



Forgiveness

Study Leader's Guide

by Delia Halverson

This study is based on articles on forgiveness posted on www.umc.org, the official denominational Web site of the United Methodist Church. A full list of articles and related resources is found at <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6532>. Those titles followed by page numbers were first published in the February-March 2005 issue of *Interpreter* magazine and *Interpreter OnLine*, publications of United Methodist Communications.

Forgiveness: Our Holy Center (pages 20-21),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6536>.

Forgiveness: A Daily Challenge (page 23),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6539>.

What Would Jesus Do? Just What Round Valley Church Did (pages 24-25),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6540>.

I've Forgiven You (page 26),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6857>

Moving Toward Racial Reconciliation in Oxford, N.C. (pages 27),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6541>.

Wartime Internment Teaches Bishop 'The Importance of Grace' (pages 28-29), <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6542>.

Self-forgiveness Doesn't Come Easily (page 30),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6543/>

Forgiveness: Taught and Caught (page 31),
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6544>.

Fitting Forgiveness Into Hectic Lives Often a Struggle,
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6553>.



Introduction

Background

Forgiveness is a hard subject to write about and certainly hard to teach. If you are hesitant about leading this study, recognize that to teach is not a sign of being an authority on a subject as much as it is a sign of leadership in guiding thought on a common search. The best learning occurs when the leader and the participants are all learners together.

It is important for you to read all of the articles referred to on Page 1 before preparing to teach. The specific articles connected to each session are listed at the beginning the plan for the session. It will be helpful for you read to through all of the session plans before the first session. By doing this, you will know if a question raised in one session will be covered later.

Each session is divided into three sections.

Each begins with an opening opportunity and includes the lighting of a candle to represents Christ's presence. The second section includes activities and discussion questions. Depending on your time frame, you may not use all of them. Each session plan closes with ideas for worship. Use the hymns listed below during worship as you find them appropriate. Note the information on a worship focus table in the "Suggestions for room set-up".

Suggestions for room set-up and advance preparation:

- Placing chairs in a circle or semicircle makes for better conversation. Seating the participants at tables will enhance small group discussion.
- Plan for a worship focus table that can be used at the close of the session. This may be at the front or in the center of the room. You may use a drape of the color appropriate to the Christian season or a purple drape, which represents penitence. Place a single candle on the table and light it at the beginning of each session, as suggested in the session plans. There is a suggestion at the close of each plan for an additional object to be placed

on the table which represents the subject for that session. The simplicity of this table allows a focus on Christ and on the subject at hand.

- The plan for the second session suggests using the book *Love You Forever* [Firefly Books, Ltd.] by Robert Munsch and Sheila McGraw. You will find the book in the children's section of most libraries.

Hymns appropriate for use with these sessions:

Use these hymns as you wish in each session. Hymns numbered below 2000 are from *The United Methodist Hymnal* [United Methodist Publishing House]. The numbers above 2000 are in the song book *The Faith We Sing* [United Methodist Publishing House]:

Because He Lives (364)

Bind Us Together (2226)

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive (390)

Forgive Us, Lord (2134)

Give Me a Clean Heart (2133)

Give Peace (2156)

God, How Can We Forgive (2169)

Grace Greater than Our Sin (365)

Great Is Thy Faithfulness, verse 3 in particular (140)

He Touched Me (367)

Help Us Accept Each Other (560)

How Can We Sinners Know (372)

I've Got Peace Like a River (2145)

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (2171)

Nothing but the Blood (362)

O How He Loves You and Me (2108)

Rise, Shine, You People (187)

Spirit of the Living God (393)

They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love (2223)

Wounded World that Cries for Healing (2177)



Session 1

Theological Overview of Forgiveness

Use with:

Forgiveness: Our Holy Center, <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6536> ,
or *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (pages 20-21)

Enter the session.

Light the candle on the focus table and place the matches beside the candle. Place a Bible on the table beside the candle.

Say: **I am lighting this candle to remind us that Christ is here among us as we study. If at some time you feel that we are not acting or talking in the manner that we would if Christ were here, I suggest that you come up and blow the candle out and relight it, just to remind us. That doesn't mean that you cannot express your feelings, because we know that it's ok to speak openly before Christ. But it does remind us that Christ expressed love for everyone, and Christ would express his feelings in a kind manner.**

Introduce participants and the study.

