



THE FRIEND WHO FORGIVES

LESSON PLAN

5-11
year-olds

Session Summary: God's word tells us that Peter failed Jesus and Jesus forgave him. Peter became a transformed, forgiven fisher of men. If we trust that Jesus died to pay for sin, we too can be forgiven like Peter when we confess our sin.

Let's pray before we start

Lord Jesus, please teach us what you are like as our friend and about the transforming power of your forgiveness. Amen

Let's get started

If I asked you what makes someone a good friend, what would you say?

There are lots of important things friends should be – kind, caring, patient, for instance. In today's true story from the Bible, we're going to hear about what makes Jesus the very best of best friends and what it is like to be his friend. As I read this story...

- for every page spread, act out/make a face to show how you think Peter is feeling at that stage in the story.

Let's listen to the story*

(Read *The Friend Who Forgives* all the way through)

Let's play a game

(If you feel the children would benefit from some moving around before thinking about the story they've just heard, play this game here. Or you could play it after looking at the discussion questions on the next page.

Either prepare in advance or have the children cut out small fish from lightweight paper/card. Make paddles out of, for instance, rolled up newspaper or a table-tennis bat or a hand-held fan etc. Set up start and finish points for a race in which the children have to waft their fish over the line first to win. Alternatively, set up a hula hoop or similar into which the children have to, like fishermen, gather their fish using the home-made paddles.)

Let's think

(If you are doing the session with children from different age groups, start by asking the questions for the younger children below. The questions for older children can be done on their own if you have only older children, but they will also contribute further ideas if they follow on from the discussion in the left hand column.)



* *The Friend Who Forgives* by Dan DeWitt/Catalina Echeverri is available from Christian retailers and at thegoodbook.com (US) / thegoodbook.co.uk (UK).

Questions for younger children

What job did Jesus tell Peter he would have? (Fisher of men, call people to forgiveness)

What did Peter realize about who Jesus was? (That he was God)

What promise did Peter make to Jesus? (That he would never run away/betray Jesus/let him down)

What actually happened, just as Jesus promised it would? (Peter said three times that he didn't know Jesus)

What did Peter realize about himself after the rooster crowed? (That he had failed/let down Jesus, that he needed forgiving)

What job did Peter end up doing? (A fisher of men!)

Questions for older children

What different experiences did Peter go through before he finally became the "fisher of men" Jesus had said he would be?

(Possible answers include: he realised who Jesus was, he saw God's rescue plan, even though he didn't fully understand it, he made promises or actions based on his own strength, he failed Jesus and realized his own failure, he encountered the risen Lord Jesus, he was able to express his love for Jesus and experience being forgiven)

Who was Peter feeling confident about when he said he would never let Jesus down? (Himself)

Who did Peter think could rescue Jesus from being arrested when he drew his sword? (Him!) What did he have to realize about himself before he could become a "fisher of men"? (Answers may include: that he wasn't perfect, that he needed forgiving, that he wasn't the rescuer, that he needed to rely on Jesus...)

Why do you think Peter refused to admit he was Jesus' friend? Are there circumstances when we might be tempted to act as if we're not followers of Jesus?

(Your discussion may touch on fear and embarrassment but also possibly feeling unworthy or unsure how to talk about Jesus. Allow the children to talk about their experiences. The Bible study below will give an opportunity to reassure children that there is forgiveness when we let Jesus down like Peter did.)

(Play the game here if you prefer.)

Peter knew that he had not loved Jesus perfectly. Peter knew that he had not perfectly treated and trusted Jesus as God the King. In short, Peter knew that he had sinned. That's the word the Bible uses for not perfectly loving and obeying God and not perfectly loving the people he has made.

Yet, despite letting Jesus down, Peter became a fisher of men just as Jesus had promised. He bravely and boldly told others the good news about Jesus and how they could be forgiven. And that transformation happened when he experienced for himself what it is to be forgiven by Jesus.

That forgiveness is something we all need and can enjoy.

Let's play a game

(If you need another game by way of a break at this point, play a quick round of "Word-O-Rama"—the game in which, for a given topic, the children have to think of as many words as possible beginning with the sound/letter s or f in a time limit of your choice. Topics might be food, animals, countries/cities, words to describe people... This gives a quick break and tees up the Bible activity for the passage below, which you can explain by closing the game with "Words beginning with s and f are going to be very important in the passage we're about to look at...")



