

Forgiveness Matters

Faith Festival



By: Jane Angha

Time: 90 minutes

Purpose

This Faith Festival helps households learn about the power and grace that forgiveness and reconciliation can bring to our relationships.

Session at a Glance

- Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (5 minutes)
- Community Builder (15 minutes)
- Family Mess Learning Activity (30 minutes)
- Family Rules Learning Activity (25 minutes)
- Closing Prayer and Announcements (10 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Copy of bingo cards – one for every two people
- Copy of readings for prayer readers
- Bibles – one for each group
- Copies of resources
- Pens or pencils
- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Colorful scrapbook papers
- 11x17 colored card stock (one sheet per family or small group)
- LCD projector

Extend the Session

Invite a group of teens to reenact the story of the Prodigal Son from Luke 15:11-32 – this can take the place of the groups reading the story for the first activity.

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up a prayer space by covering a table with a nice cloth, candle, cross, Bible and sample of family rules.
2. Copy the bingo cards and resource sheets, have some prizes ready for the winners of the bingo game
3. Invite a musician to assist with the opening prayer and closing prayer as well as Invite readers to help and give them the readings prior to the event. .
4. Gather some helpers for the craft supply table to prepare things and to help participants at the event.

Session Outline

Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)

Warmly welcome everyone making sure they have a name tag on.

Welcome! We are so happy you are here today! It isn't every day we get to spend time with each other really focusing on our relationships with each other and making sure they are doing okay. Today is special though and we are going to find out how we can keep our families and friendships happy, holy and healthy!

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Gathering Song: *Lead me Lord*, Spirit and Song OCP, #221

Leader:

You and I belong to Jesus and together we are a parish family. So we begin our prayer marked by the sign of our faith – the cross – In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

Reader 1: Matthew 5:44-47

Leader:

Loving God, you challenge us to be more loving and forgiving. Bless our time together as we celebrate our families and friends, work on ways to show our love, respect and forgiveness. Help us to always be kind, generous and gentle with others. We pray this in the name of Jesus our brother and friend, amen

Community Builder Bingo (15 minutes)

The goal of this activity is to find out how we feel about things. It is played like bingo – participants use the bingo sheet and go around the room asking questions to others. When someone can answer a question, they should initial the square. The first person done wins a prize – to share.

This game is played like Bingo, but instead of numbers being called – you and a partner have to go around the room trying to find others who agree with the statements. To win, you need to fill a whole row or four corners. If you get bingo – yell it out and raise your hands! Ready? Set? Go!!

Once there is a winner, gather everyone back together for the next activity.

Family Mess (30 minutes)

This learning activity takes a look at the scripture story of the Prodigal Son. Groups will discover how forgiveness can heal broken relationships and bring us closer to God.

Invite the participants to gather into family groups or groups of five to six. Introduce the activity:

Thanks for playing the game and congratulations to our winners! Our next activity is a little more serious... we are going to take a look at our families and communities to see how we might make them better! So to start with, I have two questions. The first - what are some of the best things about living in a family or community?

Make a list of answers people share on newsprint or smart board. After recording the ideas, ask,

What are some of the hard things about living in a family or community?

List these too under a separate heading.

As we can see there are both amazing and difficult things about families and communities. It's because we are human – we make mistakes, hurt each other's feelings, let people down, do not-so-nice things at times and forget to think of others before ourselves. Because we are disciples of Jesus and belong to a community of faith, we are called to live in a different way – to follow the example of Jesus so we have to decide to love, to forgive and to reconcile.

There is a story in the bible about a family that had a little trouble. In your groups you will share the story and like a detective, uncover some things the family believed.

Let's get into our family groups or groups of 5 – 6 and get started!

Distribute *Resource 1* to each group and be sure each group or family has a bible.

After about 20 minutes, check to see how groups are doing and give them a few more minutes to finish up. Once they are done, gather the back together.

Invite groups to share what they discovered. Once you are finished sharing, move onto the next activity.

Family Rules (25 minutes)

This activity helps families take a look at what makes them a really great family, and challenges them to look at the areas where they need some strengthening.

One of the things we learned from the story of the Prodigal Son is that their family wasn't perfect. In fact, there is no such thing as a perfect family! All of us need some work on that don't we? Our next activity is going to help us take a look at what makes our families great and where we need some work. You will have a chance to make an amazing wall hanging that will list what is important to your family and a list of some promises you will make to each other so you can continue to grow in love, kindness, mercy and joy! You will need to stop at the supply table to pick up some things and then get into our family groups or groups of 5 – 6 to get started.