If the participants don't know each other, ask them to each state their name and mention some act that would require forgiveness. Tell them it may be an individual act, an act of a group, or an act of society. If they do know each other, just ask them to tell about an act that would require forgiveness.

Explain the four session topics briefly:

Session 1: Theological Overview on Forgiveness: Discussion of what forgiveness is, why it is necessary, and what the Bible says about forgiveness.

Session 2: Everyday Forgiveness: There are opportunities in our everyday lives that need forgiveness. Just the experience of living brings these about.

Session 3: Corporate Forgiveness: On occasions groups of people have done an injustice to individuals or to other groups of people. Forgiveness needs to be asked for these acts.

Session 4: Self-Forgiveness: Sometimes this is the hardest experience. We often can forgive others but cannot forgive ourselves.

Discuss forgiveness

Divide the participants into groups of three. Give the following questions to each group, and give them five or 10 minutes to discuss them:

- **When do you find it hard to forgive someone?**
- **Must we have reconciliation to have forgiveness?**
- **Can you forgive even when the other party doesn't accept forgiveness?**
- **Sometimes we become so overwhelmed with guilt it's hard to recognize forgiveness. What are some signs of forgiveness from other people? ...from yourself? ...from God?**

Litany:

**All: Merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.**

Voice 1: Sometimes we think more of ourselves than we do of you.

All: We have failed to be an obedient church.

Voice 2: Sometimes we get hung up on being the biggest and best in the eyes of the public instead of seeking your call in our ministry.

All: We have not done your will.

Voice 3: Sometimes we find it hard to seek out your will, and then we simply follow the crowd.

All: We have broken your law.

Voice 4: Sometimes we edge a little, because keeping your law would put us at risk of ridicule.

All: We have rebelled against your love.

Voice 5: Sometimes we forget that you love us beyond imagining, and because things don't go our way we feel that you don't love us.

All: We have not loved our neighbors.

Voice 6: Sometimes we only see the world around us with far-sighted glasses and ignore the needs that are right outside our doors.

All: And we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Voice 7: Sometimes we purposely turn down the volume of those in need because it conflicts with what we want to do for ourselves.

All: Forgive us, we pray.

**Through this study, free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

--from **A Service of Word and Table II** (c)1972, 1970, 1985, 1989.
Used by permission.

Forgiveness in today's era

Ask a volunteer to read the the first five paragraphs of the article, "Forgiveness: Our Holy Center." Then discuss the following questions:

- **In our nation's history, what times or events have transpired that have been hard to forgive?**
- **In our church, what times or events have transpired that have been hard to forgive?**

Forgiveness in the Bible

Before class time, write the following on a chalkboard, whiteboard or large sheet of paper:

Leader: How great is God's love for all who worship him?

All: Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!

Leader: How far has the Lord taken our sins from us?

All: Farther than the distance from east and west!

(Psalm 103:11-12 CEV)

Ask the participants to call out various occasions in the Bible where people (individuals or groups of people) have needed forgiveness. After each one is called out, respond with the verses from the psalm that you have written and posted.

(Some of the occasions they might mention are: Jacob’s deceiving his father, the actions of Joseph’s brothers, Hebrews building a golden calf, David’s actions with Bathsheba, Zacchaeus, paralyzed man in Matthew 9:2-8, Samaritan woman at well, prodigal son, Saul who became Paul, and the Hebrew people many times turning from God.)

Ask a volunteer to read the paragraphs six through 12 of “Forgiveness: Our Holy Center” (*beginning with “And yet: Forgiveness is unavoidable…” and ending with ‘…we don’t have that capacity,’ Thompson says.”*)

How does forgiveness happen?

In the article, Ray Waddle states that there are debates over just how forgiveness happens. Ask for a volunteer to read the last 13 paragraphs of the article (*beginning with “Even so debates crackle about Christian forgiveness…”*), and ask for any participants who would like to comment on the article.

A forgiving Christian

Ahead of time gather enough two- to three-inch stones for each participant. Also have available fine-tipped watercolor markers, a pail half-full of soapy water, and paper towels.

