chest—she was so afraid the soldiers would hear the breathing!

By God’s grace, the soldiers didn’t seem to notice, but they did arrest the entire ten Boom family for suspicious activity and involvement in the Resistance. A Dutch neighbor was the one who turned them in.

Lesson 8
Memory Verse

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

—Mark 11:25

The concentration camp the soldiers took them to (Ravensbruck) was horrific. It was bitterly cold and there wasn't enough to eat. The prisoners worked from before dawn until after it was dark. If they were too sick to work, they were sent to death camps, shot, or left to die on their own. With Betsie's failing health, Corrie constantly worried about what would happen if she could no longer work.

Because of this, Corrie had to work extra hard to cover for both of them. Also, she set aside portions of her own food so Betsie could eat it and keep up her strength. In fact, she did so much for Betsie and the other women in the camp, her own health started to suffer. Betsie eventually died—only a few weeks before Corrie was released from Ravensbruck. Corrie found out later that her release was actually due to a mistake in the paperwork.

A week after she left, all the women at Ravensbruck who were her same age, were killed.

Three years later, Corrie was in Germany, speaking to a group of people about God's forgiveness. When she'd finished, a man pushed his way to the front and took off his hat. Something about his appearance made her freeze. She recognized him as one of the guards from Ravensbruck!

He stuck out his hand and said, “A fine message, Fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!”

Corrie started to fumble in her purse—anything to keep from taking his hand. She knew there was no way he could remember her from among all the thousands of women from Ravensbruck, but the memory of walking past him—and others—wearing nothing and being cruelly pushed and shoved and insulted—was still fresh in her memory.

“You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,” he continued, “I was a guard there.”

Corrie still stood there, unable to move, unable to bring her hand up to meet his. He kept going: “Since that time,” he said, “I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well.” He held out his hand again—closer—waiting. “Will you forgive me?”

As Corrie stood there, she thought about how many times God forgave her for her sins—and still, she couldn't bring herself to tell this guard, “I forgive you.” Her sister died in that concentration camp—her father was also dead—was she supposed to forgive him for that, just because he asked?

In her book, Corrie remembers it this way, “It could not have been many seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I'd ever had to do.

“Because I had to do it—I knew that. God forgives us, but He has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. ‘If you do not forgive men their sins,’ Jesus says, ‘neither will your Father in heaven forgive your sins.’

“And still, I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. ‘... Help!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’”

So Corrie held out her hand to the guard. And when she did, an amazing thing happened!

She said, “The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.”

“I forgive you, brother!” she cried, “I forgive you with all my heart!”

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands—the former guard and the former prisoner. I have never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then.”

Discuss:

- ▶ **Can you share a time when someone asked you to forgive them and you really didn’t feel like you could?**
- ▶ **What kept you from telling them you forgave them? (Or, if the answer is affirmative:) What changed in your heart that helped you be able to say, “I forgive you.”?**
- ▶ **What kinds of things do you think Corrie might have wanted to say to the guard from Ravensbruck? What would you have wanted to say in a situation like that?**

Like Corrie said in her testimony: forgiveness is a decision at first—not a feeling. If you make the decision to forgive someone, God will give you the strength to gradually change your thoughts and actions towards them too.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your *Upper Elementary Teacher’s Guide*; your Step 4 appears below.)

For more detailed information about Corrie ten Boom’s life, see this story (written by a 14-year-old girl):

http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=Corrie_Ten_Boom

To read Corrie’s entire account of the Ravensbruck guard story, visit:

<http://www.familylifeeducation.org/gilliland/procgroup/CorrieTenBoom.htm>

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STEP 4

Lesson 8 Focus:

We need to forgive others as God forgives us.

Lesson 8 Bible Basis:

Matthew 18:21-35; 6:12



To help them take the message into their daily lives, students will make prayer cards to serve as reminders to pray for the ones they need to forgive.

Materials:

- Large neon index cards
- Colored Sharpies (or other fine-tipped markers)



Ask for a volunteer to hand out index cards to each student. Place the markers in the center of the table, within everyone's reach.

Discuss:

-  **Why do you think having a grudge against someone is the same as unforgiveness?** (Possible answers: Because you're still holding on to the offense. Because you're still judging the person by their past behavior instead of giving them a second chance.)
-  **What are some practical things we can do to help us forgive the ones who have hurt us?** (Possible answers: Ask God to help us forgive them, do nice things for them, pray for them.)

One of the best things we can do to start forgiving people the way God forgave us is to **PRAY** for them! It will change our feelings towards them from the inside out.

Discuss:

-  **What are some things we can pray for them about?** (Write some of their ideas on the board, or on a sheet of paper if a board is not available.)
-  **How would you feel if you knew someone you'd hurt was praying for you?** (Now, think about the fact that, after everything we did to hurt Jesus, He not only prayed for us—He died for us! The very least we can do is pray for the ones we need to forgive!)

When you pray for someone every day—for their success and their health and for them to grow in Christ—after a while, you'll find out that you can't go on feeling bitter and unforgiving towards them.

Lesson 8
Memory Verse

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

—Mark 11:25

It’s really hard at first, to pray for good things to happen to a person who has caused bad things to happen to you. But as you pray, the Lord will soften your heart and make the words sincere, if you truly want to forgive them.

Ask your students to think of a person they need to forgive, then have them make a list of four specific things they can be praying about for this person, based on the ideas you discussed earlier.

When they’re done, tell them to take the list home and put it in a prominent place—maybe on the wall by their bed—or on the inside cover of their notebook. Ask the class to brainstorm for ideas on how to remember to pray for “their person” each day. (Such as praying down the list each morning while they’re brushing their teeth.)

Close with prayer: **Lord, thank You for Your gift of forgiveness. Help us to remember how much we’ve been forgiven when it’s our turn to give that gift to someone else. Thank You for giving us the strength to pray for the people we’ve chosen on our lists—and for the ability to ultimately forgive them. We pray that You will work in each and every heart in this room this week—and remind us that you forgive us according to how we forgive others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Finally, before you dismiss the group, encourage your students to be prepared to share their experiences at class next week.

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