



Helping Kids Forgive God's Way

When Letting Go Opens the Way to Healing

Raising Christ-Centered Kids | Faith | Forgiveness

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“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:32, *ESV*)

Key Takeaway

God forgave me, so I can forgive too.

The Biblical Meaning of Forgiveness

Forgiveness isn't just saying “it's okay” or pretending something didn't hurt. The Bible teaches that forgiveness means letting go of the hurt and choosing to want good for the person who wronged us. It's a gift of mercy—not because they deserve it, but because God has already shown mercy to us through Jesus.

When we hold onto unforgiveness, it doesn't really hurt the other person—it hurts us. It fills our hearts with bitterness and makes it harder to feel close to God. That's why Paul wrote, “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13, *ESV*). When we forgive, we are living like Jesus, who forgave us first.

Forgiveness isn't easy, but Jesus reminds us that it's at the very center of the gospel: “If you forgive others... your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” (Matthew 6:14, *ESV*). Real forgiveness begins in the heart, where God's Spirit helps us let go of bitterness and fill up with peace.

Understanding Forgiveness: Why Forgiveness Feels Hard

Forgiveness can feel impossible especially when the hurt goes deep. Parents know that feeling when someone hurts their child. Kids know it too—when a friend leaves them out, a sibling says something mean, or someone breaks a promise. Our first reaction is usually to get even or hold a grudge.



Parent Guide | Forgiveness

But forgiveness doesn't mean pretending the wrong never happened. It means trusting God to handle what's fair and choosing to let go of revenge. Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting the hurt or letting someone keep hurting us. It means choosing not to carry the heavy weight of bitterness in our hearts.

Jesus carried the cross that took away every sin, including ours. Because of Him, forgiveness isn't something we do alone. When we forgive, we find freedom from anger, shame, and the need to make others pay. Forgiveness brings peace with others and joy in knowing that Jesus lives in our hearts.

Practical Steps: Choosing Forgiveness with God's Help

1. **Pray first.** Ask God to soften your heart and remind you of His mercy. "Jesus, help me forgive because I can't do it on my own."
2. **Choose forgiveness.** Decide not to get even, even if the other person never apologizes. "I won't get back at them. I'll let God handle it."
3. **Speak blessing.** Use kind words instead of mean ones. "I'm hurt, but I'll still say something kind."
4. **Set safe boundaries.** You can forgive someone and keep space if you need to. "I forgive you, but I need space right now."
5. **Leave judgment to God.** He's fair, and His mercy is greater than ours. "I don't have to make them pay. God is the Judge."

Scripture for Parents and Kids

- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 *ESV*)
- "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18, *ESV*)
- "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (Romans 12:19, *ESV*)

Encouragement for Parents

Forgiveness is a journey, not a one-time act. Some days it feels easy; other days it feels impossible. God understands both. He gives us grace to do what we can't do on our own. Forgiveness doesn't erase the pain or make everything right overnight. But it invites Jesus into the broken place, and He begins to heal it. Each time you choose forgiveness, you're showing your child what the gospel looks like in real life: mercy, grace, and love that start with God and flow through us.

CTMP Corner: Kingdom Kids in Action

- **Connect** – Tell your child about a time you forgave someone and ask if they've ever felt hurt.
- **Teach** – Explain that revenge never brings peace, but forgiveness brings freedom.
- **Model** – Apologize sincerely and show that even parents need grace.
- **Pray** – Ask God together for strength to forgive as Jesus forgave you.