Read aloud Acts 7:54-58. Then ask for someone to express how he or she would feel in Stephen’s place. Then read aloud Acts: 7:59-60 and ask what enabled Stephen to respond as he did.

Distribute the stones and watercolor markers and ask each participant to think of something bad that someone has done toward them and write a word or draw a symbol on the rock to represent the action.

After they have finished, say:

Sometimes it is hard to forgive, but God can help us. If you would like to be able to forgive the person who did wrong to you, bring your rock to the bucket and wash it clean and dry it with a paper towel.

Allow time for those who want to wash their stones, and then suggest that they take their stones home to remind them that God helps us forgive.

Closing

Select a song from the list of suggested hymns.

Say: Forgiveness is a vast subject, and we've only touched on it. I placed a Bible on our focus table today to remind us that the Bible gives us many examples of our need for forgiveness. It also gives us guidance on how to go about forgiving others and ourselves, and it especially gives us the assurance of God's forgiveness.

Have a time of silence. Ask the participants to use that time to confess any sins that they feel need forgiveness. Tell them that at the close of the prayer time you will give the assurance of pardon that is used during the Holy Communion service. They may respond with "In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!" and you will all close with "Glory to God. Amen."

Leader: Hear the good news:

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;

That proves God's love toward us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

Leader and people: Glory to God. Amen.



Session 2

Everyday Forgiveness

Use with:

Forgiveness: A Daily Challenge,

<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6539> or *Interpreter*, February/March 2005 (page 23)

Forgiveness, Caught and Taught,

<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6544> or *Interpreter*, February/March 2005 (page 31)

Fitting Forgiveness into Hectic Lives Often a Struggle,

<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6553>.

Enter the session:

Light the candle on the focus table and place the matches beside the candle. Place a daily calendar or appointment book beside the candle.

Say: **Remember that we light this candle to remind us that Christ is here among us as we study.**

Everyday forgiveness opportunities

*Locate the book **Love You Forever** by Robert Munsch and Sheila McGraw. Although this is a children's book, it has a message about everyday forgiveness for adults. The two year old child pulls books off shelves, pulls everything out of the refrigerator, and even flushes his mother's watch down the toilet. But at each stage of her son's life, the mother goes to him after he is asleep, picks him up, and sings, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always; as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."*

Ask someone to read the story in class and then ask:

- **How does this story relate to God's forgiveness of us, even in our everyday foul-ups?**
- **What are some common times when we adults need forgiveness?**

Forgiveness and relationships

Ask someone to read the first 11 paragraphs (*through “...go on to build stronger marriages.”*) of “Forgiveness: A Daily Challenge.” Then ask the participants to cite instances that they know of where someone, asking for forgiveness, made a difference in the relationship. Why did this happen?

Then ask: **When has someone asked your forgiveness for something you didn’t even realize he or she had done? How did you feel?**

Ask someone to read the next two paragraphs in “Forgiveness: A Daily Challenge” (*starting with “Citing the difference...” and going through “...let our lives get all mucked up.”*)

Review the sentences quoted from John Patton’s book in Neill Caldwell’s article and then ask, **How does this quote cause you to view forgiveness?**

Read the suggestions that Dukes gave for actions to foster a forgiving attitude.

To forgive or not to forgive

Ask someone to read the the last nine paragraphs of the article “Fitting Forgiveness into Hectic Lives Often a Struggle” (*starting with “We also tend to equate forgiving with being a doormat....”*)

Ask: **Is saying “I’m sorry” the same as asking for forgiveness? What more do we need to do if we are truly repentant?**

Divide the participants into three groups. Hand out Bibles and assign one of the following passages to each of the three groups: Luke 23:26-43; Matthew 18:21-35; Matthew 5:38-48. After they have read their passages, say: **Often we hear the statement, “He/she doesn’t deserve to be forgiven.” How does that compare to the statements and attitudes of Jesus that you just read about?**

Forgiving the knots of anger and hurt

Use the group activity with Matthew 6:14-15, found at the end of the article “Forgiveness, Caught and Taught.” Afterwards ask:

- **How did you feel when you were caught up in the human knots and found it hard to untangle yourselves?**

- **What sort of feelings came over you when I told you that you could just release your hands and be free?**
- **What sort of process do you go through in working toward forgiving someone?**
- **How does forgiving someone change you?**

Closing

Select a song from the list of hymn possibilities.

