



# **Reaching Out through Forgiveness**

## **A Guided Curriculum for Children Ages 9-11 (Grade 4 in the US, P6 in the UK) within a Christian Context**

**Robert D. Enright, Ph.D.  
Jeanette A. Knutson, Ph.D.**

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# Reaching Out through Forgiveness

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## **Books Needed for This Curriculum**

DiCamillo, Kate (2003). *The Tale of Despereaux*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.(ISBN 978-0-7636-2529-0 [paperback]). It is important to order this particular version of the book because this guide refers to specific page numbers throughout the lessons.

Dr. Seuss (1984). *The Butter Battle Book*. New York: Random House.

Enright, Robert (2004). *Rising Above the Storm Clouds*. Washington, D.C.: APA Books.

## **Reaching Out through Forgiveness: A Guided Curriculum for Children Ages 9-11**

First of all, we wish to thank you for being in service to the children whom you teach. No more honorable profession exists than yours because you are helping the next generation become strong for life. Forgiveness is one of those tools that, when understood properly and used judiciously, can help people to lead better lives and have enhanced relationships. Forgiving someone who was deeply unjust gives the child the opportunity to cast aside bitterness and to become stronger emotionally.

Through this curriculum, you will be helping establish a foundation of forgiveness in your students. Many years from now, because we are in a world that is not always fair, some of your precious students may find themselves in unhappy marriages, or stifling jobs, or other situations that cause them deep distress and unhappiness. We wish it were not so, but we also know the realities of this world. Your teaching the students about forgiveness now may help them adjust to that marriage or to deal with that tyrannical boss in ways that are life-giving and positive precisely because you took the time when they were quite young to lay the foundation of forgiveness for them. What you do now may make a major difference for some of your students in the distant future. You have the opportunity to give them the gift of forgiveness.

We cannot think of a more worthwhile activity for them. Our scientific studies show the importance of helping children learn about forgiveness. For example, a school counselor in Wisconsin in the United States helped particularly angry children in post-primary school (middle school in the United States) to forgive. Not only did the students' emotional health improve but also their grades in their academic subjects also improved. We saw similar results in South Korea. In Belfast, Northern Ireland, we saw anger begin to melt away from Primary 3 (first grade in the United States) children who, relative to the rest of their classmates, were high in anger at the beginning of the study. Forgiveness helped them settle emotionally.

The practice of forgiveness can cut through our angers, disappointments, and resentments to give all involved a fresh start. As people forgive, they are often times set free from the prison of resentment. As people offer forgiveness to another, they have the chance to begin anew with the offending person, trying to be more civil, more respectful, more kind. Those around the forgiver benefit because a forgiver is less likely to carry anger into other situations. A forgiver is less likely to displace anger onto those who don't deserve such treatment.

As we practice forgiveness, we learn that it is full of surprises. Having scientifically studied forgiveness since 1985, we have seen remarkable improvements in the emotional health and well-being of children, adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, and the elderly as they learned to forgive. We have seen lives transformed.

Forgiveness, of course, has a long history, dating back thousands of years to the writing in Genesis where Joseph forgives his brother and half-brothers for selling him into slavery in Egypt. The New Testament tells the story of the Prodigal Son, who is unconditionally forgiven by his father, who runs to him, hugs him, and has a party in his honor. Why? The father forgives because he loves his son. Forgiveness is like that. It has a way of lavishing love on

those who were unfair. Other ancient traditions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, all have positive stories of people forgiving others who acted unfairly. In fact, we have yet to encounter an ancient text that talks unfavorably of forgiveness. The wisdom of the ages suggests that forgiveness is worth exploring.

Forgiveness can be defined this way: When you are unjustly hurt by another person, you forgive when you struggle to give up the resentment (to which you are actually entitled because you were unfairly treated) and you strive to offer the offending one compassion, benevolence, and love (knowing that yours is an act of mercy and therefore not necessarily deserved by the person).

Forgiveness has three paradoxes embedded in it:

A forgiver gives up resentment even though the world might tell him or her to cling to the resentment. Why cast off the resentment? Be strong.....show your anger....don't let the person get away with this! A forgiver gives up resentment nonetheless.

A forgiver seems to be doing all of the giving and the offender all of the taking. After all, that person hurt you, so why should you give the gift of compassion, benevolence, and love? Is it not their turn to give to you, not the other way around? A forgiver gives these gifts nonetheless.

A forgiver, who reaches out to the other person with concern and care, often finds that he or she (the forgiver), is the one who is emotionally healed.

As you learn more about forgiveness, you will see that it is not always what it seems to be. Forgiveness is not something weak, but strong. Giving a gift to one who was unfair is a lavish act of love and mercy. Forgiveness does not make us a door mat, to be walked on by others. When we forgive, we can and should stand up for our rights.

Forgiveness is not the same as condoning or excusing. When we forgive, we label the other person's actions as wrong; we do not find an excuse for that person's actions. Forgiveness is not equated with forgetting. Having scientifically studied forgiveness now for years we can say that we have never—not once—seen anyone who forgets the wrong done against them when they forgive. Yes, people may remember in new ways, but they do not develop a curious moral amnesia upon forgiving.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the exact same. When a person forgives, he or she unilaterally offers an end to resentment and institutes compassion and love. The other person might spurn this gift, but the gift-giver is the one who decides whether or not to give it. When two or more people reconcile, they come together again in mutual trust. To reconcile is to trust the other person again. To forgive is to offer love, but not necessarily to trust the other person unless he or she resolves not to offend in the same way again (within reason), repents, and offers recompense. One can forgive and then not reconcile if the other remains in his or her hurtful ways.

As you work with children on forgiveness, please keep in mind some basic issues to guard the children's rights and safety. Consider four ideas below:

Forgiveness is a choice of the forgiver. Teachers, parents, or anyone else should not demand that a child forgive someone. If a child does not want to forgive, we must respect that.

Forgiveness does not mean that a child automatically enters into a relationship with anyone who is a danger to the child. Please remember that forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing.

Please avoid putting pressure on the class as children learn to forgive. This is not like math class or any other class where children get good grades for performing better and more than others. We should avoid making forgiveness into a competition. Try to get the children to enjoy this, again keeping in mind that it is their choice.

Even if a child does not want to forgive someone, you should decide whether or not it is appropriate for the child to at least learn about forgiveness. Understanding forgiveness is not the same as practicing it. A skeptic might say that this is just a subtle way of getting a child to practice it. We disagree. When handled sensitively, you can have the child listen and learn without the pressure to perform acts of forgiveness.

### The Earlier Curricula for 6 through 8-Year-Old Children

The main point of curricula for 6-8-year-old children (The Adventure of Forgiveness and Discovering Forgiveness) is to introduce the children to the "basics of forgiveness." When we use that term---*the basics of forgiveness*---we are talking about the central foundation that will allow the children to build forgiveness skills as they develop through their lives. The basics of forgiveness include five issues: inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. All of these are described below.

Inherent worth. This is the important idea that a person is a person no matter what he or she does. It is akin to the idea that we are to love the sinner, but dislike the sin. As children begin to see beyond what people do to what they are like inside themselves, they will be laying an important foundation for forgiving.

Moral Love. When we morally love someone, we love him or her unconditionally, despite his or her flaws. Certainly, someone who morally loves another can ask fairness of him or her. Yet, the one who morally loves has the other person's best interest at heart. Moral love is not a selfish or self-centered love. It has that lavish notion of love that Joseph showed to his brothers. Moral love underlies true forgiveness.

Kindness. When people are kind, they tend to be warm-hearted, concerned about the other person, humane. People who practice being kind are laying the foundation for forgiving. Some people talk about the "change of heart" that occurs when someone forgives. The heart-of-stone becomes the softened heart.

Respect. When someone shows respect, he or she is highly regarding the other person. Some people think that respect must be earned. We believe, following the philosopher Immanuel Kant, that people possess intrinsic value to such a degree that we should respect all persons. We respect, not because of what people *do*, but because of whom they *are*. As children practice respecting all people, they make forgiveness easier in the future.

Generosity. To be generous is to give abundantly. It is a gift-giving that surprises and delights the recipient. If children can learn to be generous, they will be in a better position to understand what it means to give a gift of forgiveness to someone who hurts them.

Our intention in the first half of both of these earlier curricula is *not* to have the children understand or to practice forgiveness, but to understand the above five aspects of forgiveness. In both cases, we use children's stories to illustrate the concepts. We use different stories in Discovering Forgiveness (a slightly more advance curriculum) than in The Adventure of Forgiveness to bring about this learning. We use more complex ideas in Discovering Forgiveness than in The Adventure of Forgiveness to challenge the students at their appropriate developmental level.

The second part of both of these earlier curricula is intended to once again introduce the above five "basics of forgiveness" *in the specific context of forgiveness*. We do not ask children at this point to forgive anyone. Instead, we ask them to *understand* how inherent worth looks in the context of forgiveness as described in stories. We ask the children to understand kindness and moral love, respect and generosity all within the context of forgiveness. We again do this through stories that illustrate these points.

Finally, in the third part of the curricula, we ask the children to think about someone who has hurt them unfairly. We then have them try to forgive that person by exercising the idea of inherent worth, and the virtues of moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity toward that person. This third part is the practical part of the curriculum. The first two parts set the stage for actual forgiving.

Forgiveness encompasses more than the practice of inherent worth and the exercise of the virtues of moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. This is a curriculum based on the principles of developmental psychology. We want to start small, start with some of the basics, and keep it somewhat simple. We save the subtlety for later grades.

Our intent is to make the exploration of forgiveness interesting and fun. One does not learn to play football by being thrust into highly competitive, serious situations too early. At first, it is sufficient for the children to run out onto the field on a warm afternoon, kick the ball around, and not worry yet about all the rules and regulations. It is the same with forgiveness. Its introduction should be somewhat light, free of lots of rules, and fun.

## The Curriculum for the 9-11-Year-Old Children

The Joy of Forgiveness curriculum (taught the year before this curriculum) emphasizes moral love in forgiveness. We have taken the one virtue from the earlier curricula----*that of moral love*----and have emphasized throughout the lessons that as people forgive, they are actually lavishing love onto the offending person. We chose moral love among the five basic concepts from the earlier curricula because it is the central moral principle in forgiving and therefore perhaps the most important. It is also the most difficult and challenging.

This idea, that to forgive is to love, is common in the world of academic scholarship where forgiveness is examined in depth. For example, the brilliant writer C.S. Lewis, who was born and raised in Belfast, wrote that if we are to forgive, then we are to exercise the virtue of love. It surely is not simple to offer love to someone who was unfair. Mr. Lewis knows this. He quips that we all think forgiveness is a lovely idea.....until we ourselves have something to forgive. Then the idea of forgiving is met with howls of protest. Yet, it is in this struggle to love the offending person that true growth as a person may be realized for the forgiver.

For example, in one of our scientific studies in Taiwan, we tested a group of people, all of whom reported that they definitely were not angry with an offender who deeply hurt them. We then divided the people into two groups: those who chose the principle of moral love to forgive their offender and those who deliberately chose not to try to love their offender. Our results showed that those people who deliberately did not choose the moral principle of love upon forgiving were actually harboring angry. They had higher blood pressure when recounting what the offender did to them; they had tighter facial muscles; they were more uncomfortable when recounting what the offender did. They were angry. On the other hand, the people who tried to love their offender were more relaxed, with more even blood pressure, and appeared more comfortable.

## The Current Curriculum Guide: Reaching Out through Forgiveness

As in the earlier curricula (The Adventure of Forgiveness, Discovering Forgiveness, The Joy of Forgiveness), we primarily teach the concepts of forgiveness and moral love (that we call *lavish love* in the curriculum) through stories. We chose the kind of stories that should appeal to children ages 8 or 9 through 11. We basically have two parts to the curriculum: First, we introduce the children to the concept of forgiveness and the related concepts of lavish love, inherent worth, empathy, and compassion. Second, we introduce them to these ideas *in the context of forgiving*. We end the 12-lesson curriculum by asking the students to think about how forgiveness fits into the larger communities of school, home, and other social settings.

Each lesson will take a half-hour to an hour (excluding the reading that should be done, either aloud by you or silently by each child). We recommend teaching the lessons once a week for twelve weeks and then following up by creating a forgiving community in the classroom (see Lesson 12 for some ideas on this).

As in the earlier curricula, we constantly alert you as the teacher to potential dangers of forgiveness without proper understanding. For instance, a child might forgive a fellow student

who is behaving in a bullying way, but then not interact with that student if he or she is dangerous. In other words, a child can forgive and then not reconcile. A child should not be pushed into applying lavish love toward any offender if this makes the child uncomfortable. A child who forgives can and should strive for fairness. The mistake is to think in an “either-or” way---either I can forgive or I can seek justice, but I cannot do both. Surely, you can and so can the children. Even when a child tries to love, anger can remain. We encourage you not to try for perfection here, but to enter the challenge that forgiveness can include lavish love. Throughout the lessons, we remind you, the teacher, of the potential complications or misunderstandings about forgiveness so that you can teach with accuracy and confidence. As you teach, please remember that we are here to answer questions you have and to help with any concerns whatsoever. We are here to serve you as you serve the children.

No one who studies moral love claims that it is easy. In fact, it is difficult. That is why we saved its deeper examination until now. Followers of Aristotle, such as Thomas Aquinas, in examining moral love (*agape*, in Greek) say that it is perhaps the most difficult kind of love to offer others because we are trying to serve others with that love. Other forms of love, such as between a mother and child (*storge*, in Greek), or between siblings (*philia*), or between romantic partners (*eros*) are less demanding because each person reaps a direct and obvious benefit. *Agape* sometimes asks us to serve the other person even if it is painful. Other philosophers and theologians have echoed Aristotle’s wisdom. Gene Outka (in his book, *Agape, An Ethical Analysis*), Lewis Smedes (in his book, *Forgive and Forget*), Rabbi Charles Klein (in his book, *How to Forgive When You Can’t Forget*), L. Gregory Jones (in his book, *Embodying Forgiveness*) all discuss the challenges of loving those who hurt us. Yet, each knows the beauty of doing so.

As your children learn about forgiveness-as-love, as they consider the possibility of loving those who hurt them, they may be growing as persons. They may be developing and maturing in an ethical sense. In our opinion, they may be advancing as civilized people who can make a difference in their close relationships and in their communities as the years pass and they enter adulthood.

If the children can begin to understand moral love, if the children can begin to understand how lavish love is part of forgiveness, and if the children can gently consider the practice of forgiveness in this way, then you as the teacher will have laid the foundation for a lifetime of forgiving. Yours is valuable work.

*Jeanette A. Knutson*  
*Robert D. Enright*

# **Lesson One:**

## **What Is Forgiveness**

### **The Main Ideas of the Lesson**

This is the first of twelve lessons in this Forgiveness Education Curriculum. In each of the lessons, through a series of stories, discussions, and activities, the students will study a topic or virtue relevant to the concept of forgiveness. In the first five lessons, the students will learn: 1) about what forgiveness is (what it means); 2) the inherent worth of all people; 3) a repeat of what inherent worth is because of its importance in forgiveness; 4) the meanings of moral love (*agape*), family love (*storge*), and friendship love (*philia*); and 5) the difference between genuine and false love. In the final seven lessons, the students will actually begin to explore the forgiveness process and, if they so choose, to begin journaling about forgiving someone who has hurt them. These journaling activities will be strictly private.

Today the students will learn about forgiveness. In particular, they will learn that forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt, leads to a lessening of resentment, and results in a softened heart (a giving of love) toward the person who caused the hurt. A person who has forgiven often becomes willing to give the four-fold gifts of forgiveness toward his or her offender--kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love.

It is possible that some of the children will have received forgiveness instruction through our Forgiveness Education Curriculum when they were in earlier primary grades. Other students may be experiencing forgiveness education for the first time. We believe that each child, regardless of his or her previous experiences with forgiveness education, will be able to proceed with success through the lessons in this curriculum.

## **General Objectives**

*Through this first brainstorming session, the students will learn the following about forgiveness:*

- ❑ Forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt.
- ❑ When a person forgives, he or she chooses to see the worth of the person who caused an unfair hurt.
- ❑ As a person forgives, resentment and anger toward the person who caused the unfair hurt may fade.
- ❑ As a person forgives, a soft and loving heart toward the person who caused the hurt often emerges.
- ❑ As a person forgives, he or she may become ready to give the four-fold gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love.

## **Behavioral Objectives**

*The students will:*

- ❑ Listen to a brief explanation of character that will go back thousands of years to the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in ancient Greece.
- ❑ Participate in a class discussion.
- ❑ Participate in the “Forgiveness Is Like...” activity.

## **Materials**

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and the Building of Character (included here)  
A Sheet of Drawing Paper for Each Child  
Pencil and Crayons

## Procedures

The following section includes a breakdown of the recommended procedures for teaching this lesson. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, and/or activities if these changes will more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you are careful to fulfill the general objectives of the lesson.

1. Introduce the Forgiveness Education curriculum. Tell the students, “Today we are beginning a journey of *forgiveness*. On our *forgiveness journey* we will meet some interesting characters, have talks about the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of storybook characters, and reflect on some of the people who might be in need of our forgiveness—We will learn about forgiveness! Some of you may have learned about forgiveness through the Dr. Seuss stories when you were in first grade (Primary 3 in the United Kingdom), through the Disney stories when you were in second grade (Primary 4), and through Patricia McLaughlin’s books such as *Caleb’s Story* in third grade (Primary 5) last year. It is possible that some of you will be learning about forgiveness for the first time. Whether or not you have learned about forgiveness in the past, this will be an exciting journey for you. In today’s lesson we will be learning together about what forgiveness is by talking about this as a class. You will be learning that forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt. You will learn that when one forgives, the resentment and anger begin to fade and the heart begins to soften toward the person who caused the hurt. The person who is forgiving often becomes ready to give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love toward someone who has been unfair.”
2. Introduce the lesson entitled, “Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and the Building of Character.” These three philosophers, perhaps more influential to Western thought than any other philosophers, lived in Greece about 2,500 years ago. Talk from the notes that we provided to you, the teacher, here.
3. Conduct the class discussion on what forgiveness is. The questions can be found in the Discussion Section.

4. Have the students participate in the “Forgiveness Is Like...” activity. See the Activities Section for further instructions.
5. Conclude by summarizing the main points of the lesson. Forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt. As we forgive, we begin to see that the person who caused the unfair hurt has worth. The anger begins to fade and our hearts begin to soften toward that person. This often allows us to become ready to give the four-fold gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love toward the person who hurt us.

### **Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and the Building of Character**

How many of you have heard of the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle? They lived in ancient Greece over 2,000 years ago.

I had said that these three men were **philosophers**. What is a philosopher? A *philosopher is one who has a love of wisdom*.

What is **wisdom**? *To have wisdom is to know what is true and what is false. To have wisdom is to know right from wrong. When a person has wisdom, he or she has good judgment and does not do rash things. For example, suppose a man, who cannot swim, sees a dog in a raging river.*

Is he showing wisdom if he jumps in to save the dog? *No, he is not showing good judgment because the truth of the matter is---he cannot swim.*

**Philosophy is the search for wisdom.** Plato, who lived in Athens, Greece about 2,400 years ago was the student of Socrates. Plato, in seeking the truth of who we are as human beings, said that we all need to grow in character. Part of character is to grow in what he and Aristotle called the **moral virtues**.

What is a moral virtue? *It is striving after what is good and right and avoiding what is bad and wrong. We can **grow** in the moral virtues such as kindness, respect, and generosity if we practice them each day. All of these are examples of moral virtues.*

Plato thought that the most important moral virtue was **justice**. What is justice? *It is the seeking after **fairness**, trying to give each person what he or she deserves, what he or she has earned, what is coming to him or her.*

Did you know that Aristotle was Plato's student? Yes, and he reasoned that we need **four virtues** to lead a good life: **justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance**.

Please write (high up) in the center of the blackboard (or white board) the words, **Moral Virtues**.

Then, across the board from left to right (and below the words, **Moral Virtues**) write the names of the four central virtues---**justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance**

We already discussed what **justice** is (*seeking after what is good and right and avoiding what is bad and wrong*). We already discussed what **wisdom** is (*knowing what is right and what is wrong and practicing good judgment, such as not jumping into a raging river to save a dog when the conditions are dangerous.*)

Who can tell me what **courage** is? *It is being brave in the face of danger. It is going ahead with something that is good even if we are fearful, such as going to the dentist to have healthy teeth.*

Who can tell me what **temperance** is---(this may be a little harder)? *It is being in **balance**, by not overdoing or under-doing the other virtues.*

For example, how can you get out of balance with **courage** by showing **too much** of it? *We saw an **intemperance of courage** with the example of the man who could not swim and he jumped into the raging river anyway.*

**This is an imbalance of too much courage. It is not temperate.**

What is an example of **too little courage**, showing an imbalance the other way? *When it is time to go to the dentist, the person hides under the bed and does not go. It is an imbalance of courage. It is under-doing it.*

**It is not temperate**---it is not balanced---it shows **too little courage**.

When we are **temperate** we show the **right amount of courage, or justice, or kindness, or generosity, or mercy.**

**I now want to discuss a moral virtue that is connected to forgiveness----  
mercy.**

To the left of the word temperance on the board, please write the word **mercy**.

