

FORGIVE AND FORGET!

A New Year assembly outline for Primary aged children (4-11 years)

Resources

Downloadable:

- Video clip from bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips - search for the Parable of the unforgiving servant

Optional/extra resources

- One small pebble for each child and adult

The start of the New Year is a time when people make resolutions for the year ahead, but how many people resolve to forgive someone or let go of a grudge that they are holding? This assembly encourages the children to see the New Year as a new start in their friendships and families and to forgive and forget.

Introduction

Welcome the children to their time of worship and introduce yourself if you are visiting the school for the first time. Explain that you will be thinking about the New Year and the opportunity that it gives us to forgive and forget.

Starter: Resolutions

Ask the children to raise their hands if they have made a New Year resolution this year, perhaps giving them a couple of minutes to share. Ask the children to suggest why they think the New Year is a good opportunity for people to make promises. What kind of resolutions might people make?

Explain that many people make promises about their lifestyles or perhaps try to give up something which they think is bad for their health such as chocolate or smoking. Unfortunately, New Year resolutions don't always last very long!

However, today we are going to challenge ourselves to make a resolution that we will keep. We are going to be thinking about how we can see the New Year as an opportunity to let go of grudges that we may be holding and to forgive people.

Activity 1: The parable of the unforgiving servant

A parable is a story with a meaning. and in the Bible there are many parables which teach us what is right and wrong. They are important to Christians because they believe that parables teach them lessons about how to live their lives. This parable tells us the story of someone who asked for forgiveness but was unwilling to forgive in return. It can teach us a lot about forgiveness and we can use it to understand how not to hold grudges against other people!

Read the parable to the children and perhaps you could ask some volunteers to act it out as you read it. (You can either use *The Message* paraphrase of the story as below or choose a version from a children's Bible.)



'The Kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market. The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!' The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in Heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy.' (Matthew 18:23 - 34 *The Message*)

Explain that this parable is a good example of the wrong way to treat others. This man had an enormous amount of debt and owed a lot of money. He begged the king for forgiveness and wanted to have his debt written off. The king showed compassion to the man and agreed to cancel the debt. However, as soon as the man came across one of his fellow servants who owed him only a small amount of money, he demanded the money be paid and refused to forgive him. The King was obviously furious when he heard about this and demanded that the man pay back his debt. The man could not see that the forgiveness he had been granted could be passed on to someone else and he, in turn, could forgive unconditionally.

If possible, download the clip from the BBC website as described and show at this point. It is a modern-day version of this parable.

Activity 2: Forgive and forget

Ask the children what they think this parable teaches us about forgiveness. Can it help us in making our resolution for this year to be forgiving towards others, forgetting any hurt that they have caused us? Explain to the children that you are going to give each of them a pebble (decide whether you are able to give them out at this point or as the children leave the assembly). Encourage them to see the pebble as a reminder to forgive others. Although it's not always easy to do, let's all try to make it our resolution this year. You can choose to either keep hold of the pebble or perhaps give it to someone to show them that you have forgiven them. (In the Jewish New Year, people cast small stones or pebbles into water as a sign of 'casting off' of sins and forgiveness).

Reflection

The most well known-Christian prayer is the Lord's Prayer and there is an important line in which we can ask both for forgiveness and the ability to forgive others. Explain to the children that you are going to say this prayer and they can sit with their eyes closed and think about how they are going to be better at forgiving people this year.

