

Instructor Guide: Loving & Forgiving Lesson

Objective: Equip instructors with the necessary guidance, facilitation techniques, and answer keys (with biblical references) to effectively teach the lesson on Loving & Forgiving.

Step 1: Interactive Team-Building Event (30 min)

Activity: The Bridge of Reconciliation

Objective: Encourage teamwork and illustrate the importance of love and forgiveness in overcoming division.

Materials Needed:

- Paper, tape, string, or small building materials (e.g., popsicle sticks, straws, glue)
- A designated space with two separate areas for groups
- Timer or stopwatch
- Whiteboard or flip chart for discussion points

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Set the Scene:

- a. Divide the participants into two groups and position them on opposite sides of the room.
- b. Explain that the two sides represent division caused by conflicts, misunderstandings, or past hurts.

2. Introduce the Task:

- a. Each group must construct one-half of a bridge using the materials provided.
- b. They must do this without communicating with the other group for the first 10 minutes.
- c. The goal is for both halves to connect seamlessly once time is up.

3. Silent Building Phase (First 10 Minutes):

- a. Each group works independently, making design decisions based on limited materials.
- b. After 10 minutes, pause the activity and ask the groups how they feel working in isolation.

4. Communication & Collaboration Phase (Next 10 Minutes):

- a. Allow groups to communicate and strategize on how to ensure the bridge fits together.

- b. Encourage active listening, compromise, and teamwork to align their designs.

5. Final Construction Phase (Last 5 Minutes):

- a. Groups finalize and attempt to connect both halves.
- b. Once complete, discuss whether the bridge is stable and what challenges arose.

6. Debrief & Discussion:

- a. Gather everyone around the bridge and reflect on the experience.
- b. Ask:
 - i. What was difficult about building separately?
 - ii. How did communication change the process?
 - iii. How does this relate to real-life conflicts and reconciliation?

Biblical Connection:

- *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)*
- *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18)*

Facilitation Tips:

- Encourage teamwork and creativity.
- If time permits, allow teams to refine their bridges after the first attempt.
- Connect the exercise to biblical examples of reconciliation (e.g., Prodigal Son, Jesus & Peter).

Step 2: Small Group Instruction & Deep Discussion (45 min)

Discussion Topics & Answer Key (with Biblical References and Vignettes):

LOVING & FORGIVING:

Love - "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Forgiveness – "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

- a. **How does a man show love and forgiveness? (discussion)**
- b. **How did God the Father show us His love and forgiveness:**

- i. **Answer:** Through the sacrifice of His Son, which was acceptable and perfect and bearing the punishment of sin for those to be saved, produced a path for them to:
 - 1. Be called by God through the Holy Spirit and the hearing of the Gospel.
 - **Romans 10:14,17** – *"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*
 - **John 6:44** – *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."*
 - 2. Be given spiritual life by the Holy Spirit. (born again)
 - **John 3:3-5** – *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*
 - **Titus 3:5** – *"He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."*
 - 3. Repent of their sins and place faith in Jesus from the heart. (Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.)
 - **Romans 10:9-10** – *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

- **Mark 1:15** – *“Repent and believe in the gospel.”*
 - **Acts 3:19** – *“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”*
4. Be forgiven of all sin.
 - **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 - **Ephesians 1:7** – *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.”*
 5. Be counted as righteous or upright in the eyes of God through the acts of redemption by Jesus Christ.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21** – *“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
 - **Romans 3:24** – *“[We are] justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*
 6. Be reconciled to God, saved from His wrath and eternal judgment.
 - **Romans 5:9-10** – *“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God... while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”*
 - **Colossians 1:21-22** – *“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind... He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death.”*
 7. Be adopted as a child of God.
 - **Romans 8:15-17** – *“You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”*
 - **John 1:12** – *“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*
 8. Be secured by Him forever.
 - **John 10:28-29** – *“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”*
 - **Philippians 1:6** – *“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*
 9. Be progressively transformed into Christ’s likeness.
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18** – *“And we all... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”*
 - **Romans 12:2** – *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”*
 - **Hebrews 12:14** – *“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”*
 10. Be glorified in Christ’s return.
 - **Romans 8:30** – *“And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.”*

- **1 John 3:2** – *“When He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”*
- **Philippians 3:21** – *“[He] will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body.”*

ii. **Biblical Reference: The New Covenant**

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:19-20 ESV)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31-34 ESV)

1. **Compassion** – *“As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.”* (Psalm 103:13)

a. **How can a man demonstrate compassion for others in conflict?**

- Answer:** Compassion is rooted in extending mercy, grace, and forgiveness. It requires the transgressor to recognize their mistakes and feel accountable because you uphold a standard that earns their respect. True compassion means guiding them toward growth without completely abandoning them in their struggles.
- Biblical Reference:** *“Nevertheless, in Your great compassion, You did not make an end of them or forsake them. For You are a gracious and compassionate God.”* (Nehemiah 9:31 NASB)
- Vignette:** A father instills strong values and discipline in his child. When the child makes a mistake, they genuinely regret disappointing their father, knowing he represents a high standard. The father remains present, offering correction and guidance instead of harsh punishment or abandonment.
- Note:** *Discipline by God, in the Deuteronomy 8:2-6 passage, had a purpose behind each form of discipline, mainly to achieve obedience; however, he did not abandon them. In Hebrews 12: 4-*

11, the author describes the difference between an earthly father's discipline and our heavenly Father's discipline; God's discipline is to achieve holiness, and an earthly father's discipline is insufficient in comparison. (Deut 8:2-6 & Hebrews 12: 4-11)

2. **Peacemaker** – “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17-18)

b. What does it mean to be a peacemaker in daily life?