What is **mercy**? *It is giving a person more than he or she deserves, such as giving money to a poor person. It is loving someone who seems unlovable because of a bad temper. It is going the extra mile with someone even if it is uncomfortable for you.*

**Forgiveness is one example of mercy.** (Please write the word **forgiveness** underneath the word **mercy** on the board)

### **Discussion Questions Centered on Forgiveness**

1. Have you ever had to **forgive** someone? What are some **examples** of **unfair** things people do to us so that we can practice forgiveness toward them? *Push us down on the playground, say unkind things, hit us, lie about us, and so forth.*

2. We gave definitions of **philosophy** and **wisdom** and **justice** and other virtues. We gave a definition of **mercy and forgiveness is one part of---one aspect of---mercy**. **What is a good definition of forgiveness?** *A person forgives when he or she has been treated unfairly and then responds by: a) reducing resentment or anger and b) offers mercy to that person (or persons) in the form of kindness, respect, generosity, or even love. This includes a softened heart toward the person and seeing him or her as a genuine human being who is worthy of your kindness, respect, generosity, and love.*  
**Please be patient as the students bring forth the ideas in the italics above. Please write down their ideas under the word “forgiveness” on the board.**
3. Does forgiveness always take place only when a person has been unfair to us? *Yes, otherwise, if the person was not unfair, there is nothing to forgive.*
4. Why would philosophers say that forgiveness is a **moral virtue**? What is **good** about forgiveness? *It is having mercy on those who have been unfair to us. This is goodness in the face of being treated unjustly.*
5. Think about a time when you were unfairly hurt. Shortly after you were hurt, did you like the idea of forgiving the person who hurt you? Why? Why not? *The point is to show the students that forgiveness is difficult and not always seen as good at first when we are just recently hurt.*
6. Think about a time that you **actually forgave** someone who treated you unfairly. How did it feel to forgive? *It feels quiet and light inside.*
7. Is forgiveness **more than** just feeling quiet and light inside? *Yes. As a moral virtue forgiveness is the giving of good things to the one who hurt us.*
8. What are some of the **good things** you give to the person whom you forgive? *Patience, kindness, generosity, love, and understanding.*
9. What does it mean **to understand the other person** who was unfair to you? *When you forgive, your thoughts change about the one who hurt you. You see the person’s worth. You see the good in the person. You see that good not because of what he or she did that was unfair but in spite of that.*
10. Some of you may have learned about forgiveness in grade 1 (P3 in the United Kingdom) and/or also in grade 2 (P4 in the United Kingdom). In grade 1 (P3), the Dr. Seuss story, Horton Hears a Who, taught that “A person is a person.” In second grade (P4), the story The Fox and the Hound taught a similar message that “It’s what’s inside that counts.” What do we mean when we say, “A person is a person.” *The person is special, unique, and irreplaceable in this world---even if he or she did a bad thing to you.*

11. Some of you learned about what forgiveness is in third grade (P5 in the UK) from the story, *Rising above the Storm Clouds*. In that story, Mr. McLumen said to his two bunny-rabbit children, “Forgiveness is like the cat gently sharing and the dog graciously accepting a warm spot by the fireplace...” This shows **kindness**. How can we give the gift of kindness to a person who has caused us hurt—and, be safe? *We can smile, answer a question he or she might have, or offer to share, as long as it is safe.*
12. What other gifts does a person give when he or she forgives? *Respect and generosity and even love*
13. Forgiveness is a **moral virtue**, right? It is the **offering of goodness toward a person who has been unfair to us**. Now suppose a person is unfair to you---very, very unfair to you---and you say to him, “It’s OK. It was **not** a bad thing. Let’s just forget it.” Is that forgiveness? *No, because it is not standing in the truth that the other actually was unfair. To excuse the person by pretending that there was no unfairness is not being truthful or practicing moral virtue. You are not standing in the virtue of wisdom and calling the injustice what it is---an injustice. To practice forgiveness is to stand in the truth that you were treated unfairly.*
14. What would you say to a person who tries to push you to forgive before you are ready? *Let me think about it. I’m not quite ready for that. Thank you for the suggestion. (It is your decision.)*
15. Suppose you had to describe what forgiveness is like to a six-year-old child. What would you say to her if she asked you, “What is forgiveness is like’? *I’ll start. Let’s see....forgiveness is like....being in a cool stream on a hot summer day. Forgiveness is like curling up, with your best friend, by a warm fire in the fireplace when it is a cold winter outside.*

### Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **A Forgiveness Banner**

##### ***Objective:***

The students will think about and draw a picture of what forgiveness is and is not. This may be done as a small group activity on a very large sheet of paper or cloth and hung as a banner.

##### ***Instructions***

To begin the lesson, the teacher will tell the students, “Forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt. When we have been hurt, it is natural to be angry with the person who caused the hurt. Oftentimes, as we try to see the worth in the person who caused the hurt, our anger settles and our hearts begin to soften toward him or her. As our hearts begin to

soften, the anger and resentment toward that person often continue to fade. We may then become ready to give the gifts of kindness, respect, and generosity to the one who caused our hurt. It is important for you to remember that the decision to forgive is a personal decision. A person should never be forced to forgive or be shamed into forgiving.”

This activity is important because it is an opportunity for the students to learn to work together cooperatively as a team and to give a lasting gift, symbolic of love and forgiveness, to the school and community. The “Forgiveness Banner” will also be a lasting example of the goodness that people share. Following is an example of how “banner making” has helped people heal, memorialize those lost, express thankfulness, and provide individuals with an opportunity to join together in support: The banners made in New York City following the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center continue to hang in the church that stood less than 100 hundred yards from the World Trade Center and was the site of nine months of relief work. We want to create forgiveness banners focused on forgiveness that unites those who have been through the forgiveness program (teachers, parents, and children). The forgiveness banners, if they are made of cloth or the paper laminated so that it endures, may serve as a lasting reminder for subsequent generations of students of what the students have experienced.

Assign each student to a small group. Provide each group with a very large sheet of paper or fabric and several markers. Ask the students, “What kind of a picture comes to your mind when you think of forgiveness?” Some examples may be: People hugging or shaking hands; a big smile; a tree that bears sweet fruit for others; a dove (suggesting peace); children holding hands around a globe; or a lion lying down with a lamb.

**Note to the teacher: We will be returning to this banner activity in the final lesson (12).**

## **Lesson One within a Religious Context**

The following two sections have been provided for those of you who are looking for ways to teach about the virtue of forgiveness within the context of the Christian tradition. General ideas followed by a Bible story or verses have been provided. Please feel free to use these sections as you wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

The Bible repeatedly teaches us to forgive as we have been forgiven. By studying the Bible, we can learn the importance of forgiveness, as well as the ways in which some of the famous Biblical characters responded to unfair treatment. We can learn the “what” and “how” of forgiveness.

### ***Bible Story and Verses***

***Genesis 30-47*** The story of Joseph forgiving his brothers and half-brothers.

***Ephesians 4:32*** Be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.

**Matthew 6:14-15** If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you.

**Matthew 5: 44** Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you.

**Matthew 18: 21-22** How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him: I say not to thee until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.

### **Sample Lesson**

The story of Joseph forgiving his brother and half-brothers covers many chapters in the Bible. You, the teacher, may want to read sections of this story (*Genesis 30-47*) aloud to the students or they may take turns reading the story aloud. Some questions the teacher may want to ask the children are: 1) Did Joseph experience an injustice (an unfair hurt)? If so, what was it? 2) Do you think that Joseph experienced anger or sadness? Why do you think this? 3) Do we have any signs that Joseph's anger may have been fading toward his brothers? 4) Was Joseph able to see his brother and half-brothers as persons of deep worth? How do you know? 5) What were some signs that Joseph was willing to offer love to his brother and half-brothers? 6) Did Joseph give the gifts of forgiveness (kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love) to his brother and half-brothers? In what ways did he give these gifts?

If you wish, you may discuss one or more of the verses listed above (Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 5:44; Matthew 18:21-22). For example, if you choose Ephesians 4:32 you might ask, "What does it mean to be kind and tenderhearted toward one another? How can we forgive as God for Christ's sake forgave us?"

### **An Evaluation Of The Students**

- Did the students listen attentively to the story?
- Did the students participate in the group discussion?
- Did the students actively participate in the "Forgiveness Banner" activity?
- Did the students learn that forgiveness often begins with seeing the worth or value of the person who caused the hurt?
- Did the students learn that, with forgiveness, a soft and loving heart helps anger and resentment fade toward a person who caused an unfair hurt?
- Did the students learn that when a person forgives, he or she often becomes ready to give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON ONE**

Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Two: Don't Laugh at Me

### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

In this lesson the students will learn about inherent worth or personhood (apart from forgiveness, which we take up again in Lesson 6). A clear understanding of this concept will prepare them to become forgivers. In this lesson, the concept of inherent worth will be discussed apart from forgiveness.

A person's inherent worth is not based on outward appearances, personal possessions, or other external features, but rather on those qualities which unite people as members of the human family.

All people experience both pain and joy, require the same basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs, and share similarities in physical make-up (eyes, nose, legs, arms, etc.), body functioning (blood circulation, respiration, digestion), emotional expressions (love, anger, sadness), and cognitions (thinking and reasoning).

A person's inherent worth is based on the internal qualities of the heart, the mind, and the will. While all people are not perfectly good, all people are capable of good will.

A person has value simply because he or she exists.

We affirm a person's worth and demonstrate our understanding that a person has worth when we love him or her.

### General Objectives

#### *The students will:*

- Learn that the worth of a person is not dependent upon personal differences like physical appearance, possessions in life, career, residence, personality, or group membership.
- Learn that all people have worth as members of the *human family*.
- Learn that a person's worth is based on the internal qualities of the heart, mind, and will.
- Learn that all people hold the promise of goodness and are, therefore, of worth.
- Learn that a person has worth simply because he or she exists.

## Behavioral Objectives

*The students will:*

- Watch the video and hear the song, “Don’t Laugh at Me,” on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

The link can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTNVXlirF4Y&feature=related> We prefer this video because of it includes the words and the drawings send a powerful message that all people have inherent (unearned) worth.

If this fails to load, then try this link at youtube by the country singer Mark Wills who has over 1.6 million “hits” with this official video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVjbo8dW9c8>

Another version by Houston Rap Artist Baby Jay can found here on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9QsJxGldE8> **Your playing both the first one recommended above and this one is an excellent way to show cultural differences in presenting the same music---another message that we are all the same. So, feel free to play these two back-to-back for this lesson. We recommend playing the first one mentioned above to start because it has the words printed on the video.**

- Participate in a class discussion.
- Participate in the “Caring for Others in Other Cultures” activity.

## Materials

Access to a computer so that you can show one or two videos from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## Procedures

In this section, we have included a series of procedures that will serve as guidelines for you, the teacher. Please feel free to make changes to this lesson if you feel the children will be better served by the changes. To maintain the integrity of the curriculum, we ask that you pay careful attention to the objectives of the lesson.

1. Review the main ideas of Lesson One. Forgiveness always begins with an unfair hurt. When we forgive, we begin to see that the one who caused us an unfair hurt has value. That person is more than what he or she did. Our anger begins to fade. We begin to soften our hearts toward the one who caused the hurt and our anger fades even more. Often, as we move through the forgiveness process, we become ready to give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love toward the one who hurt us. Forgiveness can quiet our anger, make us feel light and joyful, and open the door to peace with the one who caused the hurt. Forgiveness is a choice! It is a choice that leads to good things, but all people must be allowed to make the choice when and if they are ready.
2. Introduce today's lesson. Tell the children, "Today we are going to discuss the idea of **inherent worth**. If we say that all people have an inherent worth, we mean that all people have value or worth built right into them. No one has to earn that worth. What gives a person worth? *A person's worth or value is not based on: possessions, appearance, physical health, career, place of residence, personality, or group membership. A person's worth is assured, in part, because he or she is a member of the human family.* What do all human beings share? *We have similar needs, are capable of being hurt, have bodies that look and function much the same, can think and reason, and have similar feelings.* Tell the students, "A person's worth or value **is** based on the heart (the potential or ability to love, feel sadness, joy, pain, and so forth), the mind (the potential or ability to think and reason), the will (the potential or ability to choose how to treat others and how to behave), and the potential or ability to actually *do* good. When we see a person's worth or value, we look beyond what a person does to seeing who a person is. A person has worth because he or she is an existing human being. We show that others have worth by loving them.

**Note to the teacher:** We continually use the expression “the potential or ability” to emphasize that even if a person, for example, is in a coma, he still possesses the essence of humanity, which includes the *potential* to reason or to choose well even if the *abilities* are diminished.

3. Introduce the video (or videos) on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Tell the students, “The music video was written by two composers who were concerned about bullying in school. When people are bullied, they are being **devalued**. Actually, those who bully are **devaluing themselves** because they are not standing in the **wisdom** that **all people are special, unique, and irreplaceable**. Watch the pictures, read and listen to the words, and then we will discuss the important question, “Does every person in the world have **inherent (does not have to be earned) worth?**”
4. Show the video (or the two videos back-to-back).
5. Conduct the class discussion. The discussion questions can be found in the Discussion Section.
6. Have the students participate in the Email Activity: “Caring for Others in Other Cultures.”
7. Conclude the lesson by summarizing the main ideas. A person’s worth or value does not depend on external differences or similarities. Differences such as material wealth, personal traits, group membership or place of residence do not give a person worth. The ways in which we are similar (physical and emotional needs, possibility of being hurt, similar bodies, and an ability to think, reason, and experience feelings), like differences, certainly serve to make a person unique, but do not give *worth*. A person’s worth or value is based on a person’s simply being a human being. All human beings have a capacity (a potential and/or an actuality) to love, think, reason, choose how to behave, and *do* good. As we see a person’s worth or value, we look beyond what a person does to seeing who a person is. A person has worth or value simply because he or she is exists. We show that a person has worth by loving him or her.

**Note to the instructor before showing the video(s) from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com):**

This video was written for students in state, public, and private schools. Some of the lyrics could be controversial and need clarification. For example, part of the lyrics read, “In God’s eyes, we’re all the same.” The writers’ intent here is to show commonality across all people in all cultures and in all different states of health and fortune. Their intent is not to engage in controversial discussion of our origin as humans. Also, please note that the writers further state, “Some day we’ll all have perfect wings.” This, of course, is a poetic way of saying that we are all going to die and be perfect like the angels. Taken literally, the line is bad theology. The writers are not saying that humans in heaven literally will have wings. For atheists and agnostics, these lines about the deity and the after-life should be seen, again, as poetic expressions that we all share something precious, regardless of one’s belief system.

Lyrics for the song “Don’t Laugh at Me” (retrieved from <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/mark-wills/dont-laugh-at-me.html> on July 12, 2010)

(Allen Shamblin/Steve Seskin)

I'm a little boy with glasses  
The one they call the geek  
A little girl who never smiles  
'Cause I've got braces on my teeth  
And I know how it feels  
To cry myself to sleep

I'm that kid on every playground  
Who's always chosen last  
A single teenage mother  
Tryin' to overcome my past  
You don't have to be my friend  
But is it too much to ask

Don't laugh at me  
Don't call me names  
Don't get your pleasure from my pain  
In God's eyes we're all the same  
Someday we'll all have perfect wings  
Don't laugh at me

I'm the cripple on the corner  
You've passed me on the street  
And I wouldn't be out here beggin'  
If I had enough to eat  
And don't think I don't notice  
That our eyes never meet

I lost my wife and little boy when  
Someone cross that yellow line  
The day we laid them in the ground  
Is the day I lost my mind  
And right now I'm down to holdin'  
This little cardboard sign...so

Don't laugh at me  
Don't call me names  
Don't get your pleasure from my pain  
In God's eyes we're all the same  
Someday we'll all have perfect wings  
Don't laugh at me

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall  
I'm deaf, I'm blind, hey, aren't we all

Don't laugh at me  
Don't call me names  
Don't get your pleasure from my pain  
In God's eyes we're all the same  
Someday we'll all have perfect wings  
Don't laugh at me

### Discussion Questions

In today's video, we watched and heard about children and adults who are teased, disrespected, and ignored.

1. When the little boy with glasses, the one they call the geek, and the little girl with braces on her teeth go to bed for the night, what happens? *They cry themselves to sleep.*
2. What do you think they are telling themselves and why? *They are probably telling themselves that they have little inherent worth as persons because they hear that message over and over again.*
3. Are they standing in the truth of who they are? *No. They are basing their views on themselves by what a small group is saying.*
4. Are those who make fun of the boy and the girl standing in the truth of who the little boy and girl are? *No because they are ignoring the truth that the boy and girl have inherent worth.*
5. What is inherent worth? *It is the true understanding that each person is special, unique, and irreplaceable in this world regardless of how they look.*
6. Are those who make fun of them standing in the truth of who they, themselves, are? *No because to grow as a person is to realize that we are to respect all other people.*
7. To respect others---does this mean that we let others walk all over us? *Absolutely not. To respect them is to want the best for them. We do not want those who engage in bullying behavior to continue with that. It diminishes them as people and it diminishes those they hurt.*
8. Do people get their worth from what they own? Do they get their worth from how they look or what they wear? From their health? What they do? Where they live? How likeable they are? What group to which they belong?
9. What do you think gives people worth? *They are special, unique, and irreplaceable. They are a member of the human family, have a kind and loving heart, have a mind, and are capable of good will.*
10. In the song, some of the lyrics state, "Don't get your pleasure from my pain." What does that mean? *Some people get a false sense of their own importance by ridiculing and belittling others.*
11. Is this showing wisdom? Is it standing in the truth to get one's sense of worth by putting others down? *It is not standing in the truth of who the self is or who others are.*

12. Another line states this, “And don’t think I don’t notice that our eyes never meet.” What does that mean? *People who devalue others usually do not look at them.*
  13. How can we **begin** perhaps in a small way to show others that they have great inherent worth? *We can acknowledge them with a “hello” or with a smile or some other gesture of kindness, respect, and generosity.*
  14. Think of a time in which someone was unkind and disrespectful to you. Is it the truth or not that this person---despite their being unjust to you---is a person of **inherent worth**? Why or why not?
  15. Is it easy or hard to see this person as having inherent worth?
  16. Even if it is hard to see a person who disrespects you as having great inherent worth, what can you do to stand in the truth that he or she does have such worth? *You can practice trying to see him or her as special, unique, and irreplaceable---as someone with great inherent worth.*
  17. Is it the truth or not that **you** are a person of great inherent worth even when people mistreat you?
  18. Have you ever neglected or ignored a person? Why? Why not? Did you see his or her worth?
  19. How do you think this made him or her feel?
  20. How can we show any person in a **true** and important way that we see his or her worth? *Love him or her.*
  21. Remember---when you are having mercy on others, be sure to practice the virtue of justice as well. Get help from others if you are being treated unfairly.
- In the next three lessons, we will be discussing the virtue of love. We will talk about three different types of love (lavish love, friendship love, and family love) and discuss how the different loves are often shown.

### Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **Caring for Others in Other Cultures**

##### ***Objectives:***

The students will continue to learn that all people have worth and are worthy of love. The students will write a letter (which they do not send---it will be an exercise of the imagination) to children in another culture. You, the teacher, should choose a culture which might fit into other areas of learning. Are you studying a certain area of the world in history or social studies? Re-introduce the children to that region of the world in preparation for this activity.

***Instructions:***

The teacher will begin the activity by writing on the board, “A person is a person because...” As a class, the students will discuss what gives a person his or her worth. What makes a “person a person”? Following the discussion, the students will each be given a sheet of paper on which to compose the letter (which will not be sent). The students will discuss these questions: Does each person have worth? Why or why not? Do differences in cultural customs (such as how each culture celebrates important holidays) make people different **inside**? Why or why not? What do these students from the different cultures (with different ways of celebrating holidays) have in common? How are we all alike inside?

## **Lesson Two within a Religious Context**

As in Lesson One, the next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas about inherent worth within their own Christian religious tradition. We present some general ideas followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

God created human beings in His image. We are His children. The Bible teaches that God is greatly concerned with the state of our hearts and how we treat one another. God cares deeply about every aspect of our lives, but He is less concerned with our appearance, career, place of residence, personality, and group membership than with our internal condition---our growth in holiness.

### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible verses may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

***Galatians 2:6*** As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message.

***Jeremiah 1:5*** The word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...”

***Psalms 139: 13-16*** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

*1 Thessalonians 3: 11-13* Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; and may the Lord make you **increase and abound in love** to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts **unblamable in holiness** before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (The bold font is our emphasis for discussion purposes here.)

**Sample Lesson:**

Please review the main concepts of the lesson as the Bible verses are read and discussed. The main concepts are: 1) A person's worth does not come from those characteristics that make us unique or different from one another (physical appearance, possessions in life, career, residence, personality, or group membership) nor from those things that make us similar (body make-up or the way the body operates, emotions, or thoughts processes). 2) All people have deep worth as members of the *human family*. 3) The internal qualities of the heart, mind, and will give a person worth. 4) All people have worth because they hold the promise of goodness. 5) A person has worth simply because he or she exists, and in the case of this Christian lesson, because he or she exists as a child of God, made in His image; 6) This worth cannot be earned or lost—even following injustice. For example, the teacher may say, "We learned in today's lesson that a person's worth does not come from external features or personal characteristics. The Bible teaches in Galatians 2:6 that God does not judge by external appearance. What does this mean? In Jeremiah 1:5, the Lord tells us that He formed us in the womb and set us apart. What does that tell each of you about your worth? In Psalm 139: 13-16, it is written that God created our inmost being and it is wonderfully made...All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. What does this verse tell you about your deep worth in God's eyes?"

### **An Evaluation Of The Students**

- Did the students watch the video and participate in the class discussion?
- Did the students participate in the "Caring for Others in Other Cultures" activity?
- Did the students learn that the worth of a person is not dependent on *personal differences* such as: physical appearance, possessions in life, career, residence, personality, or group membership?
- Did the students learn that all people have worth because they are members of the *human family*?
- Did the students learn that a person's worth *is* based on his or her potential or actuality concerning the quality of his or her heart, mind, and will?
- Did the students learn that inherent worth is based on the fact that all people are capable of (at least have the potential for) good will?
- Did the students learn that we can show that we see a person's worth by loving him or her?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON TWO**

**Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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**Lesson Three:**  
**Standing in the Truth that All People Have Worth**

**The Main Ideas of the Lesson**

In this lesson the students will once again center their attention on the inherent worth of all people. As we learned in the previous lesson, a person's inherent worth is not based on outward appearances, personal possessions, or other external features, but rather on those qualities that unite people as members of the human family. Instead, a person's inherent worth is based on the internal qualities of the heart, the mind, and the will. A person has value simply because he or she exists.