Let's listen to God

... as we hear some words one of Jesus' other friends, John, wrote to a group of fellow believers in Jesus.

(If you are doing this session with children across the age range, encourage your older child(ren) to do their activity independently in a different room while you look at the passage with the younger one(s). Give them their own copy of the NIRV version of 1 John 1 v 8 - 2 v 2 with verse numbers included. If you're happy for them to use a device, you could direct them to biblegateway.com)

Suppose we claim we are without sin. Then we are fooling ourselves. The truth is not in us. But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar. His word is not in us.

My dear children, I'm writing this to you so that you will not sin. But suppose someone does sin. Then we have a friend who speaks to the Father for us. He is Jesus Christ, the Blameless One. He gave his life to pay for our sins. But he not only paid for our sins. He also paid for the sins of the whole world. (NIRV)

Let's think again

(Depending on the age of your children, do *either* Section One *or* Section Two below, before moving onto Section 3.)

1. For younger children:

Every time you hear me read out the word "sin", "sins" or "sinned" put your hand over your heart. Every time you hear a word beginning with the letter f/the sound ffff, put your hands on your head. Let's practise: sin... fox... fire... sins... fan...

(Read 1 John 1 v 8 - 2 v 2 from the NIRV version above *slowly*, giving the children time to respond with the appropriate actions.)

Let's think about what we know about God from this passage: can you remember any of the words beginning with "f" used about God? (Faithful, fair, Father, friend—they may also say forgiving)

God is fair because he doesn't ignore sin as if it doesn't matter. Who do we know is the friend mentioned in those verses who died so that sin is dealt with? (Jesus Christ)

If we trust that Jesus died in our place, God does something beginning with "f" when we tell him we know we've done something wrong and say sorry. What is it? (Forgive us/forgive our sins/forgive every wrong thing we have done...)

2. For older children:

What does 1 v 8 say about all of us? Put it in your own words.

How many words beginning with "f" can you come up with from this passage to describe God? Have a go at explaining in what way each one is true of God.

1 John 2 v 2 refers to the event we trust in as making it possible for us to be forgiven. What is it?

What is it that the passage tells us to do in 1 v 9?

What do you think it involves to confess your sin? Do you think that is easy or difficult?



3. For all children

(If you're in two groups, come back together and invite the older child(ren) to share their reflections. You may not want to think about all the questions below—choose those that will be most helpful in your situation.)

We've seen that none of us love God or other people with our whole heart perfectly all the time. And we've seen there is good news for us!

When we feel in our heart and know in our head that we have done wrong against God and other people, what should we do with our lips? (Confess, say sorry to God; ask for forgiveness. Children may also add the idea of "repent")

When we've done that, what does this passage tell us we can be sure of in our head and know deep down in our heart? (That God forgives us/our sins because of Jesus)

Peter was transformed by being forgiven. How do you feel when you know that something you have done wrong has been forgiven?

Even if other people don't forgive us quickly or easily when we do something wrong, what is the good news about God? (He always forgives, completely and straight away, whenever we ask him to.)

(If you have a child who struggles not to remain cross or upset with themselves after repenting, questions you might like to ask here are: Do you ever find it hard to believe God has forgiven you? Or do you find it hard to let that truth change how you feel about yourself when you know you've done something wrong? What can you say to yourself based on 1 John 1 v 9 next time that happens?)

God forgives his people again and again and again.

Let's pray together

I'm going to read out some sentences with gaps in. We going to think about some of those lines together and some of them on our own. We can fill in the gaps in those lines based on what we've learned today from God's word and use them to help us pray. Let's think about these ones together...

Father God, we praise you because you _____.

Lord Jesus we thank you for _____.

Thank you for Peter's story, which teaches us that _____.

Please show us the ways we don't love you or other people as we should and teach us to confess our sin. And please remind us every day of the good news that _____.

Now let's pray together...

And now, before we finish praying let's think about this one for ourselves:

Lord God, I know that I _____ and that it was wrong. Please forgive me and please change my heart to make me think, speak and act more and more like Jesus. Amen.

Speak quietly to God in your own head and heart now...