When finished, have each group show off their work of art! Thank them for their wonderful work and then gather into the prayer space for the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather

Song: *All the People Said Amen*, Matt Maher , www.mattmaher.com

Leader:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
God of mercy, forgiveness, joy and hope, we thank you for our time together. You have shown us through Scripture, story, art and conversation that we matter to you. Knowing that, we too, need to let our friends, family and all people that know that they matter too. We ask for open hearts –ready to forgive, reconcile and change. We pray this in your name, amen.

Listen

Reader: Lamentations 3: 22-25

Leader:

Our God wants us to live in harmony with each other. When we sin, there is a break in our relationships with each other and with God. But for us, there is hope – you can change the situation, start fresh and be renewed! Admitting our sin, asking for forgiveness and trying to change are gifts. The Family Rules we made today will be a reminder that we aren't alone and that with relationships comes risk. Our faith gives us the courage to look in our hearts and to make changes that are needed and to share the Good News of mercy with others!

Respond

Use the PowerPoint , and have the readers lead the community in prayer.

Leader will lead the Our Father

Go Forth

Leader:

May all we learned tonight take hold in our hearts and in our relationships? May we be the first to say we are sorry and the first to forgive – just as Jesus did, amen.

Thank everyone who helped with the Festival as well as for all who came! Share any announcements and invite participants to stay for refreshments.

For further reading or to share with participants, the following articles will help go deeper on the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation.

www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday

Teaching Aids

- [Catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation](#)
by Fr. Peter Ryan, SJ
- [The Four Steps of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation](#)
by Msgr. Richard Hilgartner
- [Exploring the Forms and Options of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation](#)
by Fr. Daniel Merz

Website and links in this session were accessed successfully on June 1 2014.

This session was written by Jane Angha Project Coordinator for Young Neighbors in Action at the Center for Ministry Development. Jane teaches in the Certificate in youth Ministry Studies Program and writes for Fashioning Faith. She is married with three young adult daughters and lives in Neenah Wisconsin.

Resource 1

25 Question Bingo

I listen to others	I am kind	I am a good friend	I like to be a leader	I'm good at solving problems
I'm good at art	I am respectful	I worry a lot	I play an instrument	I take care of my things
I love to give things away	I like to sing	Free Space	I like to help others	I love sad movies
I love snow	I notice when people are sad	I'm good at writing	I don't like bullying	I have a pet
I love growing things	I'm not good at math	I like to play games	I share	I care for the earth

Resource 2

Family Mess

Directions: Read the story of the Prodigal Son from the Bible- Luke 15:11-32

Discuss the questions:



1. What just happened in this story?
2. How did the father show his joy when the son returned?
3. Why did the father forgive the son who left and spent all his inheritance?
4. Why was the older son angry?
5. What do we learn about ourselves from this Scripture story?
6. What do we learn about God from this Scripture story?

- How do we know when we hurt someone in our family?
- How do we make up for things?
- Why is forgiveness so important in a family?
- How can we ask God to guide us as a family?
- What are some things we as a family can learn from the family in the story?



Resource 3 Family Rules



To start, answer the questions and discuss your answers.

1. Family name
2. Family members
3. What are the really great things about our family?
4. What are some things that need work on in our family?

Looking at the answers to questions three and four, what do these say about your family?

What are some statements or promises you can make to one another to strengthen your family?

List those here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

When finished with your list, gather supplies and directions for part two of the activity.

Resource 4 part 2

Our Family Rules

Directions: You will need a piece of 11x17 card stock, ten pieces of scrapbook paper various sizes, markers, scissors, bible verse you like, list from Resource 3 and a glue stick.

Using your own and phrases, make a poster like the one below. Choose paper, markers and different lettering to make something like the sample poster below. With your words and phrases it will be your own family treasure!



Resource 4 part 3

These bible verses can be cut apart and used on the family rules posters if desired.

Genesis 4:9

Genesis 12:10-20

Sirach 3:1-16

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Song of Solomon 8:6-7

MATTHEW 5:43-48

1 Corinthians 13

PSALM 51

Isaiah 11:1-9

Micah 4:1-5

Numbers 20:1-4

John 15:12-17