

DUST IN THE WIND

by Lawrence Bauer

PURPOSE

To better understand God's ability to forgive, to help youth learn to forgive others and to show how to "let go" of a sin.

PREPARATION

Gather Bibles, 3 x 5 cards, pencils, blackboard or newsprint, a large bowl or metal wastebasket, matches and several copies of the prepared Forgiveness handout in the "Meat" of the Meeting section.

OPENING

Have participants group by birth months. Groups should have four to six members. Choose group leaders by whoever had the most for breakfast.

Have the youth identify themselves. If they don't know each other, they can give their names and explain why they are at the meeting. Ask if they have a picture of themselves in their wallets and, if so, to pass the picture around. Then ask how many words they can use to describe themselves—male/female, teenager, daughter/son, student, job.

The leaders then organize the groups to perform short skits on forgiveness. Ideas might be mimes or enactments of events in the Bible based on forgiveness. Or use the topics: Forgiveness is . . . Forgiveness is not . . .

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Have the participants regroup and give one person in each group a copy of the Forgiveness handout. This person will serve as the discussion leader.

Forgiveness

- Have someone in your group read the story of Hosea and Gomer in the book of Hosea.
- Talk about Hosea forgiving Gomer.
- Could you do that?
- Do you sometimes feel like Gomer? Why or why not?
- What does forgiving have to do with Christian friendship?
- Can you think of other examples of forgiveness in the Bible?
- Is forgiving others hard to do? Why or why not?
- Is self-forgiveness difficult? Why or why not?

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Reassemble in one group and give everyone a 3 x 5 card. Each person is to list one sin that is separating him or her from God. Assure the young people no one else will see what they have written.

Explain that God's forgiveness is

even stronger than Hosea's for Gomer, and that God's cleansing power is our greatest gift.

The leader is to take his or her card, put it into the bowl and burn it. While it is burning, each person should silently walk forward, put his or her card in the fire and say,

"My sin is forgiven."

After all have done this and have had time to meditate, sing "Pass It On." Close with the Lord's Prayer.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Sing With Young Life, Young Life, P.O. Box 520, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.

Forgiveness

Group 1

1. List as many sins you can think of that God will forgive.
2. Read Matthew 12:31. What does this verse mean?
3. What does each of the following statements mean to you?

- One of God's specialties is forgiving!
- God does not lock us into past sin.
- God frees us from past sin to take us to a future of usefulness.

Group 2

1. Use the dictionary to define forgiveness.

2. Put in your own words what it means to forgive.
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18. As Christians we are to be in the ministry of reconciliation.
4. Use the dictionary to define reconciliation.

Group 3

1. Read Ephesians 4:32. What does this verse mean?
2. Is forgiving others an option or a mandate for a Christian?
3. Read and discuss Matthew 6:14-15.
4. Read Matthew 18:21-22. How many times should we forgive?

sin against him. Explain if we really believe and accept God's forgiveness, we will offer it to others. Read Matthew 18:33-35 and discuss it.

● Why is it hard to forgive others? Let the youth respond. Refer to the Forgiveness handout and ask the youth to discuss how many times they should forgive. From these responses discuss Matthew 18:22, that Jesus continued to forgive and that no one should keep score of the times forgiveness is made. Refer to 1 Corinthians 13:5 and explain this is the only way to forgive—with love.

Have the youth read and discuss Matthew 7:2 and James 2:13. Have one youth read Ephesians 4:31—5:2. Discuss how we are to have the ministry of reconciliation.

Write "Forgiveness—What About Home?" on the transparency and show it with an overhead pro-

jector. Refer to Luke 15:11-31 and talk about the conflict in the home and forgiveness.

On the transparency, outline the following points on forgiveness within a family:

- Awareness of the conflict (awareness that you have sinned).
- Recognition (acknowledgment of your contribution to the conflict).
- Confrontation (action must be taken after your acknowledgment). Read 2 Timothy 2:22-24. What is its message? Why is it difficult to admit mistakes?
- Seek for oneness of heart (although this does not mean you have to always agree).
- Reaffirm your love for each other. Read 2 Corinthians 2:8.

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Distribute and have the youth complete the following worksheet:

Match the Person With the Sin

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. Moses | a. Persecuted Christians |
| 2. Lot | b. Had temper tantrums and sexual affairs |
| 3. Samson | c. Peeping Tom, adulterer and schemer of murder |
| 4. Paul | d. Ruthless tax collector |
| 5. David | e. Slept with his daughters |
| 6. Jacob | f. Deserted his wife |
| 7. Abraham | g. Murderer |
| 8. Matthew | h. Cheated his brother, lied to his father |

Answers: 1 (g), 2 (e), 3 (b), 4 (a), 5 (c), 6 (h), 7 (f), 8 (d).

Discuss the worksheet with the group and point out that God

works wonders with sinners. Although we sin—God forgives us and leads our lives if we ask him to do so.

While the song "Forgiven" is playing, ask the youth to bow their heads and consider its message.

After the song, ask the youth to take the 3 x 5 cards which they put in their shoes at the start of the meeting and place the cards in the metal wastebasket. Carefully burn the cards.

Pray that the sins may be overcome just as the flames consumed the cards.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Davis Dictionary of the Bible, by Richard Baker, Baker, P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

¹Knofel Station, **Check Your Morality** (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, n.d.), pp. 131-132.