Say: In today’s world, many people spend their time seeking revenge or assigning blame instead of offering forgiveness. There are few models for real forgiveness, and so it is no surprise that our culture is full of destructive guilt and self-hate.

Someone has said that we often look at the enormity of the sin instead of the enormity of the need to be forgiven. When forgiveness replaces retaliation, we see God’s spirit breaking into the kingdom. I have placed a date book on the focus table today to remind us that we must have forgiveness in every part of our busy lives.

Litany on the Joy of Forgiveness

Psalm 32:1-7, 11 (CEV)

Leader: Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.

Voice 1: You bless them by saying,

“You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you.”

Voice 2: Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long.

Voice 3: Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat.

Voice 2: So I confessed my sins and told them all to you.

Voice 3: I said, “I’ll tell the LORD each one of my sins.”

Voice 1: Then you forgave me and took away my guilt.

All: We worship you, LORD, and we should always pray whenever we find out that we have sinned. Then we won’t be swept away by a raging flood.

You are my hiding place! You protect me from trouble. You put songs in my heart, because you have saved me. And so your good people should celebrate and shout.

Pray: Come into our world with your calming spirit, Lord. Help us process our forgiving times, and let our repentance and forgiveness act to change us. Amen.



Forgiveness

Session 3

Corporate Forgiveness

Use with:

I've Forgiven You, <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6857>, or *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (page 26)

Moving Toward Racial Reconciliation in Oxford, N.C., <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6541> or *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (page 27)

Wartime Internment Teaches Bishop The Importance of Grace, <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6542> or *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (pages 28-29)

What Would Jesus Do? Just What Round Valley Church Did, <http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6540> or *Interpreter*, February / March, 2005 (pages 24-25).

Enter the session:

Light the candle on the focus table and place the matches beside the candle. Also place a bowl of water on the table beside the candle.

Say: **Remember that we light this candle to remind us that Christ is here among us as we study.**

Litany:

Leader: Our God, we come before you with questions beyond our knowing.

All: How do we forgive?

Group 1: When acts are done and bonds of love are torn,

All: Show us, Lord, the grace that you have borne.

Group 2: When we have missed the mark, and tears of torment flow,

All: Show us again, Lord, that you release the debt we owe.

Group 1: When we, haughtily, throw a stone to curse another's sin,

All: You continue to forgive, again and still again.

Group 2: When we feel we have sunk into a dark well of despair,

All: **Your great ocean depth of grace continues to be there.**
Group 1: *Teach us, Lord, to model our lives after Christ.*
Group 2: Remind us how He forgave enough to pay the price.
All: **As you, O God, forgive our sins, may we forgive another.**
 Teach us to love each one we meet, as sister and as brother.
 Amen.

Hospitality and forgiveness

Ask volunteers to read the article about Bishop Roy Sano, “Wartime Internment Teaches Bishop ‘the Importance of Grace,’” Then ask the following questions:

- **How does hospitality help to prevent the need for forgiveness?**
- **How did the hospitality of the United Methodist pastor and members of his congregation make a difference in Bishop Sano’s life?**
- **How did the bishop’s understanding of Thomas’ experience make a difference in understanding his own experience?**
- **Bishop Sano speaks of wounds that heal but leave scars. How has he used those scars in a positive way?**
- **Do we expect forgiveness to erase all evidence of a hurt? Is this why we sometimes have trouble forgiving?**
- **What steps toward hospitality and welcoming does our church take?**

Reread the third from the last paragraph (*beginning with “Being in an internment camp....”*). Then discuss the parallel that Rev. Lloyd Wake suggests between experiences of Muslims, Sikhs and Southeastern Asians in the United States today and Bishop Sano’s experience.

Explore examples of corporate forgiveness

Divide the participants into three groups, and give each group one of the following articles:

“I’ve Forgiven You”

“Moving Toward Racial Reconciliation in Oxford, N.C.”