When a person lives without the truth of this affirmation---that she has unconditional worth---she can begin doubting her own worth. A person must stand in the truth that he is of great worth, even when those around him tell him otherwise.

**General Objectives**

***The students will:***

- Learn once again that the worth of a person is not dependent upon personal differences like physical appearance, possessions in life, career, residence, personality, or group membership.
- Learn that when a person grows up with the false message that he is not worth much, this message can lead to pain and doubt about oneself.
- Learn that a person needs to sometimes work hard to stand in the truth of whom she is, someone who is unique, special, and irreplaceable regardless of what other people say.

## Behavioral Objectives

### *The students will:*

- Read or listen to the first two chapters of the book, *The Tale of Despereaux*.
- ❑ Participate in a class discussion.
- ❑ Participate in the “We All Have Worth No Matter What” activity.

## Materials

Kate DiCamillo (2003). *The Tale of Despereaux*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.  
(ISBN 978-0-7636-2529-0 [paperback])

## Procedures

In this section, as in Lessons 1 and 2, we have included a series of procedures that will serve as guidelines for you, the teacher. Please feel free to make changes to this lesson if you feel the children will be better served by the changes. To maintain the integrity of the curriculum, we ask that you pay careful attention to the objectives of the lesson.

1. Review the main ideas of Lesson Two regarding inherent worth. If we say that all people have an inherent worth, we mean that all people have value or worth built right into them. No one has to earn that worth. What gives a person worth? *A person’s worth or value is not based on: possessions, appearance, physical health, career, place of residence, personality, or group membership. A person’s worth is established, in part, because he or she is a member of the human family.* What do all human beings share? *We have similar needs, are capable of being hurt, have bodies that look and function much the same, can think and reason, and have similar feelings.* Tell the students, “A person’s worth or value **is** based on the heart (the potential or ability to love, feel sadness, joy, pain, and so forth), the mind (the potential or ability to think and reason), the will (the potential or ability to choose how to treat others and how to behave), and the potential or ability to actually *do*

good. When we see a person's worth or value, we look beyond what a person does to seeing who a person is. A person has worth because he or she is an existing human being. We show that others have worth by loving them.

2. Introduce the book, *The Tale of Despereaux*. Tell the students, "Today we will begin to read the book, *The Tale of Despereaux*, by Kate DiCamillo. It is a story of a little mouse named Despereaux and his adventures in a land far away and a long time ago. Today we will see his early years, when he was born and how people reacted to him. Here is your task as you read----Try to count the number of times in which others in the story **insult** Despereaux. An **insult** is an unkind remark about a person, or in this case, a mouse. I will be asking you about the number of insults you hear, what these are like, and how they affect Despereaux. So, get ready to count as you listen. "

3. Read or have the children read the first two chapters of the book. As you read, you might want to occasionally stop when an insult appears to be sure the children are listening for those insults. **You might consider writing on the board each insult as it appears in the story.**

**For your information, here are the insults as they appear in the story:**

**Note. The page numbers are from the paperback version.**

### **Chapter 1 Insults:**

**Insult 1, page 11: "All of that work for nothing." Despereaux's mother says this after giving birth to him.**

**Insult 2, page 12: "It is so sad. It is such a disappointment." Again, this is Despereaux's mother talking about the birth.**

**Insult 3, page 12: "Yes, I will name this mouse Despereaux, for all the sadness, for the many despairs in this place."**

**Insult 4, page 12: "...get my makeup bag. My eyes are a fright." (This is an insult because Despereaux seemed sick and his mother was more concerned about her puffy eyes.**

**Insult 5, page 13: "His ears are too big," said his sister Merlot."**

**Insult 6, page 13: “I will have no more mice babies. They are such the disappointment.”**

**Insult 7, same line as Insult 6 on page 13: “They [mouse babies such as Despereaux] are hard on my beauty.”**

**Insult 8, page 15: “The last one,” said the father. “And he’ll be dead soon.”**

**This is an insult because the father says it so casually, without love.**

### **Chapter 2 Insults:**

**Insult 9, page 16: “‘He’s the smallest mouse I’ve ever seen,’ said his aunt Florence.” [This is an insult because she had nothing good to say about Despereaux. His worth seems to be tied, for Aunt Florence, to his size.]**

**Insult 10, page 17: “‘Those are some big ears he’s got, too,’ observed his uncle Alfred.”**

**Insult 11, page 17: “They [Despereaux’s ears] look more like donkey ears, if you ask me.” [This is spoken by Uncle Alfred.]**

**Insult 12, page 17: “‘They are obscenely large ears,’ said Aunt Florence.”**

**Insult 13, page 18: “You are such the skinny mouse.” [His mother says this.]**

**Insult 14, page 18: “You are a disappointment to your mama.”**

### **Total insults in 9 pages=14 insults**

4. Conduct the class discussion. The discussion questions can be found in the Discussion Section.
5. Have the students participate in the Activity: “We All Have Worth No Matter What.”
6. Conclude the lesson by summarizing the main ideas. No matter what others say or do, a person’s worth or value does not depend on external differences or similarities. Differences such as material wealth, personal traits, group membership or place of residence do not give a person worth. A person’s worth or value is based on a person’s ability to love, think, reason, choose how to behave, and *do* good. We show that a person has worth by loving him or her.

## Discussion Questions

In today's reading, we met the little mouse, Despereaux. Let us think now about him and what he had to go through when he was only a baby.

1. Show the drawing on page 14 of the sweet little Despereaux. As you show the picture, ask the children, "Do you see Despereaux? What do you think? Do you think he looks like a bother or instead does he look like a great addition to the mouse family? Why do you say this?"
2. When Despereaux was born, one of his mother's first statements was, "All of this work for nothing." Do you think that bringing Despereaux into the world was "work for nothing"? Why do you say this? *Despereaux as a new member of the family is worth more than all the money in the world. He is unique, special, and irreplaceable.*
3. The mother's second insult toward Despereaux is this: "It is so sad. It is such a disappointment." Is the mother standing in the truth of who Despereaux is? *No. She is not seeing Despereaux for who he really is. She is not seeing him as a member of the family and a member of the entire mouse family. She is ignoring who he is.*
4. How many insults did we count that were directed toward Despereaux? *14* (although your class may have found even more than we did).
5. Do you see a pattern to the insults? What do they all have in common? *Each one looks at Despereaux's appearance or someone's inconvenience. They are not seeing Despereaux for who is---a precious little mouse who is unique, special, and irreplaceable.*
6. Do you think that those who are insulting Despereaux are seeing his inherent worth? What is inherent worth? *It is the true understanding that each person is special, unique, and irreplaceable in this world regardless of how he or she looks.*
7. Are those who are insulting Despereaux standing in the truth of who they, themselves, are? *No because to grow as a person is to realize that we are to respect all other people.*
8. Let us count the number of people who insulted Despereaux. How many do you count? *Five different people---Despereaux's mother, father, sister Merlot, Aunt Florence, and Uncle Alfred.*
9. Think about this---Do you think it is easier to insult someone if there are a lot of people standing around who already are insulting that person? *Yes, because insulting the person almost becomes an expectation---the ones who are making the insulting remarks expect others to join in.*
10. So, if it is easy to insult when lots of others are insulting, what is one obligation that you have when you are in a group that is insulting a person? *Do not join in and insult the person. In an appropriate way, such as getting an adult authority's attention, try to be of help. Think hard about the person's inherent worth even when others are not.*
11. Is this showing wisdom to join the crowd and insult someone else? *No, because it is not standing in the truth of who the self is or who others are.*
12. Suppose you were standing with Despereaux's mother, father, sister Merlot, and his uncle and aunt. Suppose you heard each one of the 14 insults. What could you begin **to think** about Despereaux so that you do not fall into the trap of judging him

wrongly? *I could begin seeing his inherent worth. I could see that he is a new baby and so needs help. I could begin to show love to him.*

13. If someone insulted you over and over again, as happened to Despereaux, what might you begin thinking of yourself? Might you fall into the trap of thinking you do not have inherent worth? Might you begin to think that you are a bother?
  14. Let's re-read an important section of our reading for today, on page 18. Despereaux's mother hurls the final insult (Insult 14) at Despereaux when she says directly to him, "You are a disappointment to your mama." Does Despereaux believe her? What does he say? *He says, "Sorry."*
  15. How does he react? *"He lowered his head and sniffed the castle floor."*
  16. Was he feeling good about himself at that point? *No, he said, "Sorry" about being a disappointment. He seems to be believing his mother's judgment of him by thinking he is doing something wrong by being Despereaux.*
  17. Think about that----**He is apologizing for being him.** Should anyone ever apologize for being a person? *No, never because all people have inherent worth.*
  18. Has anyone treated you the way Despereaux's family treated Despereaux? What do you have to say to yourself so that you do not say, "Sorry" for simply being a person? *I must remember, as Despereaux has to realize for himself, that I am a person and so I have inherent worth.*
  19. Think of a time in which someone was unkind and disrespectful to you. Is it the truth or not that this person---despite their being unjust to you---is a person of **inherent worth**? Why or why not? *That person, like you, is part of **the human family**.*
  20. What does it mean to be part of the human family? *We all share a common humanity and so we should strive, as best we can, to offer kindness, respect, generosity and lavish love to everyone (while protecting ourselves).*
  21. Is it easy or hard to see the person who was unkind and disrespectful to you as having inherent worth?
  22. Even if it is hard to see a person who disrespects you as having great inherent worth, what can you do to stand in the truth that he or she does have such worth? *You can practice trying to see him or her as special, unique, and irreplaceable---as someone with great inherent worth.*
  23. Have you ever neglected or ignored a person? Why? Why not? Did you see his or her worth?
  24. How do you think this made him or her feel?
  25. How can we show any person in a **true** and important way that we see his or her worth? *By being respectful, kind and generous. We can show love to him or her.*
  26. Remember---when you are having mercy on others, be sure to practice the virtue of justice as well. Get help from others if you are being treated unfairly.
- In the next two lessons, we will be discussing the virtue of love. We will talk about three different types of love (lavish love, friendship love, and family love) and discuss how the different loves are often shown.

## Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

### **Activity: We All Have Worth No Matter What**

**Objectives:** The students will begin to see the inherent worth of people who are being rejected by others. Despereaux's situation will be the means through which the children will learn this. Please reproduce the sheet below that has all of the quotations in which Despereaux was insulted. Have the children either write a counter statement to the insults or discuss counter statements as a group. If you choose the discussion, please write the counter statements on the board so that the children have a visual record of what they said.

**Instructions:** The teacher will pass out one sheet to each child and say, "Today we saw how Despereaux was insulted by five members of his family. They were each thinking about him in a negative and unloving way. In this exercise, we will consider very different ways to think about Despereaux. I have printed each insult on the paper you now have and your task is to think an opposite thought to the insult. Try to think of a respectful, kind, generous, or loving response that can be substituted for the insult. Our goal is to see Despereaux in a new light, as someone with inherent worth."

**Example for the first insult on the worksheet: "All of that work for nothing." Despereaux's mother says this after giving birth to him.**

**What can we say to the mother to show Despereaux's inherent worth? "He is not 'work for nothing,' but instead is a sweet new baby who needs your help."**

**Example for the second insult on the worksheet: "It is so sad. It is such a disappointment." Again, this is Despereaux's mother talking about the birth.**

**What can we now say to the mother? "Despereaux is not a disappointment, but instead is a mouse just like you are. He has the same inherent worth as you and his father and all the others in the family."**

**Example for third insult on the sheet: "...get my makeup bag. My eyes are a fright."**

**What is our response? "But, if you think about it, is not Despereaux more important than how your eyes look?"**

**Sheet to be reproduced for this activity:**

**Activity: We All Have Worth No Matter What**

Nine of the insults to Despereaux:

First insult we will consider: “All of that work for nothing.” Despereaux’s mother says this after giving birth to him.

But we say this about Despereaux:

Second insult we will consider: “It is so sad. It is such a disappointment.” Again, this is Despereaux’s mother talking about the birth.

But we say this instead:

Third insult we will consider: “...get my makeup bag. My eyes are a fright.”

This is what we might think and say instead:

Fourth insult we are concerning: “His ears are too big,’ said his sister Merlot.”

And our response is this:

Fifth insult for us to consider: “He’s the smallest mouse I’ve ever seen,’ said his aunt Florence.”

But we think and say:

Sixth insult about which we will think: “They [Despereaux’s ears] look more like donkey ears, if you ask me.” [This is spoken by Uncle Alfred.]

This is the second person to say this. So, we say instead:

The seventh insult we will consider here is this: “‘They are obscenely large ears,’ said Aunt Florence.”

Do you see how the mice are starting to think alike regarding his ears? But we think and say this:

Eighth insult for our consideration: “You are such the skinny mouse.” [His mother says this.]

His mother has nothing positive to say about Despereaux and so we say:

The final insult we will consider is this: “You are a disappointment to your mama.”

We now say this about Despereaux (and this is our final statement so let’s make it true and kind):

### **Lesson Three within a Religious Context**

As in the previous two lessons, this section is for those teachers seeking ideas about inherent worth within their own Christian religious tradition. We present some general ideas followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

#### ***General Religious Ideas***

Even when others shunned certain people, Jesus was there to help and to heal. He was always seeing the inherent worth of all. After all, He as God, the Creator of the universe, was responsible for making all people, even those whom others rejected. In fact, Jesus went to the cross and died for all, even those who were and are considered repulsive by other people.

#### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible passages may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

**Mark 5: 1-20.** This is the story of the “Gerasene demoniac,” who lived his life among the tombs outside of town. He was left alone by others, even chained many times to keep him isolated. Not only did Jesus welcome him by talking to him, but also He healed the man. Later Jesus continued to provide advice as He told him to return to his friends.

**Mark 1: 40-45.** In this passage, Jesus has pity on a leper and heals him. In the Hebrew scripture (see Numbers 12:9-16, for example), a person who was seen as having leprosy was sent out of camp. Even though people would not be in the presence of some lepers, Jesus let the leper in Mark 1 kneel before him. Jesus then touched his hand, showing respect and love.

### **An Evaluation of the Students**

- Did the students listen to or read the selected parts of the story?
- Did the students participate in the “We All Have Worth no Matter What” activity?
- Did the students learn that the worth of a person is not earned, but is something each person simply possesses---inherently
- ? Did the students learn that all people have worth because they are members of the *human family*?
- Did the students learn that we can show that we see a person’s worth by loving him or her?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON THREE**

Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Four: Living One's Life through Lavish Love

### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

In Lessons Two and Three, inherent worth, an important building block of forgiveness, was discussed. In this lesson, we will discuss a topic that goes to the very core of the concept of forgiveness, the virtue of love. When a person forgives, he or she is choosing to love a person who caused an unfair hurt. He or she is choosing to see the worth of a person who has caused an unfair hurt, to forego revenge, and to offer compassion, benevolence, and love.

Today's lesson will introduce the names of four loves [the original Greek names are *agape* (a ga' pea), *storge* (store gee' where the gee rhymes with "bee" and the "g" is a hard "g"), *philia* (feel' ee a), and *eros* (air' ohs)], provide a brief description of each, and teach, in depth, on the virtue of *agape* or moral love.

We will center our attention on *agape* or moral love here. The concept of moral love will be taught apart from the virtue of forgiveness in this lesson.

*Agape* or moral love, first of all, acknowledges that all people have worth. With *agape* love, people are not valued simply because they can bring pleasure or because of their personal characteristics, lifestyles, or possessions. They are valued and loved because they are people. The focus is not on oneself.

*Agape* or lavish love places the focus on other people, not on the self. The question is asked, "How can I be of service to this person?" Seeing others' worth and giving of ourselves are intimately connected in that when we give of ourselves, we demonstrate that others have worth.

We become capable of demonstrating moral love as we are loved. Love can come to us from many sources: family, friends, relatives, a teacher(s), a leader(s), places of worship and community, or a divine being.

*Agape* or moral love is demonstrated through patience (accepting a person as he or she is and allowing him or her time to grow, work through problems, and change), kindness, generosity, humility (seeing the worth in another person and being willing to give another person's needs a priority; not being easily offended), courteous behavior, self-sacrifice, and gratitude. To love deeply and fully, we must be willing to acknowledge the truth about ourselves (recognize our strengths and weaknesses), our circumstances (we do not deny or pretend), and others (their strengths and weaknesses) and avoid keeping a record of wrongs.

We love with words, tangible gifts, thoughts, and behaviors. We demonstrate love through restraint (refraining from thinking harsh thoughts, performing unkind behaviors, and withdrawing gifts), and temperance. *Agape* love allows individuals to be both secure and free. It is an unconditional love that does not abandon a person when he or she is less than perfect. It corrects when correction is needed thus helping a person to grow and bring forth his or her best qualities. It does not attempt to control

“who” a person is, what he or she needs to do in life, or where he or she needs to go.  
*Agape* love given and received helps us to be our best selves.

### General Objectives

*The students will:*

- ❑ Learn the names, pronunciations, and definitions of the four forms of love (agape, storge, philia, and eros).
- ❑ Learn the characteristics of *agape* love.
- ❑ Learn how to show *agape* love.
- ❑ Learn that we can demonstrate *agape* love through our words, tangible gifts, thoughts, and behaviors.
- ❑ Learn the benefits of *agape* love.

### Behavioral Objectives

*The students will:*

”

- ❑ Listen to or read chapters 3-7 of *The Tale of Despereaux*.
- ❑ Participate in a class discussion.
- ❑ Participate in the “Song Fest: Everybody Needs Love” activity.

### Materials

The Book entitled ,  
The Tale of Despereaux, chapters 3-8  
A song by Ingrid Michaelson,  
Everybody  
found here on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkzLk\\_2A5Dg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkzLk_2A5Dg&feature=related)  
one glove and one cut-out of a heart that will fit inside the glove during the Activity.

## Procedures

We have included the following procedures to serve as guidelines for the teacher. If it will help you to more effectively address the needs of your students, please feel free to make changes to the lesson. To maintain the integrity of the curriculum, please be careful to meet the objectives of the lesson.

1. Review the main ideas of Lessons Two and Three. Worth or value does not depend on external differences or on similarities. Differences such as material wealth, personal traits, group membership or place of residence and similarities (physical and emotional needs, possibility of being hurt, similar bodies, and an ability to think, reason, and experience feelings) serve to make a person unique, but do not give worth. All people (including each of us) have worth or value because of their ability to love, think, reason, choose how to behave, and *do* good. As we see a person's worth or value, we look beyond what a person does to seeing who a person is. All (including us) have worth or value simply because they are people. We show that others have worth by loving them.
2. Introduce today's lesson. You, the teacher, may want to let the students know that there are four types of love that will be studied in this Forgiveness Curriculum. **A clear understanding of the virtues of love will help the students be better prepared to forgive people who hurt them.**

**On the blackboard (or other writing surface visible to the students), be ready to write the names of the four loves.** There are **four types of love** described by the philosopher Aristotle in ancient Greece: **agape** (a ga' pay), **storge** (store gee' where the gee rhymes with "bee" and the "g" is a hard "g"), **philia** (feel' ee a), and **eros** (air' ohs). *Agape love*, which we will call "lavish love," is freely given to all people, regardless of the circumstances. *Storge* is the love that parents have for their children. It is a love that, when joined with agape or lavish love, protects, nurtures, corrects, teaches, and disciplines. *Philia*, the love between friends, is a love that when joined with agape love provides for mutual companionship and a shared understanding of life. Finally, *eros* is the type of love between a husband and wife or when a person has warm feeling toward another as a husband has toward his wife, for example. The students will discuss agape in this lesson.

**Agape love** is at the core of all loves. If all people were to understand how to love with a lavish love (agape) and if they would bring this lavish love into their families and friendships, then their relationships should be stronger and more enjoyable. In other words, *agape* love provides a foundation for *philia*, *storge*, and *eros*, making them strong, just as a basement provides a foundation for a house, making it stronger. *Agape* love helps us to see the inherent worth or value in all people.

How do you think we can learn to love with an *agape* love? Please tell the children, “We learn to love in this very warm and deep way by receiving love and by being loved. A deep and meaningful lavish love can come to us from many different people: our family, our friends, our relatives, our teacher(s), leader(s), places of worship and communities, or from our divine authority.”

How do we show *agape* love? Any time we are patient, kind, generous, humble (we don’t think we’re better than others), polite (not rude), and grateful with a genuine concern for others, then we are showing an *agape* or **lavish love**. We show this type of genuine love through the words that we speak to others, the gifts that we give (objects, time, etc.), our thoughts about others, and our behaviors. Lavish love helps us feel both secure and free: Secure, because lavish love is not taken away when a person makes a mistake or is simply being human; Free, because lavish love does not attempt to control who a person is, what he or she needs to do in life, or where he or she needs to go.

3. Read or review chapters 3-7, The Tale of Despereaux. Remind the students, “The story, The Tale of Despereaux, is about a little mouse who comes unwanted into the world. His very name means Desperate. Can you imagine that---his parents named him Desperate. Up to this point in the story, Despereaux has been insulted by his family and relatives. Today, he will go on a new adventure and fall in love and show courageous love.”
4. Conduct the class discussion. The discussion questions can be found in the Discussion Section.
5. Have the students participate in the “Everybody Needs Love” activity. Please refer to the Activities Section for details.
6. Conclude the lesson by telling the students the following (and once again showing them the words on the board): “Today you learned the four different names for types of love: *agape* (a lavish love for all human beings), *eros* (or warm feelings between husbands and

wives—a falling in love), *storge* (a parent’s love for a child; a child’s love for his or her parent; a sister’s love for a brother), and *philia* (a love between friends). The type of love that we focused on today was the love that can serve as a foundation for all other loves making them stronger and more joyful--*agape* or lavish love. When we love others with an *agape* love, we acknowledge their worth. We do not value people because they can bring us pleasure. We value them because they are people---who are special, unique, and irreplaceable. When we love with an *agape* love, we give of ourselves for the benefit of others. Seeing the worth in others and giving of ourselves are both joined together in *agape* love in that, as we give of ourselves, we demonstrate that the other person has worth.”