CRAFT/ACTIVITY IDEAS

Using minimal resources... Decorate the paper fish you made for the game and write your memory verse on to remind you that Peter was a forgiven fisher of men.

Using things you may have around...

- you'll need cane/bamboo/wooden skewer/stick, string, paper, glue or tape: make more paper fish or use some from the game. Decorate and then write truths or key words or verses from today's session on the fish and attach them to the stick with string to make a fishing rod.
- you'll need a magnetic fishing or hook-a-duck game: write or stick some of the key words/ideas from the passage onto the items to be fished/hooked and play the game. Each time a child successfully fishes an item, they could explain what they learnt about that key word/idea.
- you'll need card, stickers, pen: make a cross shape from the card and tack it up somewhere. Invite the children to write on the stickers ways they know they have not loved God or other people (be ready to give your own examples) and have everyone stick their stickers on to the cross. Read 1 John 1 v 8-9 and as you do take the cross and turn it over so that the sins are hidden. Leave it up as a visual reminder of the truths from the session.

More of a project... There are lots of online tutorials/videos featuring an experiment to illustrate the effect of repentance using, for instance, food colouring to represent sin and bleach to "wash" that sin away upon repentance. Either look up a video to watch together or, if appropriate, source the materials to have a go yourself.

If you have a printer: enjoy the art and activity sheets from the *The Friend Who Forgives* on the next two pages.

IN THE WEEK

Replay the games. Play the fish race game: can the children retell Peter's story of forgiveness? And/or play a game of Word-O-Rama and ask, "What words beginning with "s" and "f" help us tell our story of forgiveness? (You could also talk about the idea of faith in Jesus' death and resurrection as you tell your own story.)

Learn a memory verse. As a family, learn this verse over the course of the week. You could write up the memory verse somewhere and cover words with post-it notes or write out the initial letters only, or try setting it to a familiar tune for instance as you learn it...

For younger children:

"God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins." (1 John 1 v 9, NIRV)

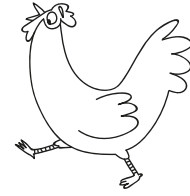
For older children:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1 v 9, NIV)

Enjoy singing about confessing our sins and being forgiven. A song about acknowledging our sin: "Tell it to Jesus" (*Slugs & Bugs Under Where?*); Psalm 32 v 1-5 set to music: "You forgave me" (*Sing the Bible with Slugs & Bugs vol.2*); hymns to enjoy as a family: "His mercy is more," "Before the throne of God above," "What a friend we have in Jesus"; a hip-hop song to enjoy: "Forgiveness" by TobyMac feat. LeCrae (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfkhqpl81NA>)



Wordsearch



r	k	i	g	b	h	s	a	g	e	s	c	u	e	u
e	e	c	u	r	l	y	t	r	i	a	e	s	r	y
m	k	i	c	i	f	t	r	h	b	r	r	o	w	d
e	w	r	o	o	s	t	e	r	o	k	l	l	n	v
m	h	e	l	e	u	c	s	l	s	a	e	d	r	t
b	f	o	i	i	a	r	i	a	d	a	l	i	e	b
t	l	i	d	n	g	t	t	p	o	r	d	e	m	k
n	p	i	r	i	s	h	i	y	l	y	s	r	e	a
l	k	l	u	e	s	p	t	l	a	s	i	s	m	w
a	p	x	r	e	o	k	k	s	o	r	s	t	b	n
z	j	r	j	n	r	u	i	r	e	e	d	m	e	o
s	a	o	p	a	p	b	c	p	r	w	a	s	r	w
e	f	r	d	a	r	k	s	g	o	t	i	c	i	a
g	a	t	e	t	h	e	r	r	i	e	f	g	i	r
s	f	a	i	t	h	a	c	h	n	n	g	s	f	m

