

Letting Go of Getting Even

“Forgiveness brings peace to your heart and wings to your soul.”
— Unknown Source

Oh, the glorious feeling of safety when a child can run into Daddy’s protective arms and cry out to him, “Help me! They’ve been so mean to me!” A good father can begin to bring peace - halt the teasing from mischievous cousins or tell the bully to back off. However, even the best parent cannot bring complete peace. **The turmoil of the heart can only be removed when the child releases desires and plots of revenge and rests in forgiveness.** But forgiveness is not a natural response at any age, and nurturing forgiveness as a habit in our children does not happen quickly.



A redeemed memory will help open the way for forgiveness. **First, remembering that we’ve each been forgiven.** And so, we are called to forgive others. “Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” Ephesians 4:32 (NLT). And, remembering that one of the last things Jesus said before he died was, “forgive them.” In forgiving, we echo the heart of Jesus.

Then, remembering that God loves justice even more than any of us, **we can trust him to take care of the wrong we’ve suffered.** Romans 12:19 teaches us, “Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the LORD.” In forgiving we choose release over revenge - releasing the wrong into the hands of God.

The benefits of forgiveness go deep. A healthy, loving environment is cultivated by forgiveness, and letting go of getting even keeps our loved ones close. **“Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.”** Proverbs 17:9 (NLT)

Forgiveness really is a gift we give ourselves, as well as a gift we give to others. **Forgiveness frees us to live at rest** under the protection and justice of our powerful God. Forgiveness and freedom are impossible to separate.

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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me for a minute. Let’s talk about forgiveness – how it is a gift from God, and to ourselves - as well as to others. “

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Butterflies are free to fly and enjoy God’s world. They don’t stay mad at each other or try to get even when another butterfly makes a bad choice. **When we let God help us forgive other people, our hearts are free to be happy, too.**

Let’s spend some time outside pretending to be a butterfly. While we wave our wings, we will thank God for forgiving us and helping us forgive others. Then we can sing a song we make up using Psalm 86:5 (NLT) “O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.”

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

The cocoon of a butterfly keeps it from flying. When a butterfly lets go of that hard shell, it is free to be all that a butterfly is made to be. Forgiveness is like that. When we forgive someone, we let go of what can be a hard shell around our hearts. Forgiveness means we let God correct and change the other person. **We let God be in charge of making things right again, instead of getting even.**

Let’s draw a big butterfly on this paper. We can write Ephesians 4:32 around the edge of the wings. “Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” Ephesians 4:32 (NLT). While we decorate the wings with circles, we can ask God to help us forgive people who have mistreated us or been unkind. And we can thank him for forgiving us for specific things.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Let’s read Ephesians 4:32 together: “Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” **There are two sides of forgiveness in that verse: giving forgiveness and receiving forgiveness.**

Let’s think about that while we learn how to make an origami butterfly. (See link below.) While we are folding the paper, let’s compare the way a cocoon traps a butterfly with what a lack of forgiveness can do to us. What similarities do you see? We can ask the Spirit of God to help us forgive others. There’s another side of forgiveness: receiving forgiveness. Now I’d like for you to read Psalm 32:1 (NLT): “Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!” Let’s tell each other about a time when we have received forgiveness and how that felt.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

God, I Need to Talk to You: Stories about God’s Love and Forgiveness by Concordia Publishing House

[How To Make an Easy Origami Butterfly \(in 3 MINUTES!\)](#)