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TAKE A LOAD OFF

Lesson 1

GOD'S FORGIVENESS AT SALVATION

In the classic book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan pictured the main character, Pilgrim, as a man deeply troubled about the heavy burden he carries. The burden is his sin. As he approaches the cross, his burden is cut free from his back and rolls away. Few unbelievers know that the burden of sin they carry can be lifted away by God. The forgiveness of God at salvation is what frees each of us from the load of sin we carry.

To help teens understand the nature of forgiveness we receive at salvation.

Students will:

- **see forgiveness illustrated**
- **discuss the different ways that sin crushes unbelievers**
- **compare their feelings to God's in forgiveness**
- **indicate whether or not they have received God's forgiveness**

Ephesians 1:7 declares that forgiveness is possible in Jesus Christ because of His shed blood on the cross. This forgiveness refers to the pardon granted to the sinner at the moment of salvation.

LESSON AIM

OBJECTIVES

TEXT
Ephesians 1:7

What You Need:

Warm-up: A big, solid hiker's backpack loaded with heavy objects

Object Lesson: A roll of plastic wrap, barrettes, scissors

Handout: Copies of "My Most Prized Possession," pens or pencils

Closing: Copies of "The Sentence"

The Lesson

WARM-UP

What You Need:

A big, solid hiker's backpack loaded with heavy objects

Load a big, solid hiker's backpack with heavy objects. As teens enter, choose a small teen to shoulder the pack and stand. Have him or her stand throughout the opening exercises of the class until he or she can't hold the pack anymore. (Make sure you choose someone who will not be able to endure for long.) Say, "This is like the load of sin each of us carries with us before salvation."

BRIDGE

Remove the pack from the teen's back and ask him or her how it feels to have the heavy load removed. Say, "When we are saved, God removes the burden of sin and guilt from us in the same way."

CONTENT

I. The Load

Every person is born a sinner. Because of Adam's sin this condition is unavoidable. As sinners we are separated from God and have been declared guilty of sin and worthy of death. As we grow older, we sin more and more. Each sin is added to the load. The heavy burden causes us to stagger and stumble through life looking for something to ease the crushing weight of the load.

David describes the weight of sin in Psalms 32:3-4 and 38:1-14. It is an overwhelming load of sin and guilt that causes people to be bent over and broken.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

What are some sins that tend to crush those involved in them? Possible answers: drugs and alcohol— *the addiction is like a heavy load that can't be removed while it destroys the user*; lust— *it controls a person by making them a slave to their own destroying lusts*; bitterness— *it makes a beautiful person into a sour, unhappy, miserable wretch*.

Sin is described as missing the mark, crossing the line, opposition to God and failing to meet up to God's perfection. Unbelievers heap sin upon sin in trying to relieve the load of sin and guilt.

II. What God Does With The Sin

Several things take place at the moment a person puts his faith in Christ. Among other things, the person is regenerated (made new), justified (declared righteous in God's sight) and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Something else happens too. The forgiveness of God is extended to that person. Since Jesus paid for the sin of the world on the cross, He can extend forgiveness to a person who repents and trusts Christ for salvation.

Forgiveness means to release, to let go and to pardon. It is the act of God that restores the sinner's relationship to God. Forgiveness makes the sin that was committed of no account and makes the sinner accepted. Through forgiveness God gives the believer new, eternal life.

Forgiveness has another benefit too. It delivers people from the power of sin. Before salvation, a person has no power to remove the burden of sin. He also has no ability to have victory over sin (Rom. 6:6-7, 16-23). He is a slave to sin. Forgiveness allows you to have victory over daily struggles with sin.

Tie up a student with plastic wrap until he can't move. Then blindfold and gag him and lay him on the floor. Say, "This is the condition of the unbeliever in relation to sin." Have the smallest member of the group come up and mess up his hair, put barrettes in it, etc. Say, "This is the state of helplessness the unbeliever is in before salvation. He has no power to resist the power of sin." Now take a pair of scissors and carefully cut off the plastic wrap. Say, "This is what forgiveness does for a person. It gives him the power to fight sin and have victory over it."