“How do we become individuals capable of lavish love? We become able to give love when we, ourselves, have been given love. We can love when we are willing to receive that love. Love can come to us from many sources: family, friends, relatives, a teacher(s), a leader(s), the place of worship, or a divine being.”

We show *agape* or lavish love when we are patient, kind, humble, courteous, unselfish, and grateful. Please take some time, if necessary, to discuss what it means to be patient, kind, humble, courteous, unselfish, and grateful. In addition, we show such love when we are honest about who the person is (his or her strengths and weaknesses), who we are (our strengths and weaknesses), and what the circumstances are (we do not pretend). We can show love through our words, gifts (time or things), thoughts, and behaviors.

Lavish love allows us to feel both secure and free because it is an unchanging love. We might not be happy with a friend’s, relative’s, or even a stranger’s behaviors at times, but yet, with lavish love, we can continue to love him or her. Lavish love does **not** try to control who people are, what they do, or what they think.

### **Discussion Questions**

Last week we discussed inherent worth by seeing that little Despereaux has great value, not because of his appearance or any other physical characteristic. He has worth because he *is*, because he exists, because he is special, unique, and irreplaceable. Today we are going to discuss the theme of love that people have for one another---and in this case, the love that Despereaux and Princess Pea show.

1. How did the Princess Pea and Despereaux show that they valued one another? *She saw him as someone who is not a bug or a rat. She took interest in him for whom he is. He did the same with her.*
2. What are some of the ways you show that people have worth? *Loving them. Pay attention to them. Give them a smile.*
3. When you are valued through love by another person, how does this make you feel?
4. What is *agape* or lavish love? *It is placing emphasis on that person even when it is difficult.*
5. How did Princess Pea show *agape* love to Despereaux? *She allowed herself to be uncomfortable when her father, the king, was angry with her. She defended Despereaux as valuable. She was generous to him.*
6. Sometimes we begin to love once we are loved by others. When did Despereaux begin to have love toward Princess Pea? *She first said that his ears are like velvet, she held him gently and loved him first with *agape* love.*
7. How did Despereaux respond to her *agape* love? *He showed love back to her.*
8. Was the kind of love Despereaux showed the kind we would call *agape* (or lavish love) or was it more like *eros* or maybe **both *eros* and *agape***? *He first showed *eros* because the author says that he “fell in love” with Princess Pea (see page 30 at the very bottom).*
9. When did Despereaux begin to show *agape* love toward Pea? *On pages 40 and 41, he three times says to her, “I honor you.”*
10. What does it mean to honor another person? *To honor is to show great respect and to protect the other even when it is difficult or painful to do so. He stayed even when the king got very angry. To honor another is to be unselfish toward him or her.*
11. *Agape* love is kind and generous. How was Princess Pea kind and generous toward Despereaux? *She was gentle and caring. She did not abandon him when the king called him a bug, a rat, and a rodent and dismissed him. She defended him.*
12. Did Despereaux show kindness and generosity? How? *He wanted to honor Princess Pea.*
13. What does it mean to be truthful in our love? *We see the other’s strengths and weaknesses.*
14. Was Princess Pea truthful regarding Despereaux? *Yes, she saw him for whom he is despite the king’s distortions of Despereaux and she saw his value.*
15. Did Despereaux and Princess Pea show lavish love toward each other? How? *Yes, by enduring discomfort for each other as the king raged against Despereaux. They both endured his hatred toward Despereaux.*
16. Were they both unselfish in their lavish love? How? *Yes, they were willing to endure the king’s harsh words and demands so that they could be gentle and generous.*
17. Look at the contrast between the lavish love or *agape* love between Princess Pea and Despereaux compared with the drum beats and anger of the mouse council in chapter 8. How would you describe the differences between the behavior of the mouse council in chapter 8 and Despereaux’s and Pea’s love in the other chapters? Can you almost hear the drums beating harshly? Can you hear the gentleness in Pea’s voice in contrast to the drums?
18. Were Princess Pea and Despereaux happy when they showed lavish love or *agape* toward each other? Even when they had pain from the king’s anger? *When we practice *agape* love, we can be happy even when circumstances are difficult and painful.*
19. Was Lester, Despereaux’s father, happy in chapter 8 when he did not protect his son from the dungeon? *No. He cried.*
20. Was Lester, Despereaux’s father, showing *lavish* love in chapter 8. *No, he was thinking of himself. He did not bear the pain for his son by defending him. He was miserable.*

21. Can you see the **contrast** in **happiness** between Lester's lack of love and Pea's and Despereaux courage in loving anyway, even when it was hard to do?
22. Who are some of the people from whom you receive *agape* or lavish love? How do they show their love? *Kind words, gifts, thoughts, and behaviors.*
23. How does being loved make you feel?
24. Who are some of the people you love? How do show your love toward them?

### Activity

Please feel free to decide if you wish to include one or more of the activities.

#### **.A Song Fest: Everybody Needs Love**

The song, Everybody, by Ingrid Michaelson

You can retrieve the video on [www.youtube](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkzLk_2A5Dg&feature=related) here:

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkzLk\\_2A5Dg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkzLk_2A5Dg&feature=related)**

#### ***Objectives:***

The students will learn the importance of love for improving our world. The students will listen to and then sing the Everybody song.

#### ***Instructions:***

The teacher will play the song for the children. In the particular youtube video selected, the words are on the video.

Questions after listening to and singing the song:

1. What does it mean that "everybody heals with love"?
2. Does everybody want to love? If a person seems **not** to want love, why might that be? *He or she might have been so unloved, like Despereaux, that the person becomes bitter.*
3. When we try to make our heart be "like a glove" does this mean trying to cover up our heart so it is not open to love? **Have a cut-out of a heart and a glove. Place the glove onto the heart so that it is hidden from view.**
4. How can people take the glove off of their hearts to feel love again? **Take the glove off of the heart and display the heart in front of the students as they answer this and rest of the questions.**
5. Let's be those who help others take the glove off of their hearts. How can we help people who are hurting to take the glove off of their hearts to begin loving again? *Take some time to bring out creative ideas here.*
6. "Just let the love, love, love begin." How can we begin to foster *agape* love in our classroom?

## Lesson Four within a Religious Context

As in the previous lessons, the next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas for this lesson within their own Christian religious tradition. We present some general ideas followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

Jesus gave two new commandments: Love God and love others as we love ourselves. When we practice kindness, generosity, and mercy, we show love. *Agape* love (a divine love coming from God) is patient, kind, humble, courteous, unselfish, and grateful. It is truthful. The Bible teaches that love is shown through words, tangible gifts, thoughts, and behaviors. We are able to love others because of God's great love for us. We can learn what it means to love and how to love through grace and faith, by receiving God's love, by getting to know Jesus, and by learning from his life.

### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible verses may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

***John 15:7-9*** Jesus said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you...As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love...Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

***I John 3:1*** How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

***I John 4:7*** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God...God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

***John 13:34, 35*** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.

***I Corinthians 13:1-8, 13, and 14*** And now I will show you the most excellent way.....

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

## An Evaluation Of The Students

- Did the students listen to or read the sections from the book?
- Did the students participate in a class discussion?
- Did the students participate in the “A Songfest: Everybody Needs Love” activity?
- Did the students learn the names of four different forms of love (*agape*, *storge*, *philia*, and *eros*)?
- Did the students learn what is *agape* love?
- Did the students learn how to show *agape* love?
- Did the students learn that *agape* love can be shown through words, gifts, thoughts, and behaviors?
- Did the students learn that we can show this love through both *restraint* when angry (for example, not shouting or being harsh) and a *lavish outpouring*?
- Did the students learn the benefits of *agape* love?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON FOUR**

**Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Five: Is It Genuine Love or False Love?

### The Main Idea of the Lesson

In Lesson Four, the students learned about lavish love or *agape* love. In particular, they learned that lavish love helps a person see the inherent worth in others and that it is demonstrated through patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courteous behavior, and service to others. To love deeply and fully, we must be willing to acknowledge the truth about ourselves, our circumstances, and others.

In this lesson, the students will be taught the importance of remaining clear thinkers regarding the true meaning of love as their hearts become softened toward others through love. A false notion of love can lead a person to fail to see the worth in others, use others to seek pleasure, or allow oneself to be used by others for their own gain. In the name of love, and being quite mistaken, individuals may give up their ability to think for themselves and maintain their personal values, morals, and beliefs thus allowing themselves to be manipulated or they may nurture the false idea that love means getting one's way, being kept comfortable, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, manipulating people for the approval of others.

Genuine love, also known as lavish love or *agape* love, protects others and the self. We love because we see the person's worth. We love because our hearts have been softened from the love of others. With genuine love, a person does not have to behave in a certain way in order to be loved. It would be self serving to attach certain conditions to our love. Genuine love does not desire power over a person. Genuine love does not seek one's own way. Genuine love helps people to grow in maturity, be strong and courageous, and grow in the knowledge of right and wrong, standing in the truth.

### General Objectives

#### *The students will:*

- Learn that love results in a softened heart, but it does **not** result in a softened head (being unthinking or unreflective). Clear thinking remains.
- Learn that false love is manipulative and self-serving.
- Learn that genuine, lavish love protects the giver and receiver of this love. False love puts the giver and receiver of love at risk.

## Behavioral Objectives

### *The students will:*

- Listen to or read chapters 9-12 of the story, *The Tale of Despereaux*
- Participate in a class discussion.
- Participate in “The Loving Mother” activity.

## Materials

The Book entitled ,  
The Tale of Despereaux, chapters 9-12  
Paper, pencil, and crayons

## Procedures

As was the case with the previous lessons, the following procedures have been included to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you to more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met so that the integrity of the lesson may be maintained.

1. Review the previous lesson by telling the students the following: “In the previous lesson, you learned the names of four different types of love: *agape* (a lavish love for all human beings), *storge* (a parent’s love for a child; a child’s love for his or her parent; a sister’s love for a brother), *philia* (a love between friends), and *eros* (the love between married people). We spent most of our time discussing the love that serves as a foundation for all other loves--*agape* or moral love. Do you remember some of the other names we gave *agape* love? *Genuine love*. *Lavish love*. When we love others with an *agape* love, we acknowledge that all people have worth. We do not value people because they can bring us pleasure. We value them because they are people. *Agape* love requires us to give of ourselves for the benefit of others. What does it mean to give of ourselves for others? How do we become able to love? *By being loved by family, friends, teachers, and people*

*of honesty within our communities. How do we show love? Through patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courteous behavior, serving others, and acknowledging truth. We show love with words, gifts, thoughts, and behaviors. With agape love, we do not take away our love if a person disappoints us. We allow others to be human while at the same time we encourage them to grow. Agape love helps each of us to be our best self.”*

2. Introduce today’s lesson. Tell the students that in this lesson they are going to learn about the importance of having a soft heart and a hard head. Ask the students what they think it means to have a soft heart and a hard head. *To understand what genuine love is. To show genuine love. To understand that loving a person does not mean giving in to a person when it is not in his or her best interest, giving a person his or her every desire, or being nice to a person to get what we want. We show genuine love for others when we accept them as they are (flaws and all), we are honest with them, and we do not treat them in a certain way to get what we want.*
3. Read Chapter 9-12 of *The Tale of Despereaux*..
4. Have the students participate in the class discussion. The discussion questions can be found in the Discussion Section.
5. Have the students participate in “The Loving Mother Story” activity. Please see the Activities Section for further instructions.
6. Provide a summary of the main ideas to conclude the lesson. You’ve learned that lavish love helps a person see the inherent worth in others and is demonstrated through patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courteous behavior, and service to others. To love deeply and fully, we must be truthful about ourselves, our circumstances, and others. It is important to remember that when our hearts become softened toward others through love, we do not give up the right to think for ourselves, to be an individual, or to hold to our morals, values, and beliefs. When we love others, we do not let them do whatever they want. Genuine love, also known as lavish or *agape* love, protects others and us. We love because we see the person’s worth. We love because our hearts are soft. We do not love because we want the person to like us. We do not love because we want power over the person. We do not love because we want our way. Genuine love allows us to meet our obligations well, to be strong and courageous individuals who know right from wrong and who live by the truth.

## Discussion Questions for Chapters 9-12 of the Book

This part of the story is about Despereaux being brought before the Mouse Council by his own brother, Furlough. Despereaux's aunt Florence and even his own mother and father do not defend him against the punishment of being thrown to the rats. Despereaux basically is abandoned by his family members, who think they are doing right.

1. What were these chapters telling us today? *Despereaux was brought before the Mouse Council for trial.*
2. Who brought him before the Council? *Furlough, his brother.*
3. Do you think that Furlough **thought** that he himself was doing something that is right or something that is wrong? *He thought that he was doing the right thing.* Was Furlough using a "**hard head**" (thinking through the issue accurately) or a "**soft head**" (not being clear in his thinking)? *He was being soft-headed.*
4. If we asked Furlough, "Why are you bringing your brother, Despereaux, before the Mouse Council?", what do you think Furlough might say? *He probably would say, "I am trying to make Despereaux into a better mouse."* Is this **hard-headed** or **soft-headed** thinking? *It is inaccurate thinking and so is soft-headed thinking.*
5. I have some questions for you about Furlough. Was Furlough showing **generosity** to Despereaux? Why not?
6. Was Furlough showing **kindness** to Despereaux? Why or why not?
7. Was Furlough showing **respect** to Despereaux? Why or why not?
8. Was Furlough **seeing** Despereaux as he really is---as a loving little mouse? *No, all he was seeing was a bad mouse.*
9. Even though Furlough was trying to do what is right toward Despereaux, he was not generous or kind or respectful. Even though he might think he is being loving toward Despereaux, was he being loving? *No.*
10. So, is there a difference between a person **thinking** he is being loving and then **actually being loving**? *Yes. Furlough thought he was doing what is right, but he failed to show the important qualities of love---generosity, kindness, respect, and seeing the truth of the other person. We are calling this soft-headed thinking and he needs to change that.*
11. Look at Despereaux's mother and father in these chapters. Remember his mother's cries (see page 63), "Please...what will happen to him? What will happen to my baby?" Doesn't that sound like a cry of love? *Yes, she cared deeply for her son.* It seems that she has a **soft-heart** toward Despereaux. What is a **soft heart**? *It is one that loves even when it is difficult to do so.* Yet, does his mother have a **soft-head** or a **hard-head** toward Despereaux? *A soft-head because she is not thinking at all clearly about him. Point out to the students that a soft-heart and a hard-head need to work as a team.*
12. Yet, to whom did Despereaux's mother listen? *She listened to the Mouse Council and did not protect or defend her son.* Is she showing **hard-headed** or **soft-headed** thinking? *Soft-headed because she is so inaccurate in what she is concluding about her own son.*
13. Like Furlough, did Antoinette, Despereaux's mother, **think** that she was loving him **even though she was not showing it**? Do you remember what the author told us about what Antoinette **should have said**? Let's read those words again from page 63 because they are word of love. Here is what Antoinette **should have said** if she were showing lavish love toward her son, Despereaux, "Take me instead. I will go to the dungeon in my son's place."

- Why is this lavish love? *It is giving of oneself for others. It is protecting and generous and kind. It is both **soft-hearted feeling** and **hard-headed thinking** and it is good.*
14. Do you see the big difference between **thinking** that you know about love and **actually knowing about love**? *Both Furlough and Antoinette misunderstood love. They did not protect. They let the Council influence their thinking. They were not generous or kind or respectful toward Despereaux.*
  15. What happened to Despereaux when his family misunderstood love and did not protect him? *He was ordered to be delivered to the rats.*
  16. On page 52, the Most Very Honored Head Mouse said that the trial for Despereaux would be “civilized.” What does it mean to be **civilized**? *It means to be orderly and efficient and to follow the rules of the court.*
  17. Sometimes is there a difference between being **loving** and being **civilized**? *Yes, in this case, the Council’s being civilized did not protect Despereaux or show understanding or kindness in any way.*
  18. When people are being **civilized** but are **not being fair or loving**, what should others do about that? *Point out how the “civilized” behavior (such as the Mouse Council’s behavior) is unfair and unloving. Give the people a chance to see that they are **confusing one virtue** (being civilized) **with even more important virtues** such as fairness and love. This takes courage to love in this way by telling the truth.*
  19. Furlough, Lester, and Antoinette all let the power of the Mouse Council be more important to them than protecting and loving Despereaux. What should they have done? *They should have loved Despereaux by standing up courageously for him.*
  20. How does it feel to you to be loved? *Protected, secure, warm.*
  - 21.. How do you show love toward others?
  22. What is **false love**? *It is thinking that you are loving, but then not having generosity, kindness, or respect. False love does not see the truth of whom the other person really is. It does not protect.*
  - 23.. What does false love look like? *It might be civilized but not protecting or caring.*
  24. What is it like to receive false love? *It is unfair, confusing and it hurts.*
  25. What is genuine, lavish love?
  26. How can we show genuine, lavish love to others?
  27. What is the fruit of genuine, lavish love? *Fair treatment, feeling whole, feeling protecting and protected, growing in maturity, experiencing courage by standing in the truth.*
  28. What is it like to receive genuine, lavish love?

### Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **The Loving Mother Story**

**Objective:**

The students will continue to compare genuine love with false love. They will write a new “love story” about Antoinette.

### ***Instructions***

The students will write a new story that demonstrates a *genuine love* between Antoinette and Despereaux.

Ask the students: Do you recall the Greek word for the love between a mother and her child? *Storge*, which is a natural love between mother and child. Antoinette not only can be loving by showing *storge* but also what other kind of love should she be showing toward Despereaux as well? *Agape* or a love of the will in which the person serves the other even when it is painful.

Let the students know that their stories should include the following: 1) pictures that illustrate the story; 2) The virtues of kindness, generosity, humility, serving the other (within reason), and courage.

Start the story where Antoinette pleads for her son (“What will happen to my baby?” on page 63). She is now standing in front of the Mouse Council. What does she think, say, and do as a mother who **lavishly loves her child**? How might the Mouse Council react to her as she stands courageously in lavish love?

## **Lesson Five within a Religious Context**

This section is for those teachers seeking ideas about false and genuine love within their own Christian religious tradition. The general ideas are followed by a Bible passage. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

Sometimes people in the Bible pretend to be respectful and loving even though they have unloving and even evil intent. In contrast are those in the exact same bible passages who show great love in the face of this false love. The genuine love shines brightly as an example for each of us to follow.

### ***Bible Passages***

As in the previous lessons, we have included a section from the Bible that may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

**Matthew 22: 15-22.** In this passage, it says that the Pharisees “took counsel how to entangle him [Jesus].” They were against Jesus. Yet, when they sent “their disciples, along with the Herodians” to Jesus, they did so with a false respect and love. They were trying to trick Jesus, but they referred directly to him as “Teacher” (a great sign of respect) and “true.” They gave Him false compliments by saying to Him that He teachers “the way of God truthfully” and that He does “not regard the position of men” (meaning that He does not respect people based on their social status in this life. He respects and loves them for whom they are---children of God). Despite all of this hypocrisy (Jesus calls them “hypocrites), He takes the time to lovingly instruct them (as he does in the next set of verses in Matthew 22: 23-40). He never stopped teaching, even those who were trying to destroy Him.

### An Evaluation Of The Students

- Did the students listen attentively to or read the story?
- Did the students actively participate in the class discussion?
- Did the students participate in “The Loving Mother Story” activity?
- Did the students learn that love results in a soft heart, but **not** a soft head?
- Did the students learn that false love is self-serving and potentially destructive?
- Did the students learn that genuine, lavish love protects the giver and receiver of love?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON FIVE**

**Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Six:

### Getting Ready to Forgive by Reviewing Lessons 1-5

#### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

This lesson will be the first of a series of lessons in which the students will learn to forgive a person who caused them an unfair hurt. This lesson, in particular, will prepare the students for their own forgiveness journey by introducing them to the “roadmap of forgiveness” detailing the four phases and 20 units of the forgiveness process model in Robert Enright’s book, *Forgiveness Is a Choice*.

As you know, this forgiveness curriculum focuses on lavish love in forgiving. The offering of love (while protecting oneself from further hurt) is a necessary component of forgiveness. A forgiver does not merely reduce anger or move to a position of neutrality toward the offender, but rather demonstrates the worth of the offender through love. Reducing anger is important, but without love it is likely that neither the forgiver nor the forgiven will be restored to wholeness. Neutrality may result in civility toward the offender, but it does not have great potential to restore the offender or offended to wholeness, either. Love has the power to restore the forgiver and the forgiven. It may even change the world.

To forgive with lavish love is not easy. It requires courage to acknowledge the hurt, forego the anger to which we have a right, and offer compassion and kindness to a person we believe does not necessarily deserve it. It takes courage to explore forgiveness and commit to forgiving.

Forgiveness is a process. Beginning the forgiveness process may be something as small as refraining from doing the person harm. Forgiveness is not something that happens suddenly and without effort. When we face the unfair hurt and make a decision and a commitment to love through forgiveness, we are ready to begin the work of forgiveness. The work of forgiveness can be hard and requires will power.

Although forgiveness takes courage and work, there is no need to be discouraged. We can start gradually to love through forgiveness. It is important that the students (any forgiver) be allowed to learn to love in this way, little by little, with no pressure or expectations. There are many ways of proceeding through the forgiveness process.

As we forgive, the effort and the learning can, at times, be difficult—even painful, but it is worthwhile. Forgiveness has been shown to improve a person’s psychological, emotional, mental, and physical health. In addition, interpersonal relationships are often helped. Holding onto anger and resentment, after being unfairly hurt, often prolongs and intensifies hurt. Forgiveness can ease one’s hurt and result in a sense of freedom or what we call “release from emotional prison.” Forgiveness offers hope and healing.