- i. **Answer:** Being a peacemaker means actively seeking reconciliation and promoting harmony, even when difficult.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." (Psalm 34:14)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A man apologizes first in a disagreement, prioritizing restoration over proving he was right.

c. How does avoiding conflict differ from true peacemaking?

- i. **Answer:** Avoiding conflict allows bitterness to grow, whereas true peacemaking addresses issues directly and with love.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *In Genesis 13:6-9 Due to conflict between Abraham and Lot's herdsman, Abraham asked Lot to choose the land of his choice. Abraham did so because they were family. Lot chose the entire valley of Jordan (this land was described as fertile as the Garden of Eden), and shortly after, as Abraham settled in Canaan, the Lord promised him and his descendants to own the land as far as the eye could see forever.*
- iii. **Vignette:** Instead of ignoring a rift with his best friend, a man humbly reaches out to have an honest conversation and resolve their dispute.

3. **Sacrifice & Generosity** – *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)*

d. Why does love require sacrifice?

- i. **Answer:** Love is not self-seeking but requires giving up personal desires for the good of others.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A father sacrifices a job promotion that would require constant travel to be more present in his son's life, prioritizing his family's well-being over career advancement.

e. How does generosity strengthen relationships?

- i. **Answer:** Generosity builds goodwill and deepens bonds, creating a cycle of love and gratitude.
 - ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor." (Proverbs 22:9)*
 - iii. **Vignette:** A man notices a close friend struggling financially and, instead of offering just temporary assistance, he helps him develop a plan for long-term stability. He mentors him in financial stewardship, connects him with job opportunities, and sacrifices his own time and resources to help his friend get back on his feet. Over time, their bond deepens as the friend not only regains stability but also learns the value of generosity, later paying it forward to others in need.
- 4. **Kindness, Hopeful, & Patience** – *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)*
 - f. **How does hope sustain love and forgiveness?**
 - i. **Answer:** Hope allows us to trust in God's promises of restoration, even when reconciliation seems impossible.
 - ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him." (Romans 15:13)*
 - iii. **Vignette:** A man forgives his estranged brother, hoping their relationship can be healed over time through prayer and patience.
 - g. **Why do kindness and patience work together in forgiveness?**
 - i. **Answer:** Kindness compels us to extend grace, while patience gives us the endurance to wait for healing and reconciliation in difficult relationships.
 - ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud." (1 Corinthians 13:4)*
 - iii. **Vignette:** A husband and wife working through past mistakes respond with kindness rather than frustration, allowing time and love to heal wounds.
- 5. **Devout** – *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22)*
 - h. **How does being devout shape our ability to love and forgive?**
 - i. **Answer:** A devout heart prioritizes obedience to God's commands, including loving our neighbors and forgiving others.
 - ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." (1 John 2:6)*
 - iii. **Vignette:** A man actively seeks to grow in his faith through daily prayer and scripture study, which helps him show patience and kindness in difficult relationships.

i. Why does devotion to God lead to stronger relationships?

- i. **Answer:** Devotion fosters humility, selflessness, and a willingness to serve others, creating bonds built on faith and trust.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this." (Psalm 37:5)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A husband and wife strengthen their marriage by committing to regular prayer and Bible study together, mutually understanding spiritual truths and reinforcing their roles and relationship.

6. Faithfulness – *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)*

j. How does faithfulness strengthen our ability to love and forgive?

- i. **Answer:** Often, people who hurt or wrong us appear undeserving of forgiveness. Our natural response is to seek personal justice or even vengeance. But Jesus commands us to forgive seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22), reflecting God's endless mercy toward us. We place our faith in Jesus because we love Jesus, and because of that love, we are called to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things (1 Corinthians 13:7)—including repeated offenses. Forgiveness is never based on another person's worthiness. It flows from our love for Christ and unwavering confidence that God will handle every wrong perfectly in His timing.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A man has a brother who repeatedly borrows money, offering excuses each time he fails to pay it back. Over time, frustration and resentment could easily take root. However, because the man loves Jesus and trusts God's justice and mercy, he chooses to forgive his brother—not based on his brother's worthiness, but on his faith in Christ. Instead of reacting in bitterness, the man bears his brother's excuses, believes in God's compassionate character, and hopes his brother will one day overcome his inability to take responsibility. Even if the debt is never repaid, he endures patiently, knowing that God sees the situation and will bring about growth and justice in His perfect timing.