OBJECT LESSON

What You Need:
A roll of plastic wrap
Barrettes
A pair of scissors

III. What God Does With The Guilt

Guilt is a declaration by a judge that wrong has been committed. We all experience guilt when we sin because God has placed a judge within us called our conscience. When you sin, your conscience lets you know. As a sinner you have a sentence passed down by the holiness of God that says “guilty.” When you get saved, God stamps over that sentence the words “paid in full.” You no longer stand as a guilty sinner but a pardoned sinner. You are free! This is called justification. It is the flip side of forgiveness.

IV. What Forgiveness Costs God

When God forgives you, it doesn't cost you anything. God doesn't shorten your life or empty your bank account in exchange for forgiving your sin. God's forgiveness is motivated by grace. Grace is undeserved favor. God doesn't forgive you because there is anything good in you or because you deserve to be forgiven. God forgives because He is loving and He is good.

In order to forgive the sin of the world, God had to sacrifice His Son on the cross. Forgiveness cost God the death of His only Son. Before God could forgive anyone, His Son's blood had to be shed to pay for sin. As Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself on the cross, God the Father had to turn His back on His Son to maintain His holiness. This was the most costly and painful part of God's grace. The Godhead was separated for the first time in all eternity.

HANDOUT

What You Need:

Copies of “My Most Prized Possession”
Pens or pencils

Distribute copies of “My Most Prized Possession.” Give teens several minutes to fill it out. Ask three or four teens to share their answers.

V. How To Get Forgiveness

The only way to get forgiveness is to repent of your sin and place your trust in Jesus Christ. Your sin is a weighty issue, even if you don't feel the weight of it. Romans 3:23 says that everyone is born in this sinful condition. Romans 6:23 says that the deserved penalty for our sin is death— eternal death and separation from God in hell. However, Romans 6:23 also says that Jesus paid for our sin on the cross and offers salvation

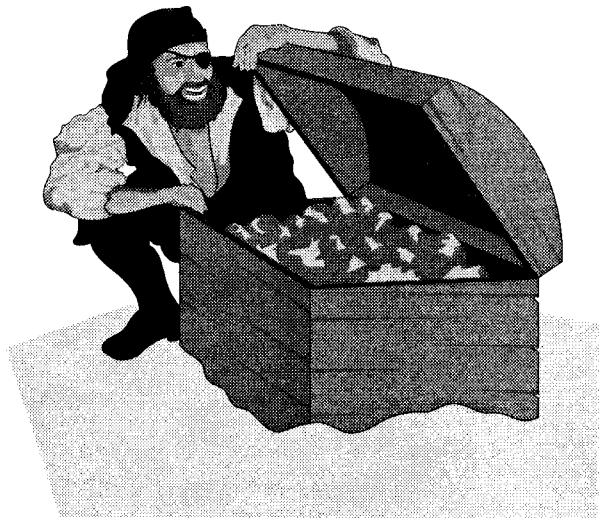
and forgiveness as a gift. All you have to do is reach out and accept the gift. You do this by confessing to God that you are a sinner, telling God that you are sorry for your sin and trusting Him to save you. Acts 10:43 says that at the moment you accept the gift of salvation, God forgives your sin and lifts its load from your shoulders.

Distribute copies of “The Sentence.” Tell teens to take them home and write “Paid In Full; Love, Jesus” across the page if they are saved. Remind them that if they aren’t saved, the sentence stands as it is. Encourage them to put their trust in Christ so that God does not have to carry out the sentence. Also, encourage them to post “The Sentence” in a place that will frequently remind them of what Jesus did for them.

CLOSING

What You Need:
Copies of “The Sentence”

MY MOST PRIZED POSSESSION



WHAT IS YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION OR RELATIONSHIP?

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD TRADE FOR IT, KNOWING YOU COULD NEVER GET IT BACK?

WOULD YOU GIVE IT AWAY IF DOING SO WOULD FREE A MAN WHO HAD MURDERED YOUR FAMILY?

DO YOU SEE THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS?



The Sentence



You are hereby declared to be



Guilty



of sin against Almighty God




and are therefore condemned to



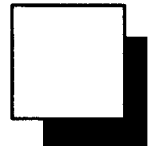
Eternal Death



in the Lake of Fire



Declared this day by



The Holiness and Justice of God

