

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Moving On / Week 1

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

When you don't forgive, it hurts you.

SCRIPTURE

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else (1 Thessalonians 5:15 NIV).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to see forgiveness as something that can help them move on and let go of hurt in their lives.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Most of the time, forgiveness is a process. It's something we have to do again and again—sometimes with the same people and for the same reasons! This can be a difficult thing for anyone to do, but especially for a middle schooler. Why? Because middle schoolers focus on the here and now. What they're feeling or

experiencing today is what they know to be real and true. Asking them to forgive over and over again with the hope that they'll eventually feel differently is not only hard, it's also abstract. And in a phase where concrete thinking is what they know, this can make the process of forgiveness all the more difficult! Be patient with your few as they grow and develop in their ability to forgive. Your goal is to simply encourage them along the way. And remember, you may have students dealing with very real and serious hurts, abuse, or wrongs committed against them. Be sure to distinguish that forgiveness doesn't mean they can't speak up, or that what happened to them is okay, or that the other person shouldn't face consequences. Make sure students know that they don't have to stay in an unsafe place or situation and that they can come to you for help.

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DURING GROUP

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 1

Ask your group to rate how easy it is to move on and forgive... 1) their pet, 2) a best friend or classmate, 3) a sibling or family member, and 4) a parent, teacher, coach, or adult in their life. With their eyes closed and using a scale of 1 to 10, ask your few to hold up the number of fingers that represents their answers.

DISCUSS THIS

1. What's one way a middle schooler might respond when someone hurts them?
2. Why is it sometimes hard to forgive someone?
3. How might choosing not to forgive hurt us?
4. How can we help a friend choose to forgive?
5. Which of these three is hardest for you when it comes to forgiveness:
 - a. Giving up your right to be mad?
 - b. Letting go of the grudge?
 - c. Repeating the process?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 2

Ask your students to write down one thing they need to forgive and let go of on a small slip of paper. Place the paper into a biodegradable balloon [*Tell them it is biodegradable—just define the word for them!*] and inflate it with helium. Then, have students say a prayer, asking for God's help to forgive, let go, and move on from the thing they wrote down and then release the balloons outside together as a group.