7. Zealous & Evangelism – *"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." (Romans 12:11)*

k. How does passion for God translate into love and forgiveness?

- i. **Answer:** When we are passionate about God, we strive to reflect His character, which includes practicing love and forgiveness in all aspects of life.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."* (2 Corinthians 5:14)
- iii. **Vignette:** A man shares his testimony about how God's love helped him overcome bitterness, inspiring others to seek healing and forgiveness.

l. How can evangelism promote reconciliation and peace?

- i. **Answer:** Sharing the Gospel. Evangelism spreads the message of God's love and grace, that we will be reconciled back to God and **saved from his wrath through faith in Jesus Christ.**
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."* (Mark 16:15)
- iii. **Vignette:** A man leads a Bible study for struggling young men, helping them find healing through faith and personal reflection.

8. Subservience & Worship – "Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

m. How does submitting to God's will help us?

- i. **Answer:** Submitting to God's will means laying down our personal desires and surrendering to what God has revealed in His Word. His will is that we grow in holiness, love others, exercise self-control, and believe in His Son for eternal life. His will is "good, pleasing, and perfect"
- ii. **Biblical Reference:**
"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life." (John 6:40)

"For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:35)

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life." (John 6:40)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10)

- iii. **Vignette:** Reflect on the example of Joseph, who was tempted by Potiphar's wife to commit adultery. Joseph resisted, saying, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Like Joseph, the man chooses to honor God rather than give in to momentary desires. He sets firm boundaries, controls his body in holiness, and walks away from temptation.

n. Why is worship essential in cultivating a forgiving heart?

- i. **Answer:** Worship shifts our focus from self-centeredness to God's grace, reinforcing a heart posture of humility and love.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." (Psalm 95:6)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A man struggling with resentment commits to daily worship and prayer, finding that God's grace is the very reason he is able to pray.

9. Prayerful – "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

o. How does prayer support a forgiving heart?

- i. **Answer:** Prayer invites self-examination before God. As we confess our own sins in prayer, we are reminded of our constant need for Christ's forgiveness. This reflection allows us to recognize that others who wrong us are sinners as well—just in different ways. As Christ forgives us, we are moved to forgive others. Through prayer, pride is softened, bitterness is replaced with compassion, and our focus shifts from personal offense to God's mercy. It reminds us that He alone judges righteously, freeing us to extend grace rather than hold grudges.
- ii. **Biblical Reference:** *"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)*
- iii. **Vignette:** A man struggles to forgive a coworker who has spread lies about him. Each day, he takes time to pray—asking God to help him forgive and confess his own sins. As he reflects, he

realizes that while his coworker's actions hurt him, he, too, falls short and needs God's grace daily. Over time, prayer softens his pride and bitterness, producing compassion. He releases the offense to God, trusting that God sees all and judges justly.

Step 3: Practical Application & Action Plan (15 min)

Exercise: Forgiveness Letter Commitment

Objective: Help participants take personal accountability for applying love and forgiveness in their daily lives.

Materials Needed:

- Paper, pens, and envelopes

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Ask participants to reflect on someone they need to forgive or an area where they need to demonstrate more love.
2. Have them write a personal letter to that person (without sending it) or a commitment letter to God about their plan to grow in love and forgiveness.
3. Allow time for silent reflection and prayer.
4. Invite participants (optional) to share what they learned from writing the letter.
5. Encourage them to keep the letter as a reminder of their commitment.

Reflection Prompts:

- How did writing this letter challenge you?
- What emotions surfaced as you reflected on love and forgiveness?
- How can you hold yourself accountable for applying these lessons?

Biblical Connection:

- *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." (Psalm 139:23)*
- *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)*
- *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)*

Facilitation Tips:

- Ensure the environment is safe and free of judgment.
- Emphasize that letters are private and not required to be shared.

- Guide participants in prayer, asking for strength to follow through on their commitment.

Step 4: Personal Testimonies & Closing Discussion (15 min)

Objective: Encourage reflection and personal growth through testimonies and open sharing.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Invite participants to share their biggest takeaways from the lesson.
2. Discuss practical ways to continue growing in love and forgiveness beyond this session.
3. Encourage participants to commit to an act of love or forgiveness in the coming week.
4. Close with a group prayer focused on reinforcing the lesson.

Discussion Prompts & Answer Guide:

1. **What was your most impactful realization from today's lesson?**
 - a. **Answer:** Responses will vary, but should reflect a personal connection to love and forgiveness.
 - b. **Biblical Reference:** *"Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18)*
2. **How can we support one another in practicing love and forgiveness?**
 - a. **Answer:** Through accountability, prayer, and encouragement.
 - b. **Biblical Reference:** *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)*
3. **Who in your life can you extend forgiveness to this week?**
 - a. **Answer:** Encourage self-reflection and prayerful action.
 - b. **Biblical Reference:** *"If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)*

Closing Prayer:

Instructor Notes & Adjustments:

- Adapt the lesson to the group's needs and engagement levels.
- Use real-life testimonials and biblical stories to reinforce points.
- Ensure a **non-judgmental and supportive** environment.
- Follow up with participants after the lesson for continued growth.