

Questions and Discussion Points

The following questions and discussion points can help spark conversation about forgiveness, and are appropriate for all ages.

- 1** **When we accept Christ as our savior, the Bible teaches us that all past and future sins are forgiven. You may wonder, “If I’m already forgiven for every thing I’ve done in the future, why do I need to apologize for anything?”** *Have you ever had your feelings hurt by a family member or close friend? What happens when this person comes to you on their own and says they’re sorry for hurting you? How does your heart react? Healthy relationships grow closer when we acknowledge, and apologize for, what we’ve done wrong.*

Dig deeper question for adults: If you have children, you undoubtedly have forced an apology from them at some point in their lives. “Go tell your father you’re sorry or else you’re going to your room!” And you’ve probably experienced your child coming to you on their own with a sincere, heartfelt apology. “I’m sorry I was disrespectful. I know I shouldn’t have done that.” How are the feelings associated with each different type of apology different? What kind of relationship is cultivated in each? How do you imagine our Heavenly Father feels when we apologize out of fear of punishment, versus an apology made in love, knowing we are loved by Him?

- 2** **What if we apologize and the person doesn’t accept our apology?** *This never happens with God. God always forgives those who accept forgiveness through Christ. But people can be different. Sometimes people won’t accept an apology. That’s okay. The important thing is to acknowledge what you did that was wrong, and say you’re sorry to those affected by what you did. You can rest in the peace that comes from God, knowing your true worth and forgiveness are in Him.*

Dig deeper question for adults: What happens when we count on people to forgive us and they don’t? How do we feel? How can looking to God for our forgiveness sooth our hearts? Take a few moments to reflect if there is unforgiveness directed toward you. If there is, turn it over to God in prayer. *Dear God, I know you have this covered. Help me let go of my desire to win approval or forgiveness from people who don’t want to give it, and live with your grace in my heart.*

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3 What's the difference between guilt and shame? *When we've asked for forgiveness for something we've done and we can't let it go, guilt can turn to shame. Guilt is the feeling that you did something bad. Shame is the feeling you are bad. For example, if you tell a lie, you should feel guilty about it, and you might think, "I told a lie and that wasn't right. I need to make it right." Shame is the voice that says, "You're a liar." Guilt says, "I shouldn't have been disrespectful to my dad. I need to apologize to him." Shame is the voice that says, "You're a terrible son." God doesn't want us to define ourselves by our sins. He wants us to define ourselves by his love and grace. Discuss examples of guilt versus shame.*

Dig deeper question for adults: Have you ever been shamed? How did this make you feel about yourself as a person? Do you shame your children without realizing it? God wants us to live in the freedom of grace and extend that grace to others. What can you do to turn shame into healthy guilt? *Talk about the action, rather than the person.* Give a few examples of what this would sound like in situations where you did something wrong, or someone in your life did. For example, your 8 year old child is insisting on their own way when it comes to what the family is going to watch on TV. Shame: *"You're such a brat! You always want things your way."* versus good guilt that draws attention to behavior and encourages change: *"When you only think of what you want to watch, you aren't being thoughtful. Let's think of something we all want to watch."*

4 So, is it bad to feel guilty? *God gave us the ability to feel guilt for a good reason. Healthy guilt draws our attention to things we need to do, change or stop. We may need to make amends with someone we've hurt, or change or stop behaviors that are harming ourselves or others. When you ask for forgiveness and change your behavior, but still feel intense feelings of guilt for what you've done, it becomes unhealthy and can turn into shame: the feeling that you are a bad person.*

Dig deeper question for adults: What are the messages society gives us about guilt? Have you ever heard the expression, "Don't put me on a guilt trip?" How can we pack well for a guilt trip? What are the things we should take with us, and what are the things we should make sure we don't bring? *Good things to pack...grace for ourselves and others, language that focuses on behavior, hugs, prayer.... Things we shouldn't pack: our tempers, and labels with bad character traits on them like selfish, dumb, brat, and liar.*

5 You don't have to say what it was that you did, but have you ever done something that you were ashamed of? How did you feel? *(Bad about myself, afraid I would get caught, afraid my mom wouldn't love me anymore, afraid I wouldn't be forgiven, I didn't feel like I was a good person anymore.) God doesn't want you to feel any of those things. He wants you to ask for forgiveness, and then he wants you to accept that forgiveness in your heart. When you let go of your sins, you are free to have a beautiful relationship with God. You don't need to hide anything from him, because he knows you make mistakes and he adores you anyway. You can rest in the freedom of his love and the gift of his forgiveness.*

Make The Sparkle Egg craft and consider if there is sin you need to let go of (past or present), or someone you need to forgive. Instructions are in the book *The Sparkle Egg*, and are available online at TheSparkleEgg.com.