rooster

soldiers

girl

crow

dark

gate

courtyard

fire

remember

arrest

warm

sad



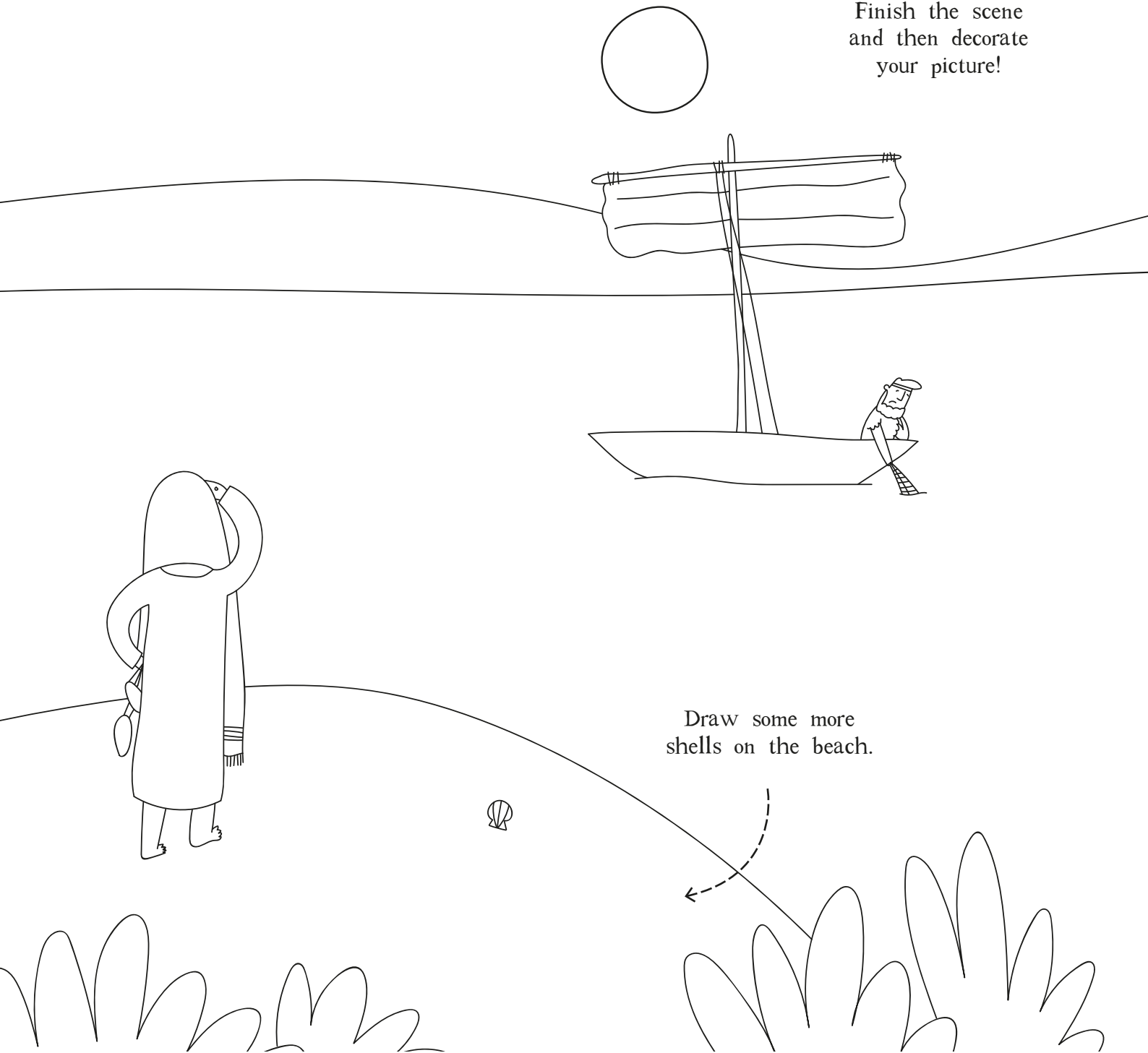
Taken from *The Friend Who Forgives Art and Activity Book*, available from Christian retailers and at www.thegoodbook.com (US) or www.thegoodbook.co.uk (UK).

© The Good Book Company, 2020. Content written by Lizzie Laferton. Not to be altered or sold without permission.

Peter didn't stay sad, because Jesus didn't stay dead.

Three days later was the first Easter Sunday, when Jesus came back to life to offer people forgiveness.

Finish the scene and then decorate your picture!



Draw some more shells on the beach.

Taken from *The Friend Who Forgives Art and Activity Book*, available from Christian retailers and at www.thegoodbook.com (US) or www.thegoodbook.co.uk (UK).

© The Good Book Company, 2020. Content written by Lizzie Laferton. Not to be altered or sold without permission.