

Religion, Peace and Conflict Forgiveness and Reconciliation



A background image showing a close-up of two hands clasped together in a prayerful or supportive gesture. The hands are of different skin tones, suggesting diversity. The image is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the text overlays.

Learning Objective

To be able to evaluate the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Success Criteria

- To describe what forgiveness and reconciliation are.
- To explain Christian views on forgiveness and reconciliation.
- To engage in group discussion and practise active listening.

What Are Forgiveness and Reconciliation?

Discuss this question with your partner or group. You have 2 minutes to write down your own definitions.

- Forgiveness is the action of putting aside your anger, disappointment or feeling of hurt towards a person, event or circumstance.
- Reconciliation is when people or groups discuss their difficulties and settle their differences.

Can you think of any examples?



How Easy Is It to Forgive?



People have very different views on forgiveness and reconciliation. In some situations it is easy, but in others it may be impossible.

- What is something you might find easy to forgive?
- What is something you might find difficult to forgive?
- What is something you might find impossible to forgive?

Why might people have different ideas about how easy or hard it is to forgive?

How can forgiveness benefit the person who forgives?



Would You Forgive?

Discuss the situations below with a partner and decide how forgivable each action would be. Consider where each could be placed on the Yes/No spectrum.

Remember: this is your personal opinion.



1. A close friend or relative is killed.
2. Your friend borrows your phone and breaks it.
3. You come up with a good idea which somebody else takes credit for.
4. A teacher gives you a detention for something you didn't actually do.

Would You Forgive?

Gary Ridgway, known as the 'Green River Killer', was convicted of the murders of 48 women – although it was suspected the count was upwards of 60.

In 2003, the families of the victims were given the chance to confront Ridgway in person before he was finally sentenced for his crimes. Many people naturally used this time to express their anger at Ridgway.

How do you feel about what Robert Rule said?
Do you think you'd ever be able to feel the way he did?

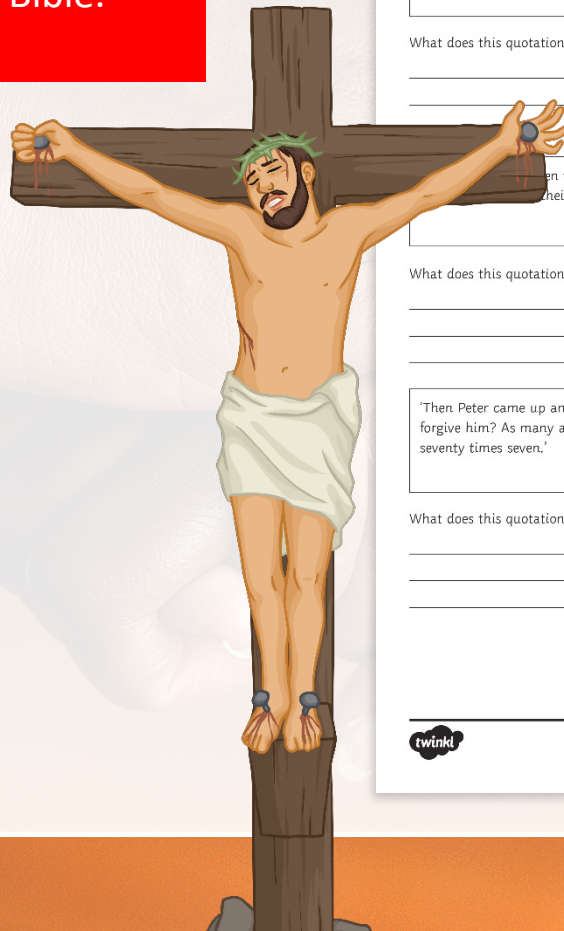
How might forgiving Ridgway benefit Robert Rule's life?

Why do you think Ridgway cried when he was forgiven?



Christian Views on Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very important concept in Christianity. Complete the activity sheet to explore ideas of forgiveness in the Bible.



Forgiveness – Bible Analysis

Read the quotations about forgiveness and answer the questions.

'But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.'

Exodus 21: 23-25

What does this quotation tell us about forgiveness?

'When their trespasses (sins), your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

Matthew 6: 14-15

What does this quotation tell us about forgiveness?

'Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.'

Matthew 18: 21-22

What does this quotation tell us about forgiveness?

Christian Views on Forgiveness

The 'eye for an eye' passage from Exodus appears to be very different to the other Christian ideas on forgiveness. This passage is from the Old Testament, which was written before the birth of Jesus.

How does Jesus make it clear that we should not personally respond to insult or injury by taking direct revenge?

What do you think He is advising the listeners to do? Are they to just ignore the situation, or is He asking for a particular kind of response?



Christian Views on Reconciliation

As they believe strongly in forgiveness, it is not surprising that Christians also believe in reconciliation.

Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian reverend, said:

“The method of nonviolence seeks not to humiliate and not to defeat the oppressor, but it seeks to win his friendship and his understanding. And thereby and therefore the aftermath of this method is reconciliation.”



Do you think King's 'nonviolent' approach is an effective response to conflict?

How might this aid reconciliation and prevent further conflict?

How does this reflect Jesus' advice in the New Testament?

A background image showing a close-up of two hands clasped together in a prayerful or supportive gesture. The hands are of different skin tones, suggesting diversity. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a sense of connection and hope.

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