

## Over and Over Again



**Theme:** God's forgiveness and our forgiving others. Proper 19 (24)

**Object:** A large assortment of pencils with the erasers all worn off.

**Scripture:** Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22 (NASB)

Just look at all of these pencils! There are short pencils, long pencils, skinny pencils, and fat pencils. There are yellow, red, black, and white pencils. There are many different shapes, sizes, and colors of pencils but there is one thing that all of these pencils have in common. The eraser is worn off of every one of them. Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that I make a lot of mistakes. When I make a mistake, I erase it and start over, and over again, until I get it right! I don't know why I keep these pencils, because as many mistakes as I make, a pencil without an eraser is pretty useless.

These pencils remind me of people. People come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors too, but we all have one thing in common, we all make mistakes! We make a lot of mistakes. That is why God sent Jesus to die on the cross -- to erase our mistakes. When we do something wrong, we can ask God to forgive us and because of Jesus, He will erase our mistakes and we can start over again, and again, and again. Unlike these pencils, God's eraser never wears out!

Just as God forgives us over and over again. Jesus taught us that we should forgive other people over and over again.

One day, Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive someone who sins against me? Should I forgive him seven times?" I imagine that Peter was pretty proud of himself for being willing to forgive someone seven times.

Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but seventy times seven times!"

I think Jesus knew that if he said we should forgive seventy times seven times, we would never be able to keep count and we would forgive over, and over again, just as he forgives us.

It doesn't matter if we are short or tall, skinny or fat, red, white, yellow, or black, we all need God's forgiveness. We also need to remember that Jesus taught that we are to forgive others just as God forgives us.

Dear Father, we all sin and fall short. Thank you for sending Jesus to forgive us of our sins. Help us to forgive others the same way — over, and over again. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

### Activities

"FORGIVENESS" SQUIGGLE CHART: Children can use neon markers to write or trace FORGIVENESS on their construction paper. Then draw or trace (for younger children) "squiggles" circles all around the big word FORGIVENESS. Children can then begin to color the little squiggle

circles with various crayons, while trying to count to 7 (for younger children), or 70 for a little old child, or to 490 for the older children! The picture will be colorful and will remind them of their lesson today!

**70 X 7 POPCORN MUNCHING:** Let children each have a bowl and count out 70 pieces of popcorn from a big bowl, while talking about today's lesson and the 70 TIMES 7, to forgive someone! Children could be given 7 M& M's if desired too, etc.

**RED CARD/YELLOW CARD FROLICK:** The teacher or another leader can stand in front of the children who are lined up on the other side of the room against the wall or behind a line. When the leader holds up a YELLOW CARD, they can hop, skip, jump, crawl, toward the leader but as SOON AS the leaders hold up the RED card, the players must STOP and wait for the YELLOW CARD AGAIN. The teacher can tell the children what "action" they can do each time until the RED CARD is held up. Children will need to keep their EYES on the leader and the cards. If they don't see and STOP at the red card, they'll be OUT! Teacher can go faster and faster until many more children are OUT! Talk about forgiveness and then let ALL the children come back in the game and play it again, if time allows!

**FORGIVE ACROSTIC:** On a chalkboard or a long piece of banner paper, write FORGIVE and then let children go to the board and write a word to describe our lesson word FORGIVE today! Let children discuss the new word and how THEY can forgive someone!

**FORGIVE FLOWERS:** Children can be given paper and markers and colorful "buttons" for the middle of the flowers (to glue on). Encourage children draw large flowers and then write F-O-R-G-I-V-E in each of the petals, so each flower should have 7 petals so one letter will fit on each petal! Give children some chenille wire for the stems, if desired.

**BIBLE VERSE FORGIVE HUNT:** A large poster board can have the stem and leaves drawn for a flower to be formed by the children. They will hunt around the room or designated area for leaves of the big flower and each petal that they find will have a word or words from today's Bible verse on it. Then children will tape or glue the petals onto the large flower onto the poster board and try to read or memorize today's verse! Each child could be given an artificial flower if they can say the Bible verse or can say some words from the verse about forgiving each other 70 x 7!

