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theParentLink

Children's Ministry Edition

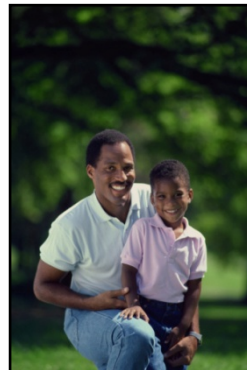
Live As Forgiven and Forgiving People

God created us perfect, in his image. But after sin entered the world, we needed a Savior. The good news of Easter is that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and then rose again. Because of his victory, we can have the free gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

As forgiven people, God tells us to extend forgiveness to others who wrong us. That can be tougher than it sounds, especially when an offender doesn't seem repentant. But God will work on our hearts and give us a desire to forgive when we ask him for help.

Here are some insights about forgiveness from God and for others:

Children first learn what forgiveness is by experiencing it firsthand. As kids experience the feeling of being forgiven, they can begin to forgive those around them. Eventually compassion will compel them to forgive as Christ calls them to—whether or not the people who hurt them are sorry.



Forgiveness is more than just saying "I'm sorry." Forgiveness costs us something, just as it cost Christ dearly on the cross. When we forgive someone, we resist our urge to retaliate, to get even, to make someone pay for their mistakes. We become vulnerable as we allow that person back into our lives. And that's a big part of loving others.

As you help children understand forgiveness, let them know that they can fully experience Jesus' gift of forgiveness when they obey his command to forgive.

That's Not What the Bible Says!

Recent research from the Barna Group shows how people's beliefs stray from what the Bible teaches:

- 74% of adults don't believe that people are born sinful ("original sin"). Instead, they believe that "when people are born, they are neither good nor evil—they make a choice between the two as they mature."
- 42% of adults say Jesus sinned while he lived on earth.
- 50% of adults say anyone who "is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in heaven."

Ask God:

1. To forgive sins that have been weighing you down.
2. To show your family the power of his forgiveness and mercy.
3. To help you all forgive each other, just as God forgives you.

Parenting Insights

Because forgiveness is an abstract concept, children may have difficulty grasping it. Here's how their thinking develops:

Ages 3 to 5

These children are concrete thinkers who understand life in literal terms. Ask questions to help kids make connections. Show forgiveness to a repentant child with hugs and smiles. Say, "I love you. I forgive you."

Ages 6 to 8

Children this age are connecting new ideas to old information. Help them make associations. Model a relational Christianity, showing kindness.

Ages 9 to 12

Some kids can now think abstractly. Older kids learn best by applying abstract concepts to familiar experiences. Let kids ask questions, and value their ideas.

OpenTheBook

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."
Matthew 6:14-15

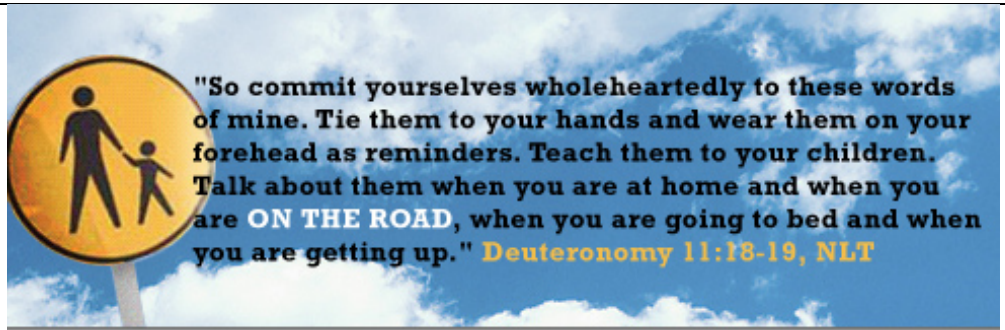
God promises to forgive and forget our sins, but he also commands us to do the same thing for people who hurt us.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Practice Sincere Apologies**—Learning to apologize takes practice. Help children learn to say they're sorry through nonverbal means (drawing a picture, giving a hug, etc.). During family prayers, practice saying, "I'm sorry." Admit to Jesus that we make mistakes and are sorry; then ask for forgiveness together.



- 2. Find Healing**—Read aloud Psalm 32:1-7. Discuss what caused David's heart to be sick and how he got rid of it. Talk about times you've felt bad after doing something wrong. Say: "When we confess our sins and tell God we're sorry, he forgives us and makes our hearts well."
- 3. Be an Example**—When you do something wrong, let children see you apologize. Be specific about what you're apologizing for, and ask for forgiveness.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Explore the good, gracious news of God's forgiveness by asking your children these questions:

1. Why do we do wrong things—and why do we not do good things we know we should do?
2. How does sin make you feel inside? What would it feel like if no one offered to take away all those sins?
3. Why do you think Jesus wants to forgive us? What do we have to do to get that forgiveness from him?
4. Why is it often hard to forgive others? How do you feel when you tell someone else that you forgive them?

