



# Forgiveness and Mercy

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 2 | Lord

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Watch a video

Watch *Forgiveness Experiment* online at [www.bitly.com/ForgivenessExperiment](http://www.bitly.com/ForgivenessExperiment) (1min 34sec).

### 2. Read

Forgiveness and Mercy p. 1-2

### 3. Discuss

Discussion Focus p.2

### 4. Activity

#### New Church Concept Mercy

The Divine mercy is pure mercy towards the whole human race, to save it. It is also unceasing towards every person, and is never withdrawn from anyone; so that everyone is saved who can be saved. Yet no one can be saved except by Divine means or Divine truths in the Word, which teach how people must live in order to be saved. By these truths the Lord leads people to heaven. The Lord does this with all, but the life of heaven cannot be implanted in anyone unless he or she avoids doing evil, because evil obstructs. *Heaven and Hell* 522

## Watch a Video

Watch *Forgiveness Experiment* online at [bitly.com/ForgivenessExperiment](http://bitly.com/ForgivenessExperiment) (1min 34sec). (Enter bitly link in browser bar at the top of your screen.)

## Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. What did you learn from the video?
2. The Writings for the New Church teach that the Lord does not take away our sins altogether, but moves them further and further from our thoughts. Why do you think the Lord cannot take our sins away completely?
3. If God doesn't take sins away, how are they forgiven?

## Read

The three-fold Word says various things about forgiveness. When the Lord gave the Ten Commandments He laid out rules for how people should behave and at the same time He talked about what would happen if people did not obey the commandments.

And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." Exodus 20:1-7

The Lord seems to be saying that an entire family will be punished when one person in the family sins.

When the Lord came on earth, He brought a new message of forgiveness and said that people should forgive others who sin against them by turning the other cheek. The Writings for the New Church extend the message of the Lord's complete forgiveness and explain how forgiveness works and tell us that we can only be forgiven when we change our behavior and take an active part in wanting to be forgiven.

Some believe that when you're forgiven your sins disappear, as if you had never done them. The New Church teaches that the Lord cannot completely take sins away because that would be like taking away from us things we have freely chosen to do, making us feel as if we had no life of our own. Instead of taking sins away the Lord moves sins further and further away from the center of our lives so they become quiet, as if they are put to sleep (see sidebar, *Wiping away Sins*).

The Lord forgives everyone his sins, because He is mercy itself. Nevertheless they are not forgiven by this unless the person performs serious repentance, and stops doing evils, and afterwards lives a life of faith and charity, and this even to the end of his life. When this is done, the person receives spiritual life from the Lord, which is called new life. *Arcana Coelestia* 9014

Since the Lord is mercy itself, He forgives all people their sins, nor does He ascribe a single sin to anyone, for He says, "They know not what they do." Nevertheless, the sins are not taken away by that; for to Peter asking how often he should forgive his brother's trespasses, whether he should do so seven times, the Lord said: "I say not to you, until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). What, then, will not the Lord do? *True Christian Religion* 539

### New Church Concept Sins and Evils

In the Word evils are sometimes called sins, sometimes iniquities, and sometimes transgressions.... The word transgressions is used for deeds contrary to the truths of faith, the word iniquities for deeds contrary to the good of faith, and the word sins for deeds contrary to the good of charity and love. *Arcana Coelestia* 9156

#### Wiping away Sins

Sins cannot be wiped away, but they are separated, or rejected to the side. *Arcana Coelestia* 5398

#### How Sins Are Forgiven

Sins are forgiven through a life according to the commands of faith. So far as a person lives according to these commands, so far as sins are removed; and so far as they are removed, so far they have been forgiven. *Arcana Coelestia* 8393

## Discuss

The Lord lets us freely respond to other people and to Him. In having freedom, we are also responsible for our words and actions. When we choose to follow the Lord, He can give us His greatest blessings. But what about the times when we make choices that go against the Lord's will?

1. How do the Ten Commandments describe the Lord's response if we choose not to obey them?
2. What does the Lord mean when He says He will "[visit] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Exodus 20:5)? (Think about how one choice we make has a long chain of consequences—*e.g.* telling a lie.)
3. The Lord's covenant with the children of Israel was simple—obey the Lord and you will do well; disobey the Lord, and you will be punished. Jehovah loved the children of Israel even though they turned away from Him again and again. What does this tell us about the Lord's mercy and forgiveness?
4. Does the Lord actually want us to "turn the other cheek" when someone hurts us?
5. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us *how* our sins are forgiven so that we can receive the Lord's love to eternity. Give three examples of what we can do to be forgiven.
6. Should we forgive someone who has hurt us? Why or why not. Does it matter if he or she has "sinned against us?"

## Forgive Us Our Trespasses

*Variation for Groups: Use a board or large pad of paper for brainstorming.*

Think of as many words as you can about anger. Write them in this box:

Think of as many words as you can about forgiveness. Write them in this box:

Now match words of equal intensity about anger and forgiveness, *e.g.* hate/love, hurt/remorse.

### Discussion

1. How does it feel when a friend forgives you for something you feel terrible about saying or doing?
2. How does it feel when you forgive a friend for something terrible they have said or done to you?
3. Is it more difficult to forgive someone for doing something slightly bad, or for doing something very bad? Explain your answer.
4. Are there any sins that the Lord cannot forgive?