
OBJECTIVE	Each young woman will recognize the importance of forgiving herself.
-----------	--

PREPARATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide a rock, book, or some other object weighing approximately 1 to 2 pounds.2. Optional: Provide a narrow-necked jar or container (see the third section of the lesson). The jar or container should have an opening large enough for an unclasped hand to go through, but small enough so that a clenched fist cannot be drawn out. Provide also a rock or object to be placed in the jar.3. Assign young women to present any stories, scriptures, or quotations you wish. <p>Note: Other lessons treat the subject of forgiving others. This lesson deals with forgiveness of self.</p>
-------------	---

SUGGESTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT	The Weight of Sin Is Heavy
Demonstration	As class begins, ask a young woman to hold in the air a stone or other object weighing 1 to 2 pounds, extending her arm out from the shoulder. Ask her to hold the stone in this position while the following story is told.
Story	<p>A group of young women were hiking in the mountains and had stopped to rest before starting the climb up a long, steep hill.</p> <p>Julie was the strongest hiker in the troop and was usually out in front setting a pace that was sometimes difficult for the rest to follow. On this day some of the young women decided to play a trick on her. While she was resting and enjoying a drink, they quietly opened her pack and hid a large stone inside.</p> <p>When the rest period was over, the young women put the packs on their backs and started up the steep mountain trail. At first Julie was not aware of the extra weight she was carrying, but after a while her pack began to feel heavy and she started to tire. For the first time she could remember, she was forced to drop back with the slower girls in the rear of the group.</p> <p>It was not until she had almost reached the top of the mountain that Julie discovered why her pack felt so heavy and why she had become so tired. She was angry at first, but then she realized that her friends were only teasing her for being a strong hiker. She laughed with the others about the useless stone she had carried so far up the mountain.</p> <p>Once the heavy stone was removed from her pack, Julie felt strong again and was soon walking in her usual place at the front of the group.</p>
Teacher presentation	Tell the young woman who is still holding the object to lay it down. Ask if she is tired, and let her comment on how heavy even a small weight becomes if you have to hold it for a while. Suggest that although we do not usually carry stones about, we sometimes carry other kinds of weights that are as useless and tiring as the stone Julie carried. The stones or weights we carry are our sins.
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why is a weight of sin heavy and hard to carry? (When we know what our Heavenly Father wants us to do and then fail to do it, we are ashamed and feel guilty. We remember our failures and worry about them, and they become a heavy stone or weight on our minds.)• How can carrying a weight of sin affect our lives?

Explain that some people unnecessarily carry the weight of sins of which they have repented.

The Lord Will Forgive Us When We Repent

Teacher presentation	Explain that sometimes our transgressions seem so numerous or serious that we feel we have no hope of overcoming them. Sometimes even though we have made efforts to repent, we still worry that the Lord has not forgiven us.
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why would Satan have us believe that we have sinned beyond hope of forgiveness? (Then we will not repent, and we will sin more and more.)
Quotation	President Spencer W. Kimball explained that everyone can have the blessing of forgiveness: “Sometimes a guilt consciousness overpowers a person with such a heaviness that when a repentant one looks back and sees the ugliness, the loathsomeness of the transgression, he is almost overwhelmed and wonders, ‘Can the Lord ever forgive me? Can I ever forgive myself?’ But when one reaches the depths of despondency and feels the hopelessness of his position, and when he cries out to God for mercy in helplessness but in faith, there comes a still, small, but penetrating voice whispering to his soul, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee’ ” (<i>The Miracle of Forgiveness</i> [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 344).
Scriptures	Have the young women read Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43 and Mosiah 4:2–3. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did the Lord promise in the scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants? (If we repent, he will forgive us and remember our sins no more.)• What happened to the people of King Benjamin to bring them so much joy, as described in Mosiah?• How do you think a person can know that she has been forgiven by the Lord?
Quotation	President Harold B. Lee taught: “If the time comes when you have done all that you can to repent of your sins, whoever you are, wherever you are, . . . then you will want that confirming answer as to whether or not the Lord has accepted of you. In your soul-searching, if you seek for and you find that peace of conscience, by that token you may know that the Lord has accepted of your repentance. Satan would have you think otherwise and sometimes persuade you that now having made one mistake, you might go on and on with no turning back. That is one of the great falsehoods. The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more” (Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, pp. 177–78; or <i>Ensign</i> , July 1973, p. 122).