“What Would Jesus Do? Just What Round Valley Church Did”

Ask the small groups to read their article and report back to the total group, telling briefly about the article and how the people handled their forgiveness. They can also answer the questions:

- **How are the people exhibiting forgiveness?**
- **What makes it possible for them to forgive?**

Restorative justice

Recall the article about the trustee’s account at Round Valley Church. Ask: **How is “restorative justice” different from arrest and imprisonment?**

Ask someone to read John 8:1-11. Ask: **How does restorative justice parallel Jesus’ teachings?**

The mediator speaks of restorative justice as a spiritual journey. Reread what Linda Drake had to do in restitution. Ask: **How was this a spiritual journey?**

Closing

Select one of the suggested hymns to sing as you come together in a circle around the table.

Close the session by using the bowl of water on the table in a blessing of forgiveness. Ask each person to think of some wrong that a group of people has done toward a person or another group of people. Tell them not to mention it out loud, but to think about it during the blessing. Say: **I will begin, and then we will each take the bowl and assure the person beside us.**

Go to the first person and dip your hand in the water and brush water across his or her forehead, saying: **As water washes us clean, remember that God forgives sins.** After the blessing has gone around the circle, ask the last person to assure you of forgiveness.

Close by praying The Lord’s Prayer together.



Session 4
Self-Forgiveness

Use with:

Self-forgiveness Doesn't Come Easily,

<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6543> or *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (page 30)

Forgiveness Taught and Caught,

<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=6544>, *Interpreter*, February / March 2005 (page 31).

Enter the session:

Light the candle on the focus table and place the matches beside the candle. Also, around the candle, place enough hearts for each participant with the following written on each: I will praise the Lord God with a song and a thankful heart (Psalm 69:30).

Say: **Remember that we light this candle to remind us that Christ is here among us as we study.**

Forgiveness in the Bible

Hand out Bibles, pencils, and paper and a list of the verses for paraphrasing, found in the article "Forgiveness, Caught and Taught." Ask the participants to work in pairs and select two or three verses to paraphrase. Then ask several to share their paraphrased verses.

One man's struggle with forgiveness

Before the session, go to Scott Johnson's Web site, www.neverhappentome.com, and consider any additional information for discussion.

Ask a volunteer to read the article "Self-forgiveness Doesn't Come Easily."

Use the following questions to reflect on the article:

- **How do you understand Scott Johnson’s statement, “Salvation takes place in the heart, not the head?”**
- **How did Johnson’s discovery that the Bible is a love letter make a difference in his being able to forgive himself?**
- **Note Miller-McLemore’s statement about the church’s actions. How does your nominating committee approach its decisions? How can that be improved?**
- **How do you recognize Miller-McLemore’s statement, “therapy has replaced confession in the modern world” as true?**

Help in the Bible for self-forgiveness

Summarize the following information for the group before you turn to the Bible passage:

A yoke is a wooden frame for joining two oxen or other draft animals. It was a crosspiece and two bows which fit around the necks of the animals. The word “yoke” often has a negative attitude, primarily from some of the Old Testament references. However, Jesus put a new twist on the symbol. He referred to his yoke as “easy.” In reality, yoked oxen work better than individual ones. Two oxen pulling together were able to do a job better than the combined work of individual oxen. As in any job, when the ox doesn’t have to do it alone and has another animal pulling with it, the job becomes easier and the stress is lessened.

Young oxen are trained by being yoked, or paired, with an experienced ox. They learn to follow the experienced animal and soon become like that animal. The training may take time, but it becomes easier as they continue to work together.

Hand out Bibles and ask each person to read Matthew 11:25-30 and reflect on how this passage helps us forgive ourselves. Then ask for volunteers to share some of their thoughts.

Create a poem

Ask the participants to “popcorn” words that express something about forgiveness as you write them on a chalkboard, white board or large piece of paper. Then put this sample cinquain poem on the board or paper.

Forgiveness
Difficult Necessary
Loving Caring Believing
Joyfully accepting God’s forgiveness
Mercy

Explain that a cinquain poem is made up of five lines:

Line 1: A title of one word or one subject.

Line 2: Two words about the subject (either a phrase or separate words).

Line 3: Three verbs that denote action. These may end in "ing" or may be phrase or action.