**\*Note: the students will now be learning to forgive a person for themselves. They should not be forced to actually forgive. If any student is hesitant to begin forgiving, he or she may participate in the discussions and activities without actually forgiving.**

## General Objectives

### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn that forgiveness with love can restore the forgiver and forgiven to wholeness.
- ⊕ Learn that we can show love in forgiveness and remain safe.
- ⊕ Learn that love in forgiveness is not easy and requires courage.
- ⊕ Learn that a person who chooses to forgive will have to do the *work* of forgiveness.
- ⊕ Learn that we can love, little by little, a person who was unfair. Forgiveness is a process.
- ⊕ Learn that the effort and learning can be difficult, but they are worthwhile.

## Behavioral Objectives

### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Participate in a class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “Getting Ready to Forgive” activity.
- ⊕ Begin a “Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness” journal.

## Materials

Chalk board and chalk  
Bulletin board  
Notebook, construction paper, glue, markers, and other art supplies

## Procedures

As was the case with the previous lessons, the following procedures have been included to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met.

1. Review the main ideas of the previous lesson. The teacher may want to begin by asking the children the following questions: 1) what does lavish or *agape* have to do with forgiveness? *When we forgive, we are choosing to love one who has been unkind to us;* 2) how is lavish

love shown? *We see the worth of the person and realize that he or she is more than his or her offense. We let go of our anger and offer compassion and benevolence. The mind (thoughts), the heart (feelings), and the actions of the forgiver work together to offer lavish love in forgiveness;* 3) what does this lavish love in forgiveness look like? *It is unconditional (you do not wait for an apology, for the person to suffer enough, or for other conditions to be met), centered on the other (the motivation to forgive is to love the offender), helpful [restores the offender to wholeness by providing the opportunity for renewed friendship and community membership (family, school, place of worship, neighborhood, etc.)], and it sets the person free (the forgiveness is not held over the person's head).* Forgiveness in the face of an injustice is a great challenge, but one that typically reaps great rewards.

2. Introduce today's lesson by telling the students that today they are going to discuss how to begin practicing lavish love *in forgiveness*. In today's lesson the students will learn that lavish love in forgiveness: 1) can restore the forgiver and forgiven to wholeness; 2) be offered while remaining safe; 3) is not easy and requires courage; 4) requires *work*; 5) is possible to learn, little by little; and 6) can be difficult—but worthwhile—to learn and do. The students will continue learning to forgive in the subsequent lessons..
3. Introduce and read (or have the students read) today's story.
4. Conduct the class discussion. The questions can be found in the Discussion section.
5. Have the students participate in the "Getting Ready to Forgive" activity. See the Activities section for further instructions.
6. Conduct the "Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness" journaling exercise. Details are provided in the Activities section of this lesson.
7. Provide a summary of the main ideas to conclude the lesson. Ask the students: a) "When we forgive, is it enough to reduce anger? *It is important that when we forgive, we do **not** merely try to reduce anger or become neutral toward a person who has unfairly hurt us (by neutral we mean that we do not have good or bad feelings or intentions toward the person; we can take or leave him or her), but that we show the worth of that person by offering lavish or genuine love. This is because lowering our anger, while important, may not restore the forgiver and forgiven to wholeness. Likewise, while becoming neutral may help us behave better toward our offender, it is not likely to bring wholeness either to us or the one who hurt us;* b) Is the offering of lavish love, while protecting ourselves from further hurt, a valuable

and necessary part of forgiveness? *Lavish love in forgiveness has power to help and even heal both the forgiver and forgiven. Lavish love has the power to change the world for the better;* c) Is forgiving with lavish love easy? *It takes courage to let go of a need for revenge and offer goodness to a person whom we do not believe necessarily deserves it. Forgiveness does not happen suddenly and without effort. It takes commitment and work. It is important to be patient with ourselves as we learn to love in forgiveness;* 4) Is the effort to forgive worthwhile? *The effort and the learning, though difficult, are worthwhile. Forgiveness can help a person's well-being and relationships. The pain and suffering experienced as we forgive may result in freedom and healing for the forgiver.*

**\*Note: It is important that the students (any forgiver) be allowed to learn to love in this way, little by little, with no pressure or expectations. There is no one particular way to proceed through the forgiveness process.**

### **Discussion Questions Based on Lessons 1-5**

Today we first are going to **review** some important ideas that we have been learning this year about forgiveness and love. This will help each of us if we want to begin forgiving people who are unfair to us.

1. My first question to you goes back to the very first day that we began these lessons. What is **forgiveness**? If you recall, forgiveness is first of all a **moral virtue**. **What is a moral virtue?** *It is striving after what is good and right and avoiding what is bad and wrong. We can **grow** in the moral virtues such as kindness, respect, and generosity if we practice them each day. All of these are examples of moral virtues.*

2. So, then, what is forgiveness as a moral virtue? *A person forgives when he or she has been treated unfairly and then responds by: a) reducing resentment or anger and b) offers mercy to that person (or persons) in the form of kindness, respect, generosity, or even love. This includes a softened heart toward the person and seeing him or her as a genuine human being who is worthy of your kindness, respect, generosity, and love.*

**We recommend bullet-pointing this definition on the board:**

*Forgiveness is a moral virtue.*

*Forgiveness takes place when you are treated unfairly.*

*Forgiveness involves the struggle to get rid of anger toward those who are unfair to you.*

*Forgiveness involves even more than that. It involves offering as much lavish love toward them as you can---kindness, respect, generosity, and seeing their inherent worth.*

*Forgiveness does not mean that you just say, “It’s ok.” You do not make up excuses for those who have been unfair to you.*

3. One of the first steps in forgiving someone who treated you unfairly is **to make a decision to forgive**. What do you think that means---**to make a decision to forgive**? *It means to first know what forgiveness is and then to commit to forgiving the person.*

4. What does it mean to “commit to forgiving a person”? *It means that you will put focus and energy into forgiving.*

5. If you make a commitment to being a good football player (soccer player), what does that mean to commit to that? *It means to try hard, to learn the rules of the game, to practice, and to go ahead and be a player.*

6. It is similar to forgiveness when you make a decision to forgive and commit to forgiveness. *You try hard, you learn the meaning of forgiveness, you practice it and you go ahead as best you can in forgiving the person who was unfair to you.* **Note to the teacher: This is the only place in the curriculum in which we discuss the second of our four phases of forgiveness. The second phase of forgiveness is the Decision to Forgive.**

7. When we forgive, we try to see the **inherent worth** of the other person. What does it mean to see the inherent worth in the other? *It means that we look beyond such superficial issues as how she looks, or how athletic she is, or how rich her parents are.*

8. When we forgive, we try to have empathy for and compassion on the person. This means that we try to soften our hearts toward the one who was unfair to us. **Note to the teacher: This is posed as a statement rather than as a question because we take up the issues of empathy and compassion (which can be difficult to understand) in Lesson 9).**

9. When we forgive, we try to have **lavish love** toward the person. What does it mean to have lavish love? *It means that we are generous, kind, and respectful. It means that we see him or her as a person of worth. We stand courageously in the truth regarding who the person really is.*

## Discussion Questions to Prepare to Forgive

1. Now, let's review what happened to poor Despereaux in Chapters 9-12. Please tell me what happened in this part of the story. *Despereaux was brought before the Mouse Council by his brother, Furlough. His mother, father, and aunt did not protect him and so the Council decided to give him to the rats.*
2. Was Despereaux treated **fairly** by his brother, mother, father, or aunt? *No. They failed to love him by listening too much to the Mouse Council.*
3. Was the Mouse Council **fair** to Despereaux? *No. They did not take the time to hear his story of love. They dismissed him as a trouble-maker.*
4. When is forgiveness appropriate? Is it appropriate when people are **unfair**? *Yes. That is part of the definition of forgiveness, when people are unfair then we can go ahead and start to forgive. Forgiveness always takes place when others are unfair to the one who forgives.*
5. If they were unfair to Despereaux, then he might at some point decide to forgive each of them.
6. Would it be a good choice or not for Despereaux to forgive his father for what he did?
7. Is it enough for Despereaux to stop being angry with his father or would Despereaux need to do more than this? *He would need to **make a decision to forgive** and then to try to see the **inherent worth** in his father and try to **practice lavish love**.*
8. Can a person show love in forgiveness and be safe? How? *Yes. There is a difference between forgiving and reconciling. If the other person is a danger, then the forgiver can keep his or her distance and not reconcile. The forgiver can report another student's unfair behavior to a teacher.*
9. Does it take courage to forgive? Why? Why not? *Yes, because you stand in the truth that you were treated unfairly and then work on being merciful to that person even if you do not feel like being very merciful.*
10. Does forgiveness usually occur immediately? Why? Why not? *No. It can take time and unfold slowly.*
11. What does it mean to "work" at forgiveness? How does a person work at forgiving? *The person has patience as he or she realizes his or her own anger, tries to see the worth in the other, and tries to be loving, which can be difficult at first.*

## Activities

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

### **Getting Ready to Forgive**

#### ***Objective***

The students will think about how to prepare for the decision and commitment to forgive. They will make a list of the things a person must know about the forgiveness process. They will make individual posters or one large poster that outlines forgiveness information important to making the decision and commitment to forgive.

#### ***Instructions***

The students will, as a class, list the things a person should know about the forgiveness process as he or she begins to forgive. The teacher will write the list on the board. The students will then be asked to work individually or in groups to create posters. The teacher will make a display of the posters as a reminder of the ways we can become ready to forgive.

**\*Note: Instead of an art project, the teacher may wish to have the children role play a situation where they help another prepare to forgive. Role play situations could simply involve one person sharing a “pretend” hurt and 1 or 2 other people sharing the importance of forgiving. The 1 or 2 students who are helping will provide the roadmap for forgiving.**

### **Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness**

#### ***Objective***

The students will continue to learn about offering lavish love in forgiveness. They will write in their journals. The journals should not include names or personal details. The students should understand the importance of respecting others’ privacy.

#### ***Instructions***

The students will bring a notebook from home in which they can write or they will staple blank sheets of paper together to make a notebook. They will decorate the “Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness” notebook using construction paper, scraps of fabric, glue, markers, or glitter. The teacher may allow time (daily or weekly) for students to write about their experiences with forgiveness. This may include writing about unfairness, the ways in which they have offered and been offered love, kindness, generosity, and respect, efforts to forgive, and questions or concerns they have about forgiveness.

For today, the students should think about one person who has been unfair to them (but not identify the person by name in the journal) and then briefly write about the injustice. When did the unfairness take place? What happened that was unfair?

## Lesson Six within a Religious Context

This section is for those teachers seeking ideas about forgiveness within a Christian context. The general ideas are followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

Jesus forgave our sins by dying on the cross for each one of us and then being resurrected to eternal life. His lavish love led Him to the cross for you and for me. In other words, His forgiveness cost Him something--His very life. Now that we are His disciples, how are we to forgive others?

### ***Bible Passages***

As in the previous lessons, we have included some Bible passages that may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

**Luke 9: 23-24.** “And he said to all, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.’” In this passage, Jesus is telling us to take up our cross on a daily basis, whatever that cross is. Has someone been unfair to you? You are to take up your cross and forgive that person as best you can on that day.

**John 15: 12-13.** “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” How did Jesus lay down His life for His friends, which is all of humankind? He died on the cross for us. We are now to be willing to bear the pain of other people’s injustices against us by trying to love them even when it is difficult to do so. This does not mean that you go into unsafe situations. You are to keep yourself safe as you try to love those who have been unfair to you.

## Evaluation of the Students

- ⊕ Did the students actively participate in the class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the “Getting Ready to Forgive” activity?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the “Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness” journaling activity?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that forgiveness with lavish love can help the forgiver and the forgiven?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that we can offer lavish love in forgiveness and remain safe?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that forgiveness with lavish love is not easy and requires courage?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that a person must *work* at forgiveness?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that we can learn, little by little, to love in this way?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that the effort and learning can be painful, but they are worthwhile?

**EVALUATION OF LESSON SIX**

**Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught:\_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Seven:

### Seeing the Injustice and Feeling the Anger

#### Main Ideas

Today's lesson addresses anger (healthy versus destructive), its depth and duration (anger can vary from light to serious and may be momentary or long-lasting), positive and negative responses to anger, the effects of anger, and the role of forgiveness in reducing anger and preventing anger that begins to live in one's heart (destructive anger). The students will think about and discuss what one's mind, heart, and actions are like when angry. They will reflect on their personal level of anger toward the person who hurt them (identified in Lesson 6).

We are all familiar with anger. It is, according to Webster's Dictionary, "a violent, revengeful emotion, excited by a real or supposed injury to oneself or others." Anger can serve as a **protection** from further unfair hurt, thus enhancing one's health and well-being, or it can **undermine** one's health and well-being if it begins to deepen and live inside of a person. Whether we are helped or hurt will depend on our attitudes and behaviors when angry. If, when we've experienced an injustice (real or perceived), we show restraint (not causing harm to self, others, or property) and allow the resultant anger to motivate us to seek positive solutions (physical and emotional safety, support, and justice) and eventually to forgive the offender, improved health and well-being may occur. When we respond to injustice and anger in this way, we are offering lavish love. If, on the other hand, we allow anger to take up residence in our hearts, unleash our anger (harming self, others, or property) and either deny, "stuff," or displace our anger, then compromised emotional, psychological, and physical health will likely occur. This type of anger is often destructive to our interpersonal relations.

#### General Objectives

##### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn the difference between an anger that can protect and one that is destructive.
- ⊕ Learn that anger is an emotion of varying depth and duration.
- ⊕ Learn positive responses to anger. These are acts of lavish love.
- ⊕ Learn how anger can be destructive to self and others.
- ⊕ Learn what one's mind, heart, and actions are like when angry.
- ⊕ Learn that forgiveness is a positive way of helping anger to fade.

## Behavioral Objectives

### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Listen to or read the selected parts of *The Tale of Despereaux*.
- ⊕ Participate in a class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Feelings” activity.
- ⊕ Listen to *The Butter Battle Book* and discuss

## Materials

The Book entitled ,  
*The Tale of Despereaux*, chapters 13-15, end of Book The First  
Dr. Seuss’ *The Butter Battle Book* (for Activity 2)  
Drawing paper, pencils and crayons for Activity 2

## Procedures

As was the case with the previous lessons, the following procedures have been included to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met so that the integrity of the lesson may be maintained.

1. Review the main ideas of the previous lesson. Forgiveness is a moral virtue in which we give mercy to those who have hurt us. When we forgive, we see that the person acted unfairly. Even so, when we forgive, we try to see and acknowledge the person’s inherent worth, not because of what the person did but in spite of it. When we forgive, we try to offer lavish love to the person. Forgiveness takes time and courage. It is not easy but it can be a very good thing to do when you are ready to offer forgiveness to someone. **Please help the students understand that when hurt, it is appropriate to seek justice while forgiving. Forgiveness toward a person who has unjustly hurt them does not mean that they cannot seek justice. Forgiveness helps a person to seek true justice rather than revenge.**
2. Introduce today’s lesson. Tell the students that today they are going to discuss *anger*.

Anger is a feeling we've certainly all felt. It is, according to Webster's Dictionary, "a revengeful emotion, excited by a real or supposed injury to oneself or others." When we experience an injustice, whether it was truly unfair or we thought it was unfair, we may experience improved health and well-being if we: a) do **not** act badly in our anger (not causing harm to self, others, or property); b) allow our anger (righteous anger) to motivate us to do good (try to bring physical and emotional safety, support, and justice to ourselves and others); and c) ultimately forgive (love) the offender. If we deliberately hold onto our anger and let it grow, if we deny, "stuff," or put our anger off to others, or if we harm ourselves, others, or property because of our anger, then we may suffer in terms of happiness and health. We may even hurt our relationships with those we love if we hold onto our anger.

1. Ask the students to read (or you read to them) the selected parts of *The Tale of Despereaux*.
2. Conduct a class discussion. The questions can be found in the Discussion section.
3. Have the students participate in the "Let's Take a Look at Our Feelings" activity. Please see the Activity section for further instructions.
4. Have the students listen to and then discuss issues of anger regarding *The Butter Battle Book*.
5. Ask the students the following questions as a review of the main ideas: a) What is anger? *It is a strong emotion that often follows a real or supposed injury to oneself or to others. Anger can be a positive or a negative emotion;* b) What are some of the not-so-good ways we deal with our anger after being unfairly treated? *We keep our anger and let it live inside of us. We cause harm to ourselves, others, or to property. We either deny, "stuff," or put our anger off on others.* This type of reaction to our anger can hurt the way we get along with friends, family, and others. What are some of the positive ways to deal with our anger? *We do not cause harm to self, others, or property. We try to do good (help ourselves and others have physical and emotional safety, support, and justice) and eventually forgive (love) the person who hurt us—whether our anger is light, serious, short- or long-lived.*

## Discussion Questions

As you know, the focus of today's lesson is on the emotion or feeling of anger.

1. What is anger?
2. When is it a right choice to be angry? Why? *Anger is right when we or others have been treated unfairly or unjustly. Anger can help protect us and others from further similar hurt.*
3. When is it **not** a good choice to be angry? Why? *It is not good to be angry when the anger begins to live in our hearts. It is not good to be angry simply because we are uncomfortable, disappointed, or frustrated from not getting our own way.*
4. What might help anger take up residence in our hearts? *If we feed our anger with thoughts of revenge, anger may take up residence in our hearts. It may deepen and grow.*
5. Why is it not a good idea to allow anger to live inside of us? *We may cause harm to ourselves, others, or property because we deny, "stuff," or displace our anger. This could cause us to be less healthy and happy.*
6. What are some not-so-good ways to behave when angry? *Hurt ourselves, others, or property. Pretend we're not angry. Stuff the anger deep inside of us. Take our anger out on others who are not as strong. Why? We are not respecting and loving others.*
7. What are some ways we can behave when angry that will not cause harm to the self, others, or property? How can we show lavish love in anger? *Talk about it. Write about it. Seek justice. Take part in art, music, or exercise. **Forgive.***
8. In today's reading from *The Tale of Despereaux*, who was angry? *Despereaux was angry because he was being led to the dungeon by his own brother, Furlough.*
9. How do we know he was angry? *He kept repeating the word "perfidy," which means that his brother was being very disloyal to him. On page 74, it says that Despereaux, "shivered...shook....sneezed....his teeth chattered....he considered fainting."*
10. Did Despereaux show lavish love in his anger and frustration? *Yes, on page 74 he said, "I will be brave" and he went through all of this torture for the Princess Pea.*
11. Did Despereaux have a right to his or her anger (in calling the others' actions "perfidy")? Why or why not? *Yes, because he was being very unfairly treated.*
12. Is there any person in the story who seemed to have a deep anger, lasting a long time? Who? *Despereaux's brother, Furlough.*
13. Was this deep, long-lasting anger hurting others? How? *Yes, he was not thinking clearly and was delivering his brother, Despereaux, to the dungeon.*  
Let's examine the anger of Furlough, who was holding onto anger so that it was causing hurt to himself and to others.
14. What do you think Furlough's **mind** was like when angry (what were his or her thoughts toward others)? *Confused. He would not let his brother, Despereaux, leave because "rules are rules." (see page 69)*
15. What do you think his **heart** was like when angry (what was he or she feeling)? *Bitter*
16. What was his **behavior** like when angry (how was he or she acting)? *He held his own brother captive.*
17. When you have experienced unfair hurt, how do you **feel**? *Angry. Sad. Bitter.*
18. What is your **mind** like when angry? What is your **heart** like when angry? Is that good for you? Why or why not?
19. What do you do when you're angry? Is that good for you and others? Why or why not?

20. What happens to your anger if you do not admit it or try to find a way to get rid of the anger? *It gets passed along to weaker people, to animals, or to property.*
21. How can you feel less angry after being treated unfairly? *Forgive.*

### **Activity 1**

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **Let's Take a Look at Our Feelings!**

**\*Note: This is a mandatory activity. It should not be skipped. If a student is not yet ready to forgive, however, he or she may participate in forgiveness for the purpose of learning the forgiveness process without actively forgiving.**

#### ***Objective***

The students will think about the person who caused their unfair hurt through a visualization exercise. They will examine their feelings toward the person who caused the unfair hurt.

**\*Note: Some may still be angry, others may feel neutral, and still others may feel just fine about the person. If the children are feeling anger or any other negative emotion, it is important that the students be allowed to express that feeling through the exercise. A key issue for you, as the teacher, is to allow them that negative expression, even though anger and related emotions are usually not part of a classroom activity. Of course, we all must use common sense when it comes to the degree or depth in expressing negative emotions.**

#### ***Instructions***

The teacher should let the students know that the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Feelings” activity is absolutely PRIVATE! As in the previous lesson, the hurt they are thinking about in this activity will not be discussed with one another or with you, the teacher.

The students will examine their feelings toward the person who caused the unfair hurt. Ask the students the following questions (they will answer these questions silently as a private exercise):

1. Are you trying not to think about your feelings toward the person who unfairly hurt you?
2. How are you feeling toward him or her?
3. Are you angry with the person who hurt you?
4. Are you embarrassed at the way the person treated you? Are you trying to hide your embarrassment? How?
5. Are you embarrassed about your own behavior following the unfairness? Are you trying to hide your embarrassment? How?

## Activity 1 (Continued)

### **Let's Take a Look at Our Feelings! (Continued)**

6. Do you think often about the unfairness or the person?
7. Do you now believe that all people are of little worth because of the unfairness? Do you now believe that all people are unkind? Do you now believe that all people are just concerned about themselves?