Forgiving Ourselves Is an Important Part of Repentance

Thought question	Ask the young women to think about why it is important to forgive themselves when they repent of a sin. Then present the following demonstration.
Demonstration (optional)	Select a young woman to put her hand in the jar that has a rock or other object in the bottom. Ask her to pick up the object and take it out of the jar. As she closes her fist around the object, her hand will be too wide to remove from the jar. She must let go of the object in order to free her hand.
Teacher presentation	Explain that this demonstration can teach us something about our sins. Unless we let go of our sins, we cannot be free. If we cling to our sins, we will not be free to progress as we should. One of the ways we sometimes cling to our sins is by refusing to forgive ourselves.
Scripture discussion	Have the young women read Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do you think the Lord commands us to forgive everyone? Why do you think it is important to forgive ourselves?
Story	The following story, told by Elder Sterling W. Sill, illustrates the importance of forgiving ourselves. “Sometime ago I talked with a woman 53 years of age who had committed a moral transgression at age 18. She understood that her sin was very serious, but because she had

repented a thousand times we can depend on the Lord's promise that he had forgiven her. But she had never forgiven herself. Because she felt unclean and inferior, she withdrew from her friends, refused to marry, and became a kind of social and spiritual recluse. For 35 years she downgraded herself with bitter regrets and accusations. Her life of looking back upon her sin has turned her into something far below the wonderful person that God intended her to be. Her sin at age 18 was very serious. But for 35 years she has been adding to her sin by wasting the most valuable thing in the world, which is a splendid human life" (*What Doth It Profit* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965], p. 183).

Discussion

- Why is it hard to forgive ourselves? Have the young women name specific things that keep them from forgiving themselves. You may want to write these things on the chalkboard.

They may include the following: We feel that the sin is too terrible; we do not have enough faith in the Atonement; we do not understand how much the Lord loves us; we concentrate too much on the things we are doing wrong and not enough on the things we are doing right; we are afraid to forgive ourselves and move forward.

Quotation

Review the following quotation:

"Someone who finds himself feeling guilty long after he has repented might try asking himself these questions:

"1. Have I completed all the steps of repentance (recognition, remorse, confession if appropriate, restitution, etc.)?"

"2. Have I asked forgiveness of the Lord?"

"3. Have I allowed the Lord to take my burden by trusting his power to do so and his love for me?"

"4. Have I fully forgiven myself for my wrongdoing?" (Dale F. Pearson, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, July 1980, p. 32).

Scripture discussion

Have the young women read Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.

- In what way is forgiveness a gift from God? How does this scripture apply to the gift of forgiveness?

- Why must we have faith before we can totally accept the gift of forgiveness?

Quotation

"God's forgiveness is often nullified because the sinner does not forgive himself. What good does it do for God to blot our evil from *his* mind, if we continue to let it dominate our thinking by rerunning it in our own?" (Sterling W. Sill, *What Doth It Profit*, p. 179).

Conclusion

Explain that the Lord has promised us that he will forgive us and remember our sins no more if we repent. It is up to us to repent and forgive ourselves. Sometimes it is easier to forgive others than to forgive ourselves. We must exercise faith in God and ourselves and rid our lives of past wrongdoings.

Scripture

Explain that Alma described his forgiveness in Alma 36:16–21. Have the young women read this passage.

Tell the young women that if they have any sins they have not repented of, they can find peace and happiness through the process of repentance. Assure them that they can be forgiven and have the peace of a clear conscience. They can forget their wrongdoings and put them out of their lives.