**OVER AND OVER AGAIN:** Let children line up in a long line or as teams if desired. Each player will take a turn at doing 3 things over and over again until they reach the other side of the playing area, such as "RUN, JUMP 3 TIMES AND SKIP 3 TIMES" and then do it over and over again. Let every player do 3 things over and over again, as the teacher gives them ideas.

**MUSICAL CHAIRS:** Children can gather in a circle inside a circle of chairs and while the music is playing, the children will slowly walk around the circle, "over and over again" until the music stops. There will be one chair less than the number of children. When everyone quickly find a seat as the music stops, one child will be left without a chair to sit on. THAT child will say, I FORGIVE YOU, and will sit outside the circle of chairs. Play as long as time allows.

**70x7=490 HUNT:** Let the class or separate teams hunt for all these numbers in the classroom. Then children will quickly put the numbers in the correct order for  $70 \times 7 = 490$ . Let the class use colorful markers and take turns writing today's Bible verse on the poster where they have taped the numbers.

**PENCIL PEOPLE:** Give children supplies to make pencil people, such as a styrofoam ball for the head, yarn for the hair, cloth to hang over the end of the pencil before sticking the styrofoam ball on the top, etc. Use markers to draw the happy face.

**BIBLE VERSE ERASING:** The teacher can write today's Bible verse on the chalkboard with colored chalk and with different types of handwriting or printing. Let children take turns erasing

one word at a time and the class reciting the Bible verse each time a word is erased, until children can recite the verse with ALL the words erased!

**BIG ERASER GIFT:** If the teacher can find a Dollar Store nearby, there may be very large erasers that say (for BIG MISTAKES). The teacher could purchase enough for the entire class, wrap the erasers in colorful paper and give one to each child as they leave the classroom.

## Keep On Forgiving



**Theme:** Forgiving others as God forgives us. Proper 19 (24) Year A

**Object:** A soccer ball, a yellow card and a red card.

**Scripture:** Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

Do you like sports? What do you think is the most popular sport in the world? Most articles that I have read seem to agree that soccer is the most popular sport in the world. If you are playing or watching soccer, it is very important to know and follow the rules. How many know what this is? (Hold up the yellow card.) Even if you have never seen a soccer game, you could probably figure out that this is called a yellow card. In a soccer game, the referee holds up a yellow card to warn a player for a dangerous or unsportsmanlike play. For example, if a player tries to kick the ball out of the goalie's hands, that is dangerous. The goalie could be hurt, so the referee shows the player a yellow card as a warning not to do it again. If that player makes another dangerous play, the referee shows him the yellow card again, but then he would show him this card. (Hold up the red card.) Do you know what that means? The player is out of the game! That is pretty rough punishment, isn't it? You get one warning and then you are out! In baseball, the batter gets three strikes before he's out. In basketball, a player gets five or six fouls before he is out. The sport of soccer isn't very forgiving, is it?

How many times do you think a person should be forgiven for doing something wrong? Once? Twice? Three times? If you were to ask Jesus how many times you should forgive someone, what do you think he would say? Well, we don't have to guess, because the Bible gives us the answer.

One day, Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive someone who sins against me? Should I forgive him seven times?" I imagine that Peter thought he was being pretty generous to forgive someone seven times. I don't know about you, but I think I agree with Peter. To forgive someone seven times is be pretty generous. Guess what? Jesus didn't agree.

Jesus answered Peter, "Not seven times, but seventy times seven."

Wow! Seventy times seven! That's four hundred and ninety times. I think that before I got to four hundred and ninety I would lose count. You know, I think that is probably what Jesus was trying to get Peter to understand and he wants us to understand it too. We shouldn't worry about keeping count of how many times we have forgiven someone -- we should just keep on forgiving. Isn't that what God does? He doesn't keep count of how many times he has forgiven

us. He just keeps on forgiving.

Some churches have a soccer league for boys and girls in grades K-6 called Upward Soccer. Most of the rules are the same as regular soccer, but there is one rule that is very different. In Upward soccer, there are no yellow cards and no red cards! I like that rule. We all make mistakes and we all do things that we should not do, so let's forgive them -- at least four hundred and ninety times!

Dear Father, we are thankful that you love us and forgive us without keeping count. Help us to love and forgive others as you have forgiven us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.