**Please be sure to conclude the lesson on a positive note. Tell the students that because of forgiveness, they have great hope that their anger will lessen.**

**\*Note: If you would like to do so, please have the children write in their journals at this time. They could reflect on the main ideas of this lesson as they write in the journals. To protect each student's confidentiality, please remind them not to list names or details that could identify anyone upon whom they are reflecting.**

## Activity 2

### Re-visiting a Story from Your Past: Dr. Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book*

Note to the teacher. Some of the students who have had forgiveness education since Grade 1 (in America) or Primary 3 (in Ireland or the United Kingdom) will have read Dr. Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book*. Please read this book aloud to your students with these questions in mind:

1. As I read this book to you, examine carefully the characters' faces. See if they become more peaceful or angrier, more worried, and even frenzied.
2. What is making them so angry and worried? *They are not resolving their differences in a healthy way. They are using brute strength to try to solve the problems.*
3. As they keep trying to solve their problems by brute strength alone, what is the consequence? *They use more and more strength, more and more power.*
4. What does it mean to have a "cycle of revenge," do you think? *As one person seeks revenge, the other person seeks revenge all the more, which makes the first person seek revenge even more, and on and on it goes.*
5. What is the end-point of "cycles of revenge" when nothing but revenge is present? *Destruction.*

6. What is one powerful way to stop “cycles of revenge” so that the characters can live in peace? *Forgiveness.*

7. How does forgiveness break “cycles of revenge”? *Forgiveness puts a stop to destructive anger and allows the people to understand each other, which may lead to a better, more peaceful solution.*

Have the students draw a new ending to the story that is positive and forgiving.

### **Lesson Seven within a Religious Context**

As with previous lessons, the next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas about anger within their own Christian religious tradition. The general ideas are followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

#### ***General Religious Ideas***

We are taught by the Bible, as well as the example of Jesus’ life, that we are not to hold onto our anger or to sin in our anger. Forgiveness can help us avoid the risk of having anger live inside of us and reduce any anger that has already taken up residence in a person’s heart.

#### ***Bible Verses***

As in the previous lessons, we have included some Bible verses that may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

***Hebrews 12: 14*** Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

***James 1:19*** My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

***Psalms 37:8*** Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

## Evaluation of the Students

- ⊕ Did the students learn the difference between a protective and destructive anger?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that anger is an emotion of varying depth and duration?
- ⊕ Did the students learn positive responses to anger? These are acts of lavish love.
- ⊕ Did the students learn how anger can be destructive to self and others?
- ⊕ Did the students learn what one's mind, heart, and actions are like when angry?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that forgiveness is a positive way of helping anger fade?
- ⊕ Did the students listen to or read the selected parts of *The Tale of Despereaux*?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in a class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the "Let's Take a Look at Our Feelings" activity?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in *The Butter Battle Book* activity?

## EVALUATION OF LESSON SEVEN

Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_

The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:

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I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:

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The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:

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The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:

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General Comments:

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## LESSON 8:

### Re-thinking Who the Offender Is by Seeing Inherent Worth in the Person

#### The Main Ideas Of The Lesson

In Lesson Seven, the students began to uncover their anger toward a person who caused them an unfair hurt. “**Uncovering Anger**” is the first of four phases in the forgiveness process.<sup>1</sup> In the one before that, Lesson Six, they began to learn about the second phase in the forgiveness process known as the “**Decision to Forgive**.” In the “Decision to Forgive” phase, the person: 1) realizes that what he or she has done in the past to cope with the hurt hasn’t worked; 2) decide to explore forgiveness, and; 3) become willing to begin the forgiveness process. The students will have, through participation in this forgiveness curriculum, entered into the second phase of the forgiveness process although they may **not** yet be ready to commit to forgive the person. Because we wanted to immediately introduce the students to information that may help them to become ready to forgive, we altered the typical order of introducing the first and second phases of forgiveness. We’ve found that for most people, they make a decision to forgive after acknowledging the anger or sadness following injustice.

Today, the students will begin studying the third phase of the forgiveness process known as the “**Work Phase**.” The first step in doing the work of forgiveness is to begin “changing the mind (thoughts).” This is important because our thinking influences how we interpret and judge other people’s actions. As was discussed earlier, our thinking helps us to accurately determine whether an unfair hurt or injustice has occurred, respond appropriately, and then begin the forgiveness process. Our thinking additionally determines, to a large degree, our success, joy, and well-being. How we ultimately feel and behave toward a person or event is determined by our perception and beliefs about the person or event.<sup>2</sup> It is common for people, without realizing it, to develop patterns of thinking that negatively impact their interpersonal relationships. The most common problems are: 1) generalizing our experiences in one unfair situation to other people or events (we may decide that a person who unfairly hurt us does **not** have worth and cannot be trusted or we may decide that **all people**, given the chance, will similarly behave unfairly.<sup>3</sup> 2) Thinking we’ve been unfairly treated, when we simply did not get our way, and; 3) Thinking we were unfairly treated, but then realizing that the person wasn’t unfair after all--perhaps he or she had an emergency or there was a breakdown in communication.

How do we begin the work of changing our thinking about a person who was unfair within the context of forgiveness? The first step is to take the focus off of ourselves and our anger and place it on the one who was unfair to us. We do this by

<sup>1</sup> Robert Enright (2001). *Forgiveness Is a Choice*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

<sup>2</sup> Ivey, Ivey, and Simek-Morgan (1997). *Counseling and Psychotherapy (Fourth Edition)*. Neidham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Beck (1988). *Love Is Never Enough*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

trying to understand the person. Following are some questions to ask ourselves as we try to understand the person or situation:

1) What was life like for the person when growing up?; 2) What was life like for him or her at the time of the offense?; 3) How do you generally get along with the person?, and; 4) What kind of a person do you see when you recognize he or she is part of the human family? As we begin to understand those who hurt us, we begin to see them with “new eyes.”<sup>4</sup>

**It is important that we help the students see that trying to understand the person does not mean we excuse his or her behavior. The hurt caused by this person was unfair, it is unfair, and it will always be unfair.** When we work to understand the one who hurt us, while being “hard-headed and soft hearted,” we show lavish love in forgiveness toward him or her.

### General Objectives

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn that a first step in forgiveness is *changing one’s thinking (mind)* about the person who hurt us. This involves taking the focus off of ourselves (our anger; our hurt) and placing it on the one who hurt us. We do this through gaining understanding.
- ⊕ Learn that when we work to understand the one who hurt us, we do not excuse, condone, or forget the offense.
- ⊕ Learn that when we work to understand the one who hurt us, we are showing lavish love in forgiveness.

### Behavioral Objectives

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Read, listen to or read the selected parts of the story.
- ⊕ Participate in the class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “Let’s Take Another Look at Our Inner World” activity.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Smedes (1984). Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don’t Deserve. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

## Materials

The Tale of Despereaux, Chapters 16-22

Student Journals and Writing Utensils

## Procedures

We have included the following procedures to serve as guidelines for the teacher. If it will help you more effectively to address the needs of your students, please feel free to make changes in the lesson. It is critically important, however, that you meet the objective of the lesson.

1. Review the main ideas of lesson seven. What is anger? *It is a strong emotion that often follows a real or supposed injury to the self or to others.* Anger can either **add to** or **subtract from** a person's health and well-being. If, when angry because of an unfair hurt, we do not cause harm to ourselves, to others, or to property and if we look for positive ways to deal with our anger (admitting our anger, getting support from others, seeking justice, and forgiving), we may experience improved health and well-being. If, on the other hand, we cause harm to ourselves, others, or property because we deny, "stuff," or displace our anger, then we may experience poorer health and well-being. If we allow anger to begin living inside of us, this is destructive. When we do no harm in anger (to the self, others, and property) and when we find positive ways of dealing with our anger (admitting our anger, getting support from others, seeking justice, and forgiving), we are giving lavish love to the person who hurt us, to self, and to others.
2. Introduce today's lesson. In this lesson, we will begin learning *how to forgive*. The first step is to begin to "change our thinking" about the person who hurt us without pretending, excusing, or condoning (saying the unfairness was all right) any unfairness. We do this by trying to understand the person or the situation. Remember, our *thinking* helps us decide whether we've been treated unfairly or unjustly. If we were treated unfairly, forgiveness can help us get rid of our anger and see that the person who was unfair has *worth*. Our *response*

to that person, even our success, joy, and well-being to a certain extent, also depend on our thinking.<sup>5</sup>

**\*Note: It is important that we help the students see that trying to understand the person does not mean we excuse his or her behavior. The hurt caused by this person was, is, and always will be unfair.**

3. Introduce today's story. The students may read or listen to the story.
4. Conduct the class discussion. See the Discussion section.
5. Have the students participate in the "Let's Take Another Look at Our Inner World" activity. See the Activity section for further instructions.
6. Conclude the lesson by telling the students the following: In this lesson, we began working on *changing our thinking* toward a person who hurt us by trying to understand what life was like for him or her when growing up, what life was like for him or her at the time of the offense, how we usually get along with the person, and whether we are able to see his or her *worth*. In our attempt to understand the person who hurt us, we are offering lavish love.

**\*Note: Please remind the students that when we try to understand the person, it does not mean we excuse the behavior or say that what he or she did was all right. The hurt caused by this person was, is, and always will be unfair.**

### **Discussion Questions for Chapter 16-22, Tale of Despereaux**

1. Who seemed to be the angriest character in Chapter 16? *The rat, Botticelli because he was teaching the other rat, Roscuro, how to make people miserable.*
2. What was his unfair strategy for making people miserable? *He told Roscuro to trick people by telling them what they want to hear, by saying to them, "I forgive you," but not meaning it.*
3. Let us now play a game of pretend with the story. Let us pretend that we are a new prisoner and that Roscuro has been unfair to us by telling us that he will protect us, care for us, and forgive us if we act badly. Let us pretend that we now want to forgive Roscuro for playing this nasty trick on us. We will start to forgive him by trying to understand him, by trying to see his inherent worth. Are you ready?
4. What do you think it was like for Roscuro to grow up in the deep dark dungeon? *It was probably scary. He was surrounded by darkness.*
5. Who were his teachers? Might Botticelli have been one of his teachers? Was it easy or hard for Roscuro to be a student of Botticelli's? *It was probably hard because Botticelli is so bitter and angry and probably taught others how to be bitter and angry.*

<sup>5</sup> Ivey, Ivey, and Simek-Morgan (1997), *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Fourth Edition). Neidham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

6. What did Roscuro seek most of all in this chapter? *He sought light. He wanted to live in the light.*

7. Now, take a good look at Roscuro and who he is. Can you see that he grew up in darkness and was probably scared? Do you see that he had a bad teacher, Botticelli, who taught him to be mean? Do you see a **new Roscuro**, who is scared and does not want to live in darkness all the time? In Chapter 17, what fascinated Roscuro the most? *The light from up above. He was seeking goodness.*

8. Now, let's look at Chapter 20, when Roscuro was on the chandelier and the princess saw him. What was her reaction? *She condemned him without knowing him.* What was it like for Roscuro when the princess shouted, "A rat" on page 107? *He saw himself as disgusting just because he was a rat.*

9. In Chapter 21, Roscuro saw the princess glare at him. How did he react? *On page 113 it says that it broke his heart. "And the heart of any living thing can be broken."* **Do you see Roscuro in a new light?**

10. When you see Roscuro in a new light---frightened, led down the wrong path by Botticelli, and truly wanting to live in the light, hated for whom he is, how would you describe Roscuro now? Is he all bad or does he have **inherent worth**?

11. If Roscuro were a human being, could you see that he is part of the human family? What does it mean to be "part of the human family"? *It means that he shares something in common with all people, even with you and me.*

Sometimes when a person has behaved unfairly, we may choose to see the deep worth of the person who was unfair. We choose to see that the person is more than what he or she has done. We try to understand the person and event without excusing, condoning, pretending, or denying the unfairness. When we truly see the person as worthwhile and love him or her despite unfairness, then we will call this our "*cover of love.*"

11. Would it be difficult to have a *cover of love* for a person who was unfair, even for Roscuro the rat? Why or why not? **Could you forgive him if you were the prisoner to whom Roscuro was very mean? Why or why not?**

12. If no one has a "cover of love" for Roscuro, what will his life be like? *He may stay miserable and keep hurting people.* Look at what happens to him in Chapter 22: "*There are those hearts, reader, that never mend again once they are broken. Or if they do mend, they heal themselves in a crooked and lopsided way, as if sewn together by a careless craftsman. Such was the fate of Chiaroscuro.*" **Could you forgive him now?**

Let's now turn to the "Let's Take Another Look at Our Inner World" activity. Think about the person who hurt you ( the person identified earlier in the "Let's Take A Look at Our Inner World" activity). You are now going to begin doing the "work" of forgiveness. The first work of forgiveness is to begin **trying to understand the person who was unfair**. We have found that through understanding, your thoughts about him or her may change. **Note\* Please emphasize to the children that when we try to understand a person who hurt us, it does not mean that what he or she did is now all right.**

## Activities

### Let's Take Another Look at Our Inner World

**\*THIS IS A MANDATORY ACTIVITY. IT SHOULD NOT BE SKIPPED. However, if any student is not yet ready to forgive, he or she may be allowed to simply listen to the activity without doing the internal work.\***

#### ***Objectives:***

The students will continue to learn about the ways in which our thoughts affect our feelings and behavior. They will learn how to do the beginning work of forgiveness, known as *changing one's thinking (mind)*. They may write in their journals following the visualization activity.

#### ***Instructions:***

Ask the students to **answer silently in private, without discussing**, the following questions:

1. What was life like for the person who unfairly hurt you when he or she was growing up? This may or may not apply. We've found, however, that often the people who cause unfair hurt are family members.
2. What was life like for the person when he or she was unfair to you—at the time of the unfair act?
3. How do you **generally** get along with this person?
4. Are you able to see the *deep worth* of the person who was unfair?
5. Can you see him or her as part of the human family?

You may want to provide time for the students to write in their "Helping Me—Helping You through Forgiveness" journals. A possible question is: *How* can we begin to see in a new way the person who was unfair—How can we begin to see with a loving heart? It may be helpful for the students to record, in their journals, the questions above so that they can refer to them in the future. **It is very important that the students leave all names out of the journal to protect the privacy of all involved. You may want to play background music and/or let the students sit on the floor as they write in their journals.**

## Lesson Eight within a Religious Context

As with the previous lessons, the next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas about understanding the person and situation within their own Christian religious tradition. We present some general ideas followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

The Bible teaches that all people were created by God and that we are to lavishly love ALL people, even those who are unkind to us. God loves ALL people (those who do evil and those who do good) and at ALL times.

### ***Bible Story and Verses***

**Matthew 5:43-45** Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

## An Evaluation Of The Students

- ⊕ Did the students listen to or read the selected part of the story?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the class discussion?
- ⊖ Did the students participate in the “Let’s Take Another Look At Our Inner World” activity?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that a first step in the *work* of forgiveness is *changing one’s thinking (mind)* about the person who hurt us?
- ⊖ Did the students learn that we can change our thinking about someone who hurt us by trying to understand him or her?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that when we work to understand the one who hurt us, we do not excuse, condone, or deny the unfairness. We do not forget the offense.
- ⊕ Did the students learn that when we work to understand the one who hurt us, we are showing lavish love (we called this the “cover of love” here) in forgiveness?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON EIGHT**

**Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Nine

### Softening the Heart Through Loving Forgiveness

#### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

In today's lesson, the students will continue the work of forgiveness with an awareness that the speed with which they proceed through the forgiveness process is unique for each person. They will think about their feelings toward the person who was unfair and reflect on any softening of their heart toward him or her as they "change their thinking".

Feelings that often emerge as we forgive are: empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love. **Empathy** is feeling the same feelings as another person. Webster says, "It is the identification with and understanding of the feelings of another person." This often occurs within the context of forgiveness when we become willing to "step inside the shoes" of the person who caused the hurt. We may share feelings of sadness, anger, or happiness with him or her. **Sympathy** is, according to Webster's Dictionary, a mutual understanding or affection during a time of sadness or loss. For example, we may see that the person who was unfair is angry and then feel sorry for him or her. As we gain understanding about the person and the unfairness and as we acknowledge that the person has hurt him- or herself, a feeling of compassion may emerge.

**Compassion**, within the context of forgiveness, is a willingness to suffer with the one who caused the hurt. In other words, a person who does and continues to do wrong often is hurting inside (perhaps others were unfair to this person, causing anger and discontent). As a person's heart continues to soften through forgiveness, he or she may notice feelings of lavish love emerging. **Lavish love** includes empathy, sympathy, and compassion.

How does a person keep him- or herself safe as the heart is softened toward the person who caused an unfair hurt? One does **not** have to enter into a relationship with the person as his or her heart softens if it is **not** safe to do so. There are many ways we can **safely** feel (and offer) empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love. Here are some examples of safe ways to feel and offer empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love: Any time we do **not** deny, "stuff," or push away the pain, we are showing lavish love toward others and ourselves; any time we do **not** engage in self-destructive behavior, we are showing lavish love toward others and ourselves. Any time we accept the pain rather than passing it on to those less powerful or "safe" (loved ones, those younger or smaller), we are showing lavish love toward others and ourselves.

Our research has shown that a softened heart toward the person who caused the hurt is a very important aspect of the healing process. Those who become able to offer empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love are often pleasantly surprised to discover the freedom that accompanies **genuine forgiveness**. Forgiveness, offered as lavish love, to a person who doesn't necessarily deserve it and at a time when it is most difficult to do so, can restore the giver and the receiver to wholeness.

**A note to the teacher: Please be aware that many individuals, at the beginning of the forgiveness process, have difficulty believing that empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love toward a person who was deeply unfair to them should be fostered. These same people, however, as they begin to see the offending person differently (with new eyes; through a different lens) often develop positive feelings toward him or her through forgiveness. People’s willingness to “soften the heart” toward the one who was unfair may depend on the depth of the hurt and how long ago it occurred. We ask you to remain fully aware of this as you introduce the concept of changing the heart through lavish love and forgiveness.**

### **General Objectives**

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn what it means to show empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love within the context of forgiveness.
- ⊕ Learn that these positive feelings often emerge naturally once we gain understanding of the one who was unfair to us and even an understanding of the unfair event.
- ⊕ Learn that we can soften our hearts toward the offender and remain safe.
- ⊕ Learn that “lavish love in forgiveness” is healing, freeing, and restorative.
- ⊕ Learn that it is not easy to foster empathy, sympathy, compassion, or love toward an offender.

### **Behavioral Objectives**

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Read or listen to the selected parts of the story.
- ⊕ Participate in a class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “How Warm Is My Heart” activity.

### **Materials**

*The Tale of Despereaux*, chapters 24-38 (pages 125-199)

Paper and Markers

## Procedures

As was the case with the previous lessons, the following procedures have been included to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you to more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met so that the integrity of the lesson may be maintained.

1. Review the main ideas of the previous lesson. In the previous lesson we began the work of forgiving the person we thought about in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World.”.
  - What work of forgiving did we do in Lesson Eight? *We began to “change our thinking” about the person who unfairly hurt us. We began to understand the person apart from his or her unfair behavior. We began to understand the unfairness without excusing, condoning, denying, or pretending.*
  - Why is this important? *Our thinking affects how we view people and events. How we think about a person will influence our emotions and behaviors. Our thinking helps us know whether an unfair hurt or injustice has occurred. Our thinking affects our responses to a person or event. Our thinking determines, to a large degree, our success, joy, and well-being.*
  - How did we learn to change our thinking toward the person who hurt us? *We took our eyes off of ourselves and put them on the person who hurt us by trying to understand such things as: 1) What was life like for him or her when growing up; 2) What was life like for him or her at the time of the offense; 3) What has the relationship usually been like with him or her, and; 4) Do you see a different person when you think of him or her being a part of the human family? **As in the previous lesson, please remind the students that when we try to understand the person, we are not excusing, condoning, or denying the unfair behavior. The hurt caused by this person was unfair, it is unfair, and it will always be unfair. A person can begin to *understand the one who caused the hurt* and remain safe. One does not have to become friends with the person to gain understanding.***
2. Introduce today’s lesson. Let the students know that today they will be learning how hearts often begin to *soften* toward a person who was unfair through forgiveness. They will also learn that warm feelings like empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love

often grow out of these *softened hearts* in forgiveness. Discuss the meanings of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love. What is empathy? *Empathy is feeling the same feelings as another person. This often occurs within the context of forgiveness when we become willing to “step inside the shoes” of the person who caused the hurt. We may feel sad, angry or happy with him or her.* What is sympathy? *Sympathy is when we feel sorry for a person. We may see the person’s anger and feel sorry for him or her.* What is compassion? *It is suffering with the one who caused the hurt.* What is lavish love within the context of forgiveness? *It is empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Lavish love takes our eyes off the self and puts them lovingly on the one who was unfair.*

3. Read or listen to a portion of the story.
4. Conduct a class discussion. Please see the Discussion Section.
5. Have the students participate in the “How Warm Is My Heart?” activity. Please see the Activities Section for further instructions.
6. Provide a summary of the main ideas to conclude the lesson. Today we began to learn about how a person’s *heart* often *softens* toward one who was unfair through forgiveness. We were especially interested in *your feelings* toward the person you identified in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity.

- How can we *soften our hearts* toward an unfair person? *As we gain understanding by doing the work of forgiveness (without excusing, condoning, or denying), these feelings often develop.*
- What are some of the feelings that grow out of a softened heart? *Empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love.*
- What is empathy? *Empathy is feeling the same feelings as another person. We may feel sad, angry or happy with him or her.*
- What is sympathy? *Sympathy is when we feel sorry for a person. It is a mutual understanding or affection during a time of sadness according to Webster’s Dictionary. We may see the person’s anger and feel sorry for him or her.*
- What is compassion? *Compassion is suffering with the one who caused the hurt. We see that the person has made wrong choices and this has hurt him or her.*

- What does it mean to show lavish love, within the context of forgiveness? *Lavish love is empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Lavish love takes our eyes off of the self and puts them on the one who was unfair.*
- Can we have a softened heart toward a person who unfairly hurt us and remain safe? In what ways? *We do not have to be friends with the person if he or she still cannot be trusted to behave well. We can only be around the person when others are present.*
- **Lavish love in forgiveness** helps a person heal. Forgiveness, offered as lavish love to a person who doesn't necessarily deserve it and at a time when it is most difficult to do so, offers freedom from sad or angry feelings and makes the giver and receiver of forgiveness feel whole. We can soften our hearts in lavish love as we forgive without putting ourselves at risk to be hurt again by the same person.

