

FORGIVENESS

It's not the big day, it's everyday!

Level: Middle School **Time:** 2 Class Periods **Topic:** Forgiveness

Essential Questions:

1. What is forgiveness?
2. What are the benefits of forgiveness for individuals and for society?
3. What forms does forgiveness take?

Lesson Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will be able to define what forgiveness is in their own lives and for society.
2. Students will discuss how forgiveness can affect people.

Key Terms:

Forgiveness

Line in the sand

Genocide

Perpetrators

Reconciliation

Materials:

Lessons of Forgiveness - written by Alison Crowther

Activity sheet: quotes on forgiveness

Instructional Activity/Procedures:

1. Ask students to journal on the word forgiveness. What does it mean to them? What does it look like in their lives? What are the benefits to forgiveness? Who can they or can't they forgive?
2. Discuss the conclusions that the students reached. Make a list of pertinent ideas/thoughts.
3. Hand out activity sheet on forgiveness. Students should work in pairs to answer the questions. The class then can compare ideas and come up with the quote they found most meaningful.

Instructional Activity/Procedures (cont.)

4. Discuss the meaning of the key terms.
5. Students should create a timeline of the events of September 11, 2001. There is one available on the National 9/11 Memorial Museum's web site as well as many others on the internet. Any websites should be carefully prescreened by the teacher.
6. Students should view the video; The Man in the Red Bandanna.
7. After watching the video they should journal on their reaction to the video. Would they be able to forgive the people who committed these attacks? Why or why not? What impact would this have on their lives and those of their families?
8. Give students the reading: Lessons of Forgiveness. After completing the reading students should work in pairs to answer the questions on the worksheet.
9. Class discussion on their answers.
10. Students should look back to their original journal. What changes would they make based on this lesson? Do they still feel the class quote' on forgiveness is one they agree with? Why or why not?

Evidence of Understanding

1. Write an essay, poem or create a poster expressing your views on forgiveness. Make sure it includes how forgiveness impacts a person's life and that of their families and friends.
2. Create a chart on forgiveness. Include types of forgiveness as well as its impact.
3. Write a story either real or imaginary about forgiveness and its affect.

Extension Activities

1. Research an individual who has been able to forgive and build a positive life in spite of enduring loss. Write a news article about this person and the effect that their ability to forgive has had on others.
2. What organizations help people to accept what has happened and forgive? Describe what they are doing.
3. What could forgiveness do for your life? How could you use it to help you grow as a human being?
4. Listen to the song 'We Are the World'. What is the meaning of it?
5. Students can create a poem, song or art showing the meaning of forgiveness

Lessons of Forgiveness
By Alison Remy Crowther
August 14, 2023

Although I am not a professionally trained educator, by virtue of my life's experience as the mother of Welles Remy Crowther, I am perhaps somewhat qualified to reflect on Forgiveness, what it is and what it means.

It took me many years and this learning project supported by the Fetzer Institute to even begin to address the concept of forgiveness regarding the events of September 11" and the loss of our beloved son. The Fetzer Institute, whose mission it is to understand how love and forgiveness works in the world, offered me an opportunity and impetus to do just that.

I began to broach the subjects of Love and Forgiveness as a guest speaker to students in small classrooms as well as large assemblies. I engaged in lengthy conversation with Vernoy Paolini, regarding the subject as well, as we attempted to formulate ways to delve into the topic through our Red Bandanna Project.

It became very clear that Forgiveness was the most difficult topic of all for anyone to address and understand. I will never be able to forgive the planners and perpetrators of the horrors of September 11th.

Over time, however, I have begun to have new understandings about forgiveness and its dynamics. The first, and easiest to grasp, is the notion that when an event of such horrific proportions as 9/11 occurs, it draws a "line in the sand" which defines the truly unforgivable and shows that most things that happen to us in life can and should be forgiven.

With all of the many unfair or unkind things that happen often in life, holding grudges, resentments or dwelling on slights generates negative energy and is destructive to the person who does not forgive, as well as to those around them. This negativity wastes time, as well as the personal and spiritual resources of the individual and can lead to an inwardly focused, downward and destructive emotional spiral.

Releasing oneself through Forgiveness frees one from the control of others over themselves. As a result, one can be much more productive and happier.

Forgiveness allows love to come in. Love is a very powerful force, the most powerful force, for good. Love can power Forgiveness.

Lessons of Forgiveness (continued)

But what about the larger evils such as mass genocide, for example? How is that to be forgiven? Can, or should, acts of that nature ever be forgiven? Or forgotten? If so, how?

What does forgiveness mean? Forgetting something terrible ever happened? That just invites recurrence of the same. Those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it. Or does it mean releasing oneself from the paralyzing grip of the horror to rise up to bring good in response to the evil? Isn't Good the only true weapon against Evil?

Perhaps, like Love, Forgiveness has many dimensions and meanings.

The lesson I understood from the very early days after 9/11 was that, in times of challenge, it is important to not focus inwardly, at least not for any prolonged length of time. It is important to keep your focus outward, to strive to bring changes for the better within, or outside of, your sphere of influence, to care for others who may be suffering as well. Through Love and Forgiveness much positive energy will be generated and good will once again come flooding into the world.

Search for ways to learn from bad things that happen and respond with good. For example, from bullying to genocide, a vast range of mankind's inhumanity to mankind, seek solutions, take action, to eliminate the problem and make the world a better place. Is this not perhaps a form of forgiveness, driven by one's love of one's fellow human being? This is a power that lies within each one of us.

What would be other examples? What or whom do you need to forgive in your life? What will you do to Forgive and bring good into the world to right a wrong?

Even small positive changes can start a chain reaction which will grow and influence your world beyond expectation. After all, the power lies within each one of us to help create the world we live in, a beautiful world for all, in ways both large and small.

This is, I believe, is the essential purpose and responsibility we have as living, intelligent, creative, essentially social creatures with opposable thumbs and an enlarged brain living on this exquisite and solitary planet earth....a fragile miracle of life in the great void of space of which we human beings are the primary caretakers.

Forgiveness Worksheet

Part I: Answer the following questions based on these quotes:

A. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. - Martin Luther King Jr.

B. Forgive your enemies but never forget their names. - John F. Kennedy

C. The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong.
- Mahatma Gandhi

D. When you forgive, you in no way change the past- but you sure do change the future. - Bernard Meltzer

E. I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying I will not forgive.- Henry Ward Beecher

F. To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.
- Hannah Moore

1. Which of these quotes is closest to your idea of what forgiveness? Explain why.

2. Which of these quotes would you most disagree with? Explain why?

3. Create your own quote about forgiveness.

Forgiveness Worksheet (continued)

Part II: After reading Lessons in Forgiveness answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Alison describes 9/11 as a "line in the sand"?
2. Explain why holding grudges and resentments can create negative energy.
3. What are the benefits of forgiveness for the person who is able to forgive?
4. What are other examples of forgiveness?
5. Whom do YOU need to forgive? How will you do this?
6. Explain how forgiveness can change the world.