Line 4: Four words telling about the feeling for line one. May also be a phrase.

Line 5: One word that means same as first line (or reuse the first word or *Amen*).

Hand out paper and pencils and ask the participants to create cinquain poems about forgiveness. They may use some of the words that were written on the chalkboard. If they like, they may work in pairs. After they have finished, encourage any who wish to share their poems.

Closing

Select one of the suggested hymns to sing together as you close.

Give each participant a heart from the table. Tell them that you will mention situations where we need to forgive ourselves, and after each they will respond with the verse from the Psalms that is written on their hearts.

Leader: Sometimes it is harder to forgive ourselves than to forgive others. But we must realize that God is willing to forgive if we truly turn and follow God’s guidance.

Sometimes we think more of ourselves than we do of God, but God is ready to forgive.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we get hung up on being the biggest and best in the eyes of the public instead of seeking God’s call in our ministry, but God is ready to forgive.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we find it hard to seek out God's will, and then we simply follow the crowd, but God is ready to forgive.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we edge a little, because keeping God's law would put us at risk of ridicule.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we forget that God loves us beyond imagining, and because things don't go our way we feel that God doesn't love us.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we see the world around us with far-sighted glasses only and ignore the needs that are right outside our doors.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Leader: Sometimes we purposely turn down the volume of those in need because it conflicts with what we want to do for ourselves.

All: I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

Ask the participants to stand in groups of four. Then ask each group to form a circle with their arms around each other and to be in a spirit of worship. Tell them they will need space enough to step back a couple of steps.

Read the following, pausing at times for them to respond with movement.

Working with people is great! We love the feeling of helping others come closer to God.

But it doesn't always work that way.

Sometimes we do or say things that separate ourselves from others and we can't enjoy the love God intends for us.

➤ *If you've ever failed to love someone and forgotten what is best for the other person, I'd like you to drop your arms to your sides.*

Sometimes we're more interested in what's more comfortable for ourselves, than what's best for others.

- *I'd like anyone who's ever forgotten what's really best for another person to take a step backward.*

Sometimes we lose our patience and fail to treat another person with respect.

- *If anyone has ever gotten upset and said or thought something you regretted later, take another step backward.*

Sometimes we just get mad and frustrated with people who don't act the way we'd like them to.

- *If anyone has ever gotten angry at someone else, turn and face away from the center of the circle.*

Sometimes we get so busy we don't take the time to understand why others may act the way they do.

- *If there have been times you ignored the special needs of a person, I'd like for you to close your eyes and keep them closed.*

God created us to be together as effective people of God, but at times our actions keep us apart.

- *If you've ever shown interest in a person and called that person by name, I'd like you to turn around.*

It's important to encourage other persons in their faith walk.

- *If you've ever taken the time to speak a word of praise or encouragement to a person, I'd like you to take one step in.*

Seeing others as God sees them is a sign of respect.

- *If you've ever reached out in respect and marveled at God's gift in another person, open your eyes.*

Prayers of forgiveness change lives.

- *If you've ever taken the time to pray for a person, take another step in.*

God asks us to reach out in love to others.

- *If you've ever reached out in Christian love and forgiveness, place your arms around the people beside you -- and give them a big hug.*



Additional Resources

Books

Brizee, Robert, **Eight Paths to Forgiveness**, Chalice Press.

Halverson, Delia, **The Gift of Hospitality**, Chalice Press.

Phillips, Myrna and Noel, **Forgiveness – Who Needs It?**, Chalice Press.

Sanders, D., **A Walk with God Through Forgiveness**, Dimensions for Living.

Weaver, Andrew, **Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth**, Abingdon Press.

Wuellner, Flora, **Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey**, Upper Room Press.

Curriculum

Companions in Christ – The Way of Forgiveness (participant's and leader's manuals), Upper Room.

LinC – Cokesbury curriculum (electronic download), issue 02/2002 – "Forgiveness"

Other Resources

JustPeace, Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 488-5647, <http://www.justpeaceumc.org>

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), 475 Riverside Drive, Room 330, New York, NY 10115, (800) 554-8583, <http://gbgm-umc.org/UMCOR-Hotline>