### **Discussion Questions for Chapters 24-38 of The Tale of Despereaux**

**Note to the teacher: This lesson requires a lot of reading and so you might want to allow a few days for the students to do the reading or for you to read to them. As they read, please have the students focus specifically on Miggery Sow's childhood, how unfairly she was treated, and the consequences of that unfair treatment (excessive ambition and insensitivity toward the Princess). Have them then focus on the Princess' empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love as she forgives Miggery in Chapter 38 (especially page 198).**

1. Let's begin the discussion near the end of the reading, when Princess Pea forgave Miggery for her unjust behavior. What did Miggery do that was so unfair to Princess Pea? *She took her captive and brought her to the dungeon.*
2. What did Princess Pea do in response to all of this injustice (see page 198). *She forgave Miggery even though she had taken her captive.*
3. Did the Princess have a good understanding of Miggery? *Yes, she saw that she wanted to be a princess and was going about it in the wrong way.*
4. Let us now pretend, as we did in Lesson 8. Let us pretend that we are the ones who are being led captive by Miggery. Our goal is to soften our hearts toward Miggery so that we can forgive her. One way to soften our hearts is to understand Miggery as best we can. **Let's take a look at how Miggery Sow grew up.** We can find the answers in Chapters 25-28. Please tell me some of the deep injustices she experienced while growing up. Following is a list of injustices that Miggery endured as a child:
  - a) On page 126, Miggery's mother was dying. Miggery, in her childhood innocence, asked that her mother stay with her. Let's read together what her mother said: "*Ah, child, and what does it matter what you are wanting?*" Do you think that this hurt Miggery's heart? *Yes because she loved her mother and her mother insulted her. It was one of her mother's last words to her--- "what does it matter what you are wanting?"*

- b) On page 126, soon after her mother died, Miggery was sold by her father for “a handful of cigarettes, a red tablecloth, and a hen.” Can you image a father selling his daughter? And while she was mourning the death of her own mother?
- c) On page 128, we read how her “uncle,” the man who bought Miggery, overworked her and never praised her.
- d) On page 129, we read that this “uncle” hit her many, many times on her ears. Her ears became disfigured because of the blows he gave her to her ears.
- e) On page 131 we read that on her seventh birthday, Miggery’s “uncle” did not give her a birthday party.
- f) On page 137, Miggery’s “uncle” called her “an ugly, dumb thing like you.”

- g) On page 145 we read that Miggery goes to the castle to be a servant and the other servants do not see her inherent worth. She is disrespected. See, for example, page 151 where Louise tells her that she took too long to deliver thread.
- h) On page 167, we read that Roscuro tricked Miggery into liking him. He took advantage of her dream to be a princess. Why did she want to be a princess, do you think? *She wanted, in her dream to escape all of the loneliness and disrespect that she received as a child.* Is your heart starting to soften toward Miggery when you see that all she was trying to do at first was to escape all of the pain that others gave to her?
5. When you step inside Miggery’s shoes, how is she feeling inside? *She is lonely and confused.*
6. Does she like herself? *Probably not because of the bad things she is doing to the princess.*
7. Can you feel her dislike for herself? If you can, this is **empathy**---to feel what another is feeling.
8. Let us now, with this knowledge, try to have **sympathy** toward Miggery. What is **sympathy**? *Sympathy is when we feel sorry for a person. It is a mutual understanding or affection during a time of sadness. We may see the person’s anger and feel sorry for him or her.* Can you feel any sorrow for Miggery, for how she was treated and raised? Can you feel sorry for her that she is going about her dream in such a wrong way?
9. Now, let’s try to have **compassion** on Miggery, just as the princess does. What is compassion? *Compassion is when you suffer along with the other person who is hurting.* Listen carefully as I read the paragraphs from pages 197 (starting with the final paragraph, “In this story, reader, we have talked about the heart of the mouse...” to the end of page 199. [Please read that passage.] Now ask the students: Is your heart soft toward Miggery as the Princess’ heart is soft toward her? The softened heart contains **empathy, sympathy, and compassion** for Miggery. All of this together shows **lavish love** toward her.
10. How was Princess Pea able to forgive Miggery for such behavior as taking her captive? *The princess had empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love for her.*
11. Do you think that it is easy to feel empathy, sympathy, and compassion toward a person who hurt you? *No because when we are angry it can take time to let go of that anger and to have a softer heart.*
12. Do we need patience if we are to have a softened heart toward someone who hurt us deeply? *Yes, it usually takes time for these feelings to develop.*
13. Is it possible to have a softened heart toward one who hurts us and remain safe? How?
14. What are some positive things that might happen for a person who has been hurt, who has been carrying deep anger, who manages to develop a softened heart toward the one who caused the hurt? *The anger might fade. Their relationships may improve. They may feel happier.*

15. Do you think that other people benefit besides the forgiver and forgiven when the forgiver shows lavish love? Why?

### Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **How Warm Is My Heart?**

##### ***Objective:***

The students will continue to learn how positive emotions can emerge toward a person who treated them unfairly as they gain understanding about the person and the event through forgiveness. They will compare the effects of love with the effects of anger.

##### ***Instructions:***

Ask the students the following questions:

What do you think will happen to the heart if it is fed by anger?

*It will get cold and hard. It may get colder and harder than when the hurt first occurred.*

What will happen to the heart if it is fed with love and forgiveness? *It will remain (or become) warm and loving.*

Tell the students that our own hearts can become colder or warmer toward a person depending on the choices we make following unfairness. Loving forgiveness leads to a warm and softened heart. A lack of love and forgiveness with continued anger leads to a cold and hard heart.

Now ask the students to think about the person in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity.

How does your heart feel toward this person?

As we’ve been doing the work of forgiveness, has your heart been growing warmer or colder?

Ask each student to draw a picture of a thermometer (a thermometer of feelings) and to color in the thermometer to reflect the warmth or coldness of their hearts toward the person who was unfair. Note to the teacher: Please have the students put their names on their work and collect and save the thermometer drawing for Lesson 10, where they will be used again.

## Lesson Nine within a Religious Context

The next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas about a softened heart within the context of forgiveness within their own Christian religious tradition. The general ideas are followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

The Bible teaches that we are to love others with a softened heart as God has loved us. When we forgive, we are lavishly loving a person at a time that it is the most difficult to love.

### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible verses may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

***1 John 3:1-3*** How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are.

***Proverbs 4:23*** Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. (In other words, we need to be aware of anger that is building in us so that we can continue to love others, even those who are unfair to us).

## An Evaluation Of The Students

- ⊕ Did the students read the selected parts of the story?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in a class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the “How Warm Is My Heart” activity?
- ⊕ Did the students learn what it means to show empathy, sympathy, compassion, and/or love within the context of forgiveness?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that these positive feelings often emerge naturally and perhaps slowly once we work to understand our offender through forgiveness?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that it is not easy to foster empathy, sympathy, compassion, or love toward an offender?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that “lavish love in forgiveness” is healing, freeing, and restorative?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that they can safely soften their hearts toward the one who hurt them?

**AN EVALUATION OF LESSON NINE**

**Please indicate the date that this Lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Ten:

### Inherent Worth and Empathy in Forgiveness Revisited

#### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

In lessons eight and nine we had the students engage both in thinking exercises and feeling exercises that are connected to forgiveness. Because these approaches to forgiveness are so important, we will be repeating them here by combining the thinking exercises (seeing the inherent worth in someone who acted unjustly) and the feeling exercises (feeling empathy, sympathy, compassion, and even lavish love which is more than a feeling). We will not be repeating the same parts of the story. We will only be repeating the themes of inherent worth and empathy and the related emotions. We are doing this to solidify the importance of these themes as your students learn to forgive.

#### General Objectives

##### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn once again that to forgive is to struggle to see the inherent worth of the one who was unfair
- ⊕ Learn once again that to forgive is to struggle to feel empathy, sympathy, and compassion toward the one who was unfair.
- ⊕ Learn that when we work to understand the person and to feel such feelings, we are showing lavish love in forgiveness.

#### Behavioral Objectives

##### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Read or listen to the selected story.
- ⊕ Participate in the class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “How Warm Is My Heart *Now?*” activity.

## Materials

The Tale of Despereaux, Chapters 39-45

The previously drawn thermometers which you collected from Lesson 9

Student journals and writing utensils

## Procedures

As was the case with the previous lessons, the following procedures have been included to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you to more effectively meet the needs of your students. We ask that you please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met so that the integrity of the lesson may be maintained.

1. Review the main ideas of the previous two lessons. In Lesson 8 we began the work of forgiving the person we thought about in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity.

- What work of forgiving did we do in Lesson Eight? *We began to “change our thinking” about the person who unfairly hurt us. We began to understand the person apart from his or her unfair behavior. We began to understand the unfairness without excusing, condoning, denying, or pretending.*
- Why is this important? *Our thinking affects how we view people and events. How we think about a person will influence our emotions and behaviors. Our thinking helps us know whether an unfair hurt or injustice has occurred. Our thinking affects our responses to a person or event. Our thinking determines, to a large degree, our success, joy, and well-being.*
- How did we learn to change our thinking toward the person who hurt us? *We took our eyes off of ourselves and put them on the person who hurt us by trying to understand such things as: 1) What was life like for him or her when growing up; 2) What was life like for him or her at the time of the offense; 3) What has the relationship usually been like with him or her, and; 4) Do you see this person in a new light when you think of him or her being a part of the human family? **As in the***

previous lesson, please remind the students that when we try to understand the person, we are not excusing, condoning, or denying the unfair behavior. The hurt caused by this person was unfair, it is unfair, and it will always be unfair. A person can begin to *understand the one who caused the hurt* and remain safe. One does not have to become friends with the person (if he or she is a danger to you) to gain understanding.

- What work of forgiving did we learn in Lesson 9? *We began to warm our heart toward a person who has been unfair to us.*
- Why is this important? *If we are to forgive, we should consider being merciful toward the one who hurt us. One way to show this mercy is to try to respond with gentler emotions than anger or bitterness*
- How did we learn to change our thinking toward the person who hurt us? *We tried to practice empathy, sympathy, and compassion toward the person who was unfair. All of this together is part of lavish love toward him or her.*

2. Introduce today's lesson. Let the students know that today they will once again have the opportunity to explore the thinking and feeling that are part of forgiveness. They will try to see the inherent worth of those who are unfair. This should be done in a context of safety---the students need to protect themselves from others who may be harmful by their actions. They will also learn once again that warm feelings like empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love often grow out of these *softened hearts* in forgiveness. Discuss the meanings of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love. What is empathy? *Empathy is feeling the same feelings as another person. This often occurs within the context of forgiveness when we become willing to "step inside the shoes" of the person who caused the hurt. We may feel sad, angry or happy with him or her.* What is sympathy? *Sympathy is when we feel sorry for a person. We may see the person's anger and feel sorry for him or her.* What is compassion? *It is suffering with the one who caused the hurt.* What is lavish love within the context of forgiveness? *It is empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Lavish love takes our eyes off the self and puts them lovingly on the one who was unfair.*

3. Read or listen to a portion of the story.

4. Conduct a class discussion. Please see the Discussion Section.

5. Have the students participate in the “How Warm Is My Heart *Now*?” activity. Please see the Activities Section for further instructions.

6. Provide a summary of the main ideas to conclude the lesson. Today we continued to learn about how to see an unfair person in a new light by thinking of his or her inherent worth. We also continued to learn that in forgiveness a person’s *heart* often *softens* toward one who was unfair. We were especially interested in *your feelings* toward the person you identified in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity.

- How can we begin to see the **inherent worth** of those who are unfair to us? *As we strive to see that he or she, despite what was done, is unique and irreplaceable in this world. He or she might be scared or bitter. Each person needs love in this world.*
- How can we **soften our hearts** toward an unfair person? *As we gain understanding by doing the work of forgiveness (without excusing, condoning, or denying), these feelings often show up.*
- What are some of the feelings that grow out of a softened heart? *Empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love.*
- Can we see the inherent worth and have a softened heart toward a person who unfairly hurt us and remain safe? In what ways? *We do not have to be friends with the person if he or she still cannot be trusted to behave well. We can only be around the person when others are present.*
- **Lavish love in forgiveness** helps a person heal from angry, bitter emotions. Forgiveness, offered as lavish love to a person who doesn’t necessarily deserve it, is an act of mercy. You are having mercy on the one who was unfair. We can soften our hearts in lavish love as we forgive without putting ourselves at risk to be hurt again by the same person.

### **Discussion Questions for Chapters 39-45 of The Tale of Despereaux**

1. Do you remember how Despereaux’s father, Lester, treated him in Chapter 10 when Despereaux was condemned by the Mouse Council? Let us read what happened on page 51 [near the bottom]: “*Despereaux dropped Furlough’s tail. He looked up at the members of the Mouse Council. His father met his gaze and then shook his head and looked away. Despereaux turned and faced the sea of mice.*” Do you recall that Lester did not try to save Despereaux? *He treated his son very unfairly.*

2. Now, let's turn to Chapter 40, page 205. Despereaux and Lester meet each other after Lester thought he would never see his son again. How does Despereaux see his father? *"Despereaux looked at this father and saw an old mouse whose fur was shot through with gray. How could that be? Despereaux had been gone only a few days, but his father seemed to have aged many years in his absence."*
3. Why do you think Lester seemed so old only after only a few days? *He had condemned his own son to death and that was so hard on Lester that he aged many years in only a few days.*
4. Did Despereaux see this in his father? Do you think Despereaux saw how much pain and **guilt** his father was carrying around inside of him? Might this thought by Despereaux help him to forgive his father? How might it help him? *He would see that his father was very sorry for not having the courage to save his own son. He would see the great deal of emotional pain that his father was carrying inside him.*
5. Do you think that Despereaux saw the **inherent worth** in his father? Why or why not? *On page 208, Despereaux forgives his father. On page 207, Despereaux sees his father as he trembles and holds his paws in front of him as a sign of humility. He sees a father who is broken with pain and he still wants to love his father. This shows that Despereaux sees his father as having great worth in spite of his earlier injustice.*
6. On pages 207 and 208, the author of the book says that forgiveness is a wonderful thing, something powerful and wonderful and loving. The author also says that this kind of forgiveness is ridiculous. Why do you think the author calls forgiveness ridiculous? *Because it is a lavish act of mercy in that Lester does not deserve forgiveness for condemning his son to death.*
7. What is mercy? *It is an act of love by giving someone what they do not deserve.* Is mercy a good thing? *Yes, because it is showing compassion and love even in the face of injustice and hurt.*
8. Let us now look at Despereaux's feelings. Is he showing **empathy** to Lester? [Please re-read pages 207 (starting with "Despereaux looked at this father, at his gray-streaked fur...") and read to page 208 where Despereaux says, "I forgive you, Pa."] *He is probably feeling empathy because he sees his father's deep pain of sadness and guilt.*
9. Is Despereaux showing **sympathy** toward his father? *Yes, because his own heart was breaking. He was feeling very badly that his father was feeling so sad.*
10. Is Despereaux showing **compassion** toward his father? *He seems to be feeling compassion because he is willing to suffer with Lester, who caused the hurt. Despereaux sees that Lester has made wrong choices and this has hurt him.*
11. Point out to the students that the author is aware that Despereaux is showing lavish love toward Lester. Please read this sentence to the students from page 207: *"Forgiveness, reader, is, I think, something very much like hope and love, a powerful, wonderful thing."*
12. Please turn to Chapter 44. Here is one more opportunity for Despereaux to forgive. What injustice happens to Despereaux in this chapter? Cook laughed at Despereaux and it hurt.
13. Why do you think that Cook's laughter at him hurt Despereaux so much? *She was not seeing his inherent worth. She was judging him by (page 229) "a needle tied around his waist, a mouse with no tail." She was judging him by his appearance, not by who he is.*
14. If Despereaux is to forgive Cook for not respecting or loving him, what thoughts could he think about her to help him see her worth? *He could see that she was very frightened, thinking that she was going to be thrown in prison for making soup and owning a spoon.*
15. If he stepped inside of her shoes and tried to have empathy, what feelings might she have had inside of her when she said the mean things about Despereaux? *She was scared and she was*

*relieved that she would not be thrown in prison. She was not thinking about Despereaux as much as she was thinking only about herself.*

16. What might Despereaux's compassion look like if he decided to forgive Cook? *He could see and appreciate her fear and suffer along with her in that fear.*

### **Activity**

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

#### **How Warm Is My Heart Now?**

##### ***Objective:***

The students will continue to learn how positive emotions can emerge toward a person who treated them unfairly as they gain understanding about the person and the event through forgiveness. They once again will compare the effects of love with the effects of anger.

##### ***Instructions:***

Please pass out the thermometers which the students drew for Lesson 9. Ask the students the following questions:

What will happen to the heart if it is fed more and more with love and forgiveness? *It may remain warm and loving or even grow bigger in warmth and love. Sometimes a person gets angrier before he or she grows more loving.*

Ask the students once again to think about the person in the "Let's Take a Look at Our Inner World" activity.

How does your heart feel toward this person now that you have done more work on forgiveness? As we've been doing the work of forgiveness, has your heart been growing warmer or colder?

Hand back to the students their thermometers from Lesson 9. Have another sheet of paper (or have them draw alongside the previously-drawn thermometer) another one that reflects their current level of coldness or warmth. Ask each student to draw a new picture of a thermometer (the thermometer of feelings) and to color in the thermometer to reflect the warmth or coldness of their hearts toward the person who was unfair. Compare the previous drawing and the newer drawing. Note to the teacher: Sometimes, before forgiveness is complete, a person may become angrier than before. Make room for this in your students without subtly condemning or putting pressure on them to grow in love.

## Lesson Ten within a Religious Context

The next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas about lavish love within the context of forgiveness within their own Christian religious tradition. The general ideas are followed by some specific Bible verses. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

### ***General Religious Ideas***

The Bible teaches that we are to love others as God has loved us. When we forgive, we are lavishly loving a person at a time that it is the most difficult to love.

### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible verses and stories may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

**Matthew 5: 38-48.** These New Testament passages are some of the more difficult to put into practice because they represent a difficult path to holiness. Please point out the following challenges to us all, which take place in the context of unfairness:

- a) In verse 39 we are to “turn to him the other” when someone strikes us on the cheek. The point is not to be weak and defenseless. The point is to have mercy and sometimes our mercy helps the other to see his unfairness and to correct it. Our forgiving may help the unjust person to repent. At the same time, we are to be fair and protect ourselves;
- b) If someone takes your coat, you are to give your cloak as well. This passage again concerns mercy, being generous in the face of injustice. To forgive is to be merciful and generous;
- c) If someone tells you to go one mile, you are to be merciful and generous and go two miles even if it is not fair.
- d) You are to love your enemy and not hate him as it says in verses 43 and 44.
- e) With what attitude are we to do this? See verses 46 and 47. We are to love even those who seem unlovable. Why? See verse 45 where it states that the Father loves us all without discriminating (He makes the sun shine on us all and the rain fall on all of us. We are all children of God. As He loves us, we are to love, by seeing others’ inherent worth, by having compassion on them, and by lavishly loving them.)
- f) The entire point of these verses is summed up in verse 48: We are to strive to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. If we are to be sons and daughters of God (made in the image and likeness of God), then we need to look to Jesus as our example and love those who are unjust to us. We need to have Jesus’ grace to love those who are unfair to us. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15: 5).

## Evaluation of the Students

- ⊕ Did the students listen to or read the selected parts of the story?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the “Let’s Take Another Look at Our Inner World” activity?
- ⊕ Did the students reflect on the *work* of forgiveness which at first is *changing one’s thinking (mind)* about the person who hurt us?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that we can change our thinking about an offender by trying to understand him or her?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that when we work to understand the one who hurt us, we do not excuse, condone, or deny the unfairness? We do not forget the offense.
- ⊕ Did the students learn that when we work to understand our offender, we are showing empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love in forgiveness?

**EVALUATION OF LESSON TEN**

**Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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## Lesson Eleven:

### Lavish Love and Forgiving in Action: Giving the Gift

#### The Main Ideas of the Lesson

In the previous lessons, the students learned that when we forgive, we recognize the fact that the person who was unfair has deep worth (he or she is more than the offense). As we begin to understand the person within a larger context of who he or she truly is as a person, then we begin to develop feelings such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love.

In this lesson, the students will learn that forgiveness may be deepened further by extending into *action* (i.e., kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love as concrete, behavioral expressions of forgiveness). Please note that in this lesson, lavish love will be discussed as a behavior rather than only as a feeling inside the forgiver (as in Lesson 9).

Many people become concerned that they will be put at risk for further hurt when asked to give these gifts to a person who has been unfair. It is important that the students learn that such gifts can be given without entering into a relationship with a person who persists in behaving unfairly. Following are some examples of how a person may **safely** offer these gifts (kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love): 1) refusing to cause the offender harm (**not** pushing, shoving, or hitting the person, **not** saying unkind words to the person, **not** talking badly about the person); 2) offering a smile, a kind word in the presence of others, or sharing a toy or game with the person in the presence of others (also examples of kindness, respect, and generosity); 3) bearing the pain rather than throwing the pain back at the offender or onto others. **Bearing the pain** means that we shoulder the pain as a result of what the other did. We do not deny the pain, push it away, throw it back at the offender, or pass it along to those who are less powerful than ourselves (smaller in size, younger, weaker).

At this point in the forgiveness process, you may find some variation in the students' desires and abilities to express kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love. These virtues within forgiveness do not always come easily. A student's readiness to give them may depend on the depth of the hurt or the length of time since the hurt. **Please allow the students to become willing to respond with the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love in their own way and in their own time toward the person who was unfair to them.** It is the case that although some people may not initially be ready to give these gifts, they may be ready to give them in time. As the students continue to work at "seeing with new eyes" and "softening the heart" toward their offender, the desire and ability to give these gifts will likely emerge.