Family Experience: Freely Forgiven

Dive further into the topic of forgiveness by using these easy but powerful activities from Group's *Hands-On Bible*.

- **Goodbye Sins!**—Say: "Think of a sin, or wrong thing, you've done." Then let each family member use a highlighter to write on a coffee filter a sin that he or she has committed. (Assist young children.) Say: "Now confess that sin to God and ask him to forgive you." Put a few drops of lemon juice on the writing, and watch as your "sin" disappears. Read aloud 1 John 1:8-9. Say: "The lemon juice made the writing disappear. When we tell God we're sorry for our sins, he forgives us. He makes our sins completely disappear from his sight! We may still have to deal with the consequences of our sins, but when God forgives a sin, it's gone." Close in prayer, thanking God for his amazing gift of total forgiveness.
- **Forgiveness Spelled Out**—Write the word *forgive* down the left side of a chalkboard (or down a piece of paper). Share with one another how it feels to be forgiven. Then write one of those feelings next to each letter; for example, Fresh, Optimistic, Relieved, Grateful, Invigorating, and so on.

Put the chalkboard in a place where everyone can see it during the coming week. Use it as a reminder to thank God often for his gift of forgiveness. Throughout the week, add to the list as you think of other words that remind you how forgiveness feels.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Oceans* (April 22, Earth Day)

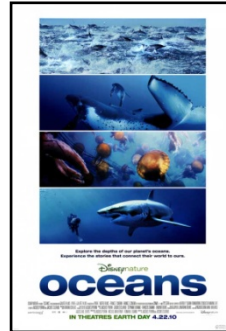
Genre: True-life adventure

Rating: G (some nature-related suspense and peril)

Cast: Nature

Synopsis: In a follow-up to *Earth*, DisneyNature offers a look below the seas, which cover three-fourths of our planet. The directors dive deep into life-sustaining waters, using new technology to offer stunning up-close views of nature, animals, and vanishing wonders.

Discussion Questions: What amazes you most about God's creation? What would you say to people who insist that no Creator was involved in making it? Read aloud Genesis 2:15. What responsibilities do we have to care for our planet? How is caring for our environment an act of love toward God and other people?



What Music Is Releasing

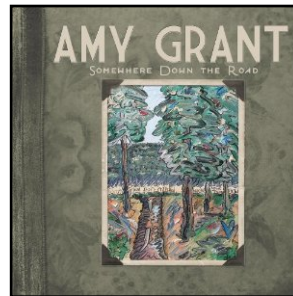
Artist: Amy Grant

Album: *Somewhere Down the Road*

Artist Info: Grant, who's been singing for more than 30 years, has sold more than 30 million albums worldwide. She's known for storytelling songs that explore life's joys and struggles.

Summary: Grant's 19th album contains six brand-new songs and some older favorites. "Better Than a Hallelujah" is already being played extensively on Christian radio. "Overnight," which features Grant's 18-year-old daughter Sarah, reminds listeners that answers to some prayers take time: "If it all just happened overnight, you would never learn to believe in what you cannot see."

Discussion Questions: For you, what's the hardest thing about waiting? Would you want God to instantly answer your every request? Why or why not? Read aloud Romans 8:25 and Hebrews 11:1. What are some things you've learned from having to wait? How do waiting and hoping affect your faith?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Cheer We Go</i>	Players try to work their way up to star cheerleader, completing increasingly complex routines and dances.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Echoshift</i>	Amid minimalist graphics, players solve more than 30 different types of puzzles and obstacles within time limits.	E; PSP
<i>Battle vs. Chess</i>	The timeless board game of chess is updated with 3D characters and visuals. Contains cartoon combat scenes.	Rating pending; Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo DS

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- As part of the new health-care legislation, fast-food chains will be required to list menu calorie counts. Anti-obesity advocates hope this will spur chains to offer healthier options.
- The new buzz word "hyperlocalization" describes people looking for communities to belong to, as well as marketers connecting to families at home.

Quick Stats

- Short breaks can help with problem behavior. In a study of 11,000 third-graders, children given a 15-minute break to play and chat had better behavior ratings.

(Albert Einstein College of Medicine)



- More than half (51%) of moms say they listen to their kids more than their parents did. And 82% of kids say they give input about their mom's clothing.

(JustKid)