Once able to give kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love, the students may be surprised at the freedom they experience. Forgiveness has a way of being a gift both to the offender and to the one who willingly offers the gift.

Please note that the students will continue to focus on the one specific person who caused them an unfair hurt whom they have been considering in lessons 5-8 (the

person they identified in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity) as they deepen forgiveness by offering kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love toward the person who was unfair.

### General Objectives

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn that as we continue the forgiveness process, we may become willing to give gifts.
- ⊕ Learn that giving gifts to one who was unfair is **not** easy.
- ⊕ Learn that giving these gifts often deepens forgiveness.
- ⊕ Learn that one can safely give kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love.
- ⊕ Learn that giving these gifts may provide emotional freedom.

### Behavioral Objectives

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Read or listen to the two selected stories.
- ⊕ Participate in a class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the “Giving a Gift within Forgiveness” activity.

### Materials

The Tale of Despereaux, Chapters 46-51

Rising above the Storm Clouds

### Procedures

As with the previous lessons, we have included a detailed list of procedures. Please note that the discussion questions and activities have been provided as suggestions. Adjustments and/or improvements may be made if it will help you more effectively meet the needs of your students provided the objectives of the lesson are met.

1. Conduct a review of the previous lesson. Last week we discussed how a person’s *thinking* can become more positive and the *heart can* become *softer* toward one who was unfair when the person forgives. As we try to understand the person who was unfair, we often develop

feelings of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love. Briefly (because the students will already have had two lessons on this) review the meanings of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and lavish love within forgiveness. *Empathy is feeling the same feelings as another person. We may feel sad, angry, or happy with him or her. Sympathy is when we feel sorry for a person. We may see the person's anger and feel sorry for him or her. Compassion is suffering with the one who caused the hurt. Lavish love is empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Lavish love takes our eyes off of the self and puts them on the offender. We can safely soften our hearts in lavish love as we forgive. Lavish love in forgiveness can help a person heal from the hurt. It can help a person feel free and more whole.*

2. Introduce today's lesson. Today we are going to continue learning to forgive by exploring what it means to give a gift to the person who was unfair. What kind of a gift do you think we could **safely** give a person who was unfair? *We can give kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love (bearing the pain rather than lashing out with unkind words or actions) to a person who has hurt us. This might be in the form of a smile, a kind word, or refusing to do harm to the person (do not say unkind words, do not kick, hit, or hurt his or her property).* When we do this, it will actually help to deepen our forgiveness toward the person.
3. Ask the students to listen to or read the first of today's two stories and to listen to the second story as you read.
4. Conduct the class discussion. The questions can be found in the Discussion section.
5. Have students participate in the "Giving a Gift within Forgiveness" activity. See the Activity section for further instructions.
6. Provide a summary of the main ideas of the lesson to conclude the lesson. Today the students learned that as they continue to recognize their offender's worth and soften their hearts toward him or her, forgiveness may deepen as they give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love. What are some ways we can safely give these gifts without putting ourselves in danger of being hurt again in the same way or by the same person? *We don't need to have a relationship with the person (if he or she is a danger to us). We can safely offer the gifts of lavish love by: 1) refusing to cause the offender harm (**not** pushing, shoving, or hitting the person, **not** saying unkind words to the person, **not** talking badly about the person); 2) offering a smile, a kind word in the presence of others, or sharing a toy or game with the person in the presence of others (also examples of kindness, respect, and*

generosity); 3) bearing the pain rather than throwing the pain back at the offender or onto others. What does it mean to **bear the pain**? *We do not deny the pain, push it away, throw it back at the offender, or pass it along to those who are less powerful than ourselves (smaller in size, younger, weaker).* **Please remind the students that they can give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love in their own way and in their own time. Ask them to be patient with themselves. It is all right if they are not ready to give the gifts today. They may be ready in time.**

### **Discussion Questions Based on The Tale of Despereaux, Chapters 49-51**

1. What were some unfair hurts that took place in today's story (Chapter 46-51)? How was Roscuro being unfair? What happened? *Roscuro led Mig and the Princess deep down into the dungeon and was going to imprison the Princess.*
2. How did the people in the story think, feel, and act at first toward the unfairness? For example, how did Mig respond to Roscuro's cruelty? *Mig obeyed Roscuro's unfair orders. Was this a good way to respond to the unfairness? Why? No because Mig was acting selfishly at the Princesses' expense. She was giving in to the unfairness.*
3. How did Despereaux respond to Roscuro's unfairness? Were his actions good or bad? *He was brave and stood up to Roscuro. He fought for what is right. [Some respond poorly to deep offenses whereas other act in a very good way to those offenses.]*
4. Let's focus now on Princess Pea, who was being imprisoned. How unfairly was she being treated in this part of the story? *Very, very unfairly because of Roscuro's intent to keep her as a prisoner.*
4. Are there any signs that the Princess Pea was "seeing the deep worth" of Roscuro (page 264)? What are these signs? *Although she did not like the rat, her heart softened toward him. She saw him as more than a law breaker, as more than a mean rat. She saw him in the same way that Despereaux saw his own father when he was begging for forgiveness---as a sad, weakened person.*
5. What gifts within forgiveness did Princess Pea give to Roscuro? *She treated him with respect by asking a polite question, "Roscuro, would you like some soup?" She was kind to him because she knew he would want some soup. She was generous in offering the soup because he certainly did not earn it. She showed lavish love toward him by softening her heart and giving him mercy (in the form of offering the soup) which he did not deserve.*
6. Might it have been difficult for Princess Pea to give the gifts of respect, kindness, generosity, and lavish love? Why or why not? *Yes, because her heart was very angry (she put her hand on her heart, knowing that she had to protect her emotions). To talk respectfully under this condition is difficult.*
7. The Princess Pea had a lot of pain inside, didn't she? *Yes, she held her heart because it was in so much pain.*
8. Did she bear that pain in forgiveness for Roscuro? *Yes, she did not throw that pain back at him by shouting or trying to get even with him once they were upstairs.*

9. Do you think a person would feel discomfort or even pain as he or she tried to give a gift within forgiveness? What might be the discomfort or pain? *The Princess might have been scared to reach out. She may have been afraid of being hurt even more. She may have wondered if the gifts would be accepted.*
10. How might this discomfort and pain itself be a gift? *She was willing to experience the discomfort and pain rather than withhold a gift.*
11. What kinds of gifts could you *safely* give a person who was unfair?
12. Would this be difficult? Why or why not?
13. Even if it was difficult, would you be willing to give gifts to a person who was unfair? Why or why not?
14. If it is difficult or painful to give a gift to a person who was unfair, how might your struggle or difficulty be a gift to him or her?

### **Discussion Questions Based on the book, Rising above the Storm Clouds**

Some of you may recall reading the story, *Rising above the Storm Clouds* last year. We will read it again with new eyes and ears. This time, let us focus primarily on each time a gift is given by one story character to another. As I read, let's try to pick out the gifts and identify what they are.

Gifts in order of appearance in the story:

1. (Picture of the airplane). The gift here is that each character gives a "quieter and sunnier" heart to the other one.
2. (Picture of the butterflies). The gift is one of sharing together.
3. (Picture of the mother and child polar bears). The gift is a great big bear hug.
4. (Picture of the cat and dog). The gift is sharing the warmth of a fireplace together.
5. (Picture of the porcupine and the mole). The gift is respecting one another as they move about the house.
6. (Picture of the fish at fish school). The gift is the offer of money to buy a school lunch after the guppy lost her money.
7. (Picture of the meadow). The gift is spending time together.
8. (Picture of Freddy B. and Ezzie with Franklin). The gift is reconciliation, where both Freddy B. and Ezzie come together in a loving way again.

## Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

### **Giving a Gift within Forgiveness**

#### ***Objective***

The students will learn ways to *safely* give a gift to a person who treated them unfairly. They will think of particular ways they can give gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love to a person who was unfair.

#### ***Instructions***

The teacher will create with the students a list of ways to give gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love within forgiveness. Following are some examples of how a person may **safely** offer these gifts (kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love): 1) refusing to cause the offender harm (**not** pushing, shoving, or hitting the person, **not** saying unkind words to the person, **not** talking badly about the person); 2) offering a smile, a kind word in the presence of others, or sharing a toy or game with the person in the presence of others (also examples of kindness, respect, and generosity); 3) bearing the pain rather than throwing the pain back at the offender or on to others. **Bearing the pain** means that we shoulder that pain and do not deny the pain, push it away, throw it back at the offender, or pass it along to those who are less powerful than ourselves (smaller in size, younger, weaker). **It is important that the students learn that such gifts can be given without entering into a relationship with a person who persists in behaving unfairly.**

## Lesson Eleven within a Religious Context

Again, the next two sections are for those teachers seeking ideas on this topic within their own Christian religious tradition.

#### ***General Religious Ideas***

The Bible is filled with stories of giving through lavish love within the context of forgiveness. When unjustly hurt, we learn through the lives of Bible characters, teachings of Jesus, and parables and other scripture to love all people even when they've behaved unfairly.

#### ***Bible Verses***

The following Bible verses may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson.

**Luke 6: 27-36** Jesus said, "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (*verse 27*)

See the golden rule in *verse 31*. Jesus is *not* saying that you should treat others as they treat you (if someone hits you, then you hit him). Instead, Jesus says to treat others **as you want to be treated**. Do you want to be loved and shown mercy? Then love and show mercy. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (*verse 36*). As we learned in Lesson 10, we are to strive for holiness because the Father is holy. This is why we are asked to love our enemies and be merciful.

### Evaluation of the Students

- ⊕ Did the students read and/or listen to today’s stories?
- ⊕ Did the students actively participate in the class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students actively participate in the “Giving a Gift within Forgiveness” activity?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that as one sees “with new eyes” and begins to “soften the heart” toward a person who was unfair, the willingness to give gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love (bearing the pain) often emerges?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that giving gifts to one who was unfair is **not** easy and the willingness to give such gifts in forgiveness may vary depending on when the hurt occurred and its depth?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that as one gives these gifts, forgiveness often deepens?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that one can give kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love (bearing the pain) **without** being put at risk for further hurt in the same way or by the same person?
- ⊕ Did the students learn that a person may experience a sense of freedom upon giving these gifts?

**EVALUATION OF LESSON ELEVEN**

Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_

The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:

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I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:

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The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:

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The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:

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General Comments:

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**Lesson Twelve:**  
**How Lavish Love and Forgiving May Benefit the Self, the**  
**Offender, and the Wider Community**

**The Main Ideas for the Lesson**

In this final lesson of the curriculum, the students will begin thinking of the reasons to forgive, as well as learning of the benefits to forgiveness. For example, many people have indicated the following reasons for forgiving: 1) to improve overall well-being (reduce anger and sadness, increase self-esteem and hopefulness); 2) to improve their relationships (both with the person who was unfair and with others); 3) to feel more loving toward the person who hurt them, in particular, and more loving toward others, in general; and 4) to help the person who was unfair be set free from feelings of shame and guilt and to feel loved and worthy (this may even help the person who was unfair to see the unfairness and change his or her behavior).

Our research since the mid-1980's has demonstrated that forgiveness can increase self-esteem and hopefulness and decrease anger, anxiety, and depression. Further, there is evidence that interpersonal relationships, behavior, and academic achievement improve.

The students will learn how communities (families, schools, places of worship, neighborhoods, and cities) might be changed in a positive way by forgiveness. **Although this lesson is an end to the formal forgiveness curriculum, we challenge you, the teacher, to keep the idea of forgiveness in front of your students while they are at school. We further encourage you to think of ways to extend the theme of forgiveness into the students' families and other areas of the community that are important to the students' lives. We congratulate you for giving your students the "gift of forgiveness." We believe your efforts will likely bear great fruit in your life, the lives of your students, and even in unexpected places.**

**General Objectives**

*The students will:*

- ⊕ Learn reasons people give for forgiving.
- ⊕ Learn the benefits of forgiveness for individuals.
- ⊕ Learn the benefits of forgiveness for communities (families, schools, places of worship, neighborhoods, and cities).

## Behavioral Objectives

### *The students will:*

- ⊕ Read or listen to the selections of today's story.
- ⊕ Participate in a class discussion.
- ⊕ Participate in the "Am I Ready to Give a Gift?" activity.
- ⊕ Participate in the "Raise the Banner of Forgiveness" activity.

## Materials

The book entitled, The Tale of Despereaux, chapters 51 and 52

Banners (made earlier in the forgiveness curriculum, Lesson One)

## Procedures

As you now know, the following procedures are to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments and/or improvements to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you more effectively meet the needs of your students. To maintain the integrity of the curriculum, please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met.

1. Briefly review the concepts learned in Lesson Eleven. The students learned that as they forgive (in particular, as they begin to see the deep worth of the person who was unfair and soften their hearts toward him or her), their forgiveness may continue to deepen as they give the gifts of **kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love**. They learned that they can **safely** give these gifts because they do not have to become friends with the person if he or she refuses to change unfair behavior. How can we do this? *We can refuse to cause the offender harm by **not** pushing, shoving, or hitting the person, **not** saying unkind words to the person, and **not** talking badly about the person. We can smile, say a kind word, or share a toy or game with the person in the presence of others. These are examples of kindness, respect, and generosity. We can bear the pain (shoulder that pain and not deny, push it away, throw it back at the offender, or pass it along to those who are smaller, younger, or weaker). **Once again,***

**please remind the students that they can give the gifts of kindness, respect, generosity, and lavish love in their own way and in their own time. Ask them to be patient with themselves. It is all right if they are not yet ready to give a gift. They may be ready in time.**

2. Introduce today's lesson. Let the students know that today they will learn about the reasons why people forgive and the benefits of forgiveness. Ask the students why they think it is important to forgive.
3. Read or listen to today's portion of the story.
4. Conduct a class discussion. The questions can be found in the Discussion section.
5. Have the class participate in the "Are You Ready to Give a Gift?" activity. See the Activities section.
6. Have the class participate in the "Raise the Banner of Forgiveness" activity. Further instructions can be found in the Activities section.
7. Conclude the lesson by providing a summary of the main ideas. Today we started thinking about the reasons to forgive. We also continued learning the benefits of forgiveness for the forgiver, the forgiven, and communities (family, school, cities, and so forth). Ask the following questions: 1) What are some reasons to forgive? *a) to improve overall well-being (reduce anger and sadness, increase self-esteem and hopefulness; b) to improve relationships (both with the person who was unfair and with others); c) to feel more loving toward the person who was unfair, in particular, and more loving toward others, in general; and d) to help the person who was unfair to be set free from feelings of shame and guilt and feel loved and worthy (this may even help the person who was unfair see the unfairness and change his or her behavior);* 2) What are some benefits of forgiveness? *The authors' research since the mid-1980's has demonstrated that forgiveness can increase self-esteem and hopefulness and decrease anger, anxiety, and depression. Further, there is evidence that interpersonal relationships, behavior, and academic achievement improve;* 3) What are some ways that forgiveness might help communities? *Forgiveness might reduce the overall level of anger in a community if enough people consistently practice it; forgiveness may make people willing to dialogue and to work out differences; it may promote a deeper peace in a society.*

## Discussion Questions

1. What happened in the story [in Chapter 51 in particular] once Princess Pea forgave Roscuro? *The Princess' heart was protected from bitterness and hatred. Roscuro got some soup. Princess Pea, Roscuro, Miggery, and Despereaux all were able to leave the dungeon and to go upstairs into the light.*
2. In Chapter 51, the author uses the word "light" three different times (please read those sections on pages 206-207). What does it mean that "forgiveness is light"? *It means that forgiveness is filled with goodness. It gets rid of the darkness in our hearts and in our relationships. It makes the forgiver feel better, it makes the forgiven feel better, and it improves relationships.*
3. How was the Princess' relationship with Roscuro improved once she forgave him? *He no longer wanted to keep her as a prisoner, she was freed from the dungeon, and he was able to go up into the light and beauty of the castle.*
4. Do you see how both Roscuro and the Princess Pea were set free from hatred and bitterness once she forgave him and he accepted it? *Yes, he no longer had to live in the dungeon but could go upstairs whenever he wished and she no longer had a dark heart but a heart of light.*
5. When a person is forgiven, other people can benefit as well. In Chapter 52, who benefitted from Roscuro being forgiven? *Miggery Sow's father and Miggery benefitted greatly. He was released from prison and Miggery got her father back.*
6. How did Miggery Sow's father treat her once he was released from the dungeon? *He treated her like a princess "for the rest of his days" (page 267).*
7. Do you see how forgiving and being forgiven spread love around? Tell me some of the ways that love was spread around once the Princess Pea forgave Roscuro. *The Princess gave Roscuro soup. Roscuro revealed where Miggery's father was [in the dungeon]. Miggery's father treated Miggery like a princess, loving her deeply. The Princess Pea and Despereaux became very good friends---together they had many adventures.*
8. Did many of the characters in the story end up living in a loving community with each other? Why do you say this? *On page 267 at the bottom, the author tells us that the king, the princess, Miggery, Roscuro, and Despereaux were all sitting around the table in the banquet hall. They were all sharing a great kettle of soup.*
9. Do you see that they were glowing in the light of love? *The king was "adoring" his daughter, the princess. The princess was "glowing." Despereaux was in a "place of honor." They were all respecting and loving one another.*
10. Now think about this community of love in contrast to earlier in the story. What were these characters like before this ending of love and forgiveness? *The king was harsh and banned soup. Roscuro wanted to imprison the princess and Miggery. Miggery wanted to imprison the princess and Despereaux was ready to kill Roscuro. Now look at the peace and harmony surrounding them. **They are in the light.***
11. What does it mean to live in a Forgiving Community? *It means that the people try to forgive each other, to love each other, and to get along well. It means that the people try to live in the light of love.*
12. How can we in this classroom create a Forgiving Community? Try to have a free-flowing discussion for these three questions (12-14). Listen carefully and write down

the students' ideas because the children may help in actually creating these communities through their suggestions here.

13. How can this school become a Forgiving Community?

14. How can your families become the light of a Forgiving Community?

## Activities

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

### **Am I Ready to Give a Gift?**

#### ***Objective***

The students will continue to learn how lavish love in forgiveness can benefit the forgiver, the forgiven, and even entire communities. The students will reflect on their feelings toward the person (and if the teacher chooses, be given an opportunity to write in their journals).

#### ***Instructions***

Once again, the teacher should let the students know that this activity is absolutely PRIVATE! As in the previous lessons, the person they are considering in this activity will not be discussed with one another or with you, the teacher.

**\*Note: The students will reflect on the person identified in the “Let’s Take a Look at Our Inner World” activity.**

The students will examine their feelings toward the person who caused the unfair hurt. Please be open to the likelihood that your students will have a variety of feelings toward the person who was unfair. For example, some may still be angry, others may have become more neutral than angry, and still others may have begun to feel compassionate and loving toward the person who unfairly hurt them.

Please ask the students the following questions:

1. I would like you to recall the person who caused your unfair hurt. Please think about any feelings of love and goodwill you may have toward this person.<sup>6</sup>
2. Do you notice a difference *now* in how you are seeing the person who hurt you compared with how you felt about him or her *when you first began learning to forgive*? If so, how have your feelings changed?

**\*Note: You may wish to give your students an opportunity to write in their journals about their personal forgiveness process. In an effort to protect the confidentiality of all individuals, please ask the students to avoid writing names or details of the unfair hurt in their journals.**

It is important to let the students know that all people work through the process of forgiveness in their own way and in their own time.

<sup>6</sup> This activity was inspired by Leonel Narvaez of Bogota, Columbia.

## Activities (Continued)

### **Raise the Banner of Forgiveness**

#### ***Objective***

The students will continue to learn how forgiveness can spread from the forgiver to the forgiven and outward to the entire community. The students will dedicate the “forgiveness banners” as a gift to the community a celebration to which parents (and other guests) are invited. Please review the Activity section in Lesson 1 for the details of the forgiveness banner. The students will sing the song(s) learned in previous lessons and share what they’ve learned about forgiveness with parents and other guests.

#### ***Instructions***

The teacher and students will dedicate the forgiveness banners. The children will sing the song(s) learned in the various forgiveness lessons and will share what they have learned about lavish love in forgiveness with parents and other guests from the community. The forgiveness banners may be hung in the school (place agreed upon by teacher, students, and other school staff) for all to see. The teachers and students may want to prepare treats for the parents and other guests.

## Lesson Twelve within a Religious Context

As you now know, in this section we present some general ideas for religious discussion followed by some specific Bible verses and stories. The theme of the ideas and verses below is forgiveness. Teachers should feel free to use these sections as they wish.

#### ***General Religious Ideas***

Forgiveness can restore the well-being, happiness, and relationships of the forgiver and the forgiven. Forgiveness is giving lavish love when we feel least like giving lavish love. The Bible teaches us how to forgive, helps us to see the benefits of forgiveness, and shows us how communities (family, schools, and cities) can be changed through forgiveness.

#### ***Bible Passages***

The following Bible verses may be used for thought and/or discussion to support the main ideas of the lesson. It concerns making connections with each other through *agape* love, benefitting all who say “yes” to the connections.

***1 John 3:11-24*** This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we

have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our heart condemns us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the spirit he gave us.

**Revelation 7: 13-17.** Please read this passage with the idea of a community of worship in heaven. The community is united, protected, loved and giving love. The Lamb (Jesus) protects them and every tear from their eyes is wiped away.

### **Evaluation of the Students**

- ⊕ Did the students read or listen to today's story?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in a class discussion?
- ⊕ Did the students take part in the "Am I Ready to Give a Gift?" activity?
- ⊕ Did the students participate in the "Raise the Banner of Forgiveness" activity?
- ⊕ Did the students learn reasons for forgiving?
- ⊕ Did the students learn the benefits of forgiveness for individuals?
- ⊕ Did the students learn the benefits of forgiveness for communities (families, schools, cities, places of worship, and so forth)?

**EVALUATION OF LESSON TWELVE**

**Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

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**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

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**The students responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**The students did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

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**General Comments:**

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