

# Forgiveness

This is an assembly looking at forgiveness. Forgiveness is when someone does something that hurts you but instead of holding it against them and hating them, you make a choice to not hold it against them. You deliberately choose to release them from any feelings of resentment or hatred you may well deserve to have against them. It's not about forgetting, it's not about people getting away with it. It's about you letting go of resentment and anger and choosing to forgive. It's really hard.

## Story One

When I was at school, I got involved in gangs and football violence. This carried on until the end of University. But my brother was different and decided to do something positive with his life. He went out to Africa and got involved in helping children, building a church and doing good. But one day he was killed. He was in a car, was told to put his seat belt on and didn't. There was a bad accident with a lorry and he was killed. That is the day I cried out to God and said 'help, you've got to help me, change my life and turn it around'. God did exactly that. But my Grandad could not forgive the driver of the car, who he blamed for the crash. He had that pain and anger in him all his life. Whereas the drivers of the car came to stay with me and we got on really well. I didn't blame them at all – it wasn't even their fault!

## Story Two

I went to the Scottish mountains in Winter with a friend. She isn't great at packing her bags or keeping to the weight limits there are on flights. So the weight limit was 23kg. My bag was under 20kg. My friend got there with her bag and it was so heavy! She couldn't lift it – I had to do all the lifting because it was so heavy. I said to her 'what have you brought in there?!' She didn't know why it was so heavy. It went to the check-in desk and the weight was 28kg! On the flight out they let us get away with it but on the way back it was even heavier and they made her take a lot of stuff out of her case. As she did that, her case got lighter. Where did the extra stuff go? It went to me...

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a really good thing. It can be incredibly hard. But when we forgive someone, it's like a weight is taken from us because it's really heavy trying when we have lots of hurt, hate and unforgiveness inside of us. It is like carrying around a really heavy case that's too heavy for us to carry. But when we forgive it's like getting rid of all that extra weight and it makes us feel lighter and happier inside.

When we don't forgive someone, it's like drinking a cup of poison and expecting it will kill the person you won't forgive. It won't happen. The main person it will hurt is you.

# True Stories

I went to a Christian conference once and there was a lady there who had to use a wheelchair sometimes. Someone was talking about unforgiveness and this lady felt like she needed to forgive someone for a sexual assault that had happened 20 years before! She did forgive that person and from that moment, she started walking and has never needed that wheelchair since. I know the lady, saw this happen and (as of early 2020) it's been 4 years and she has never needed that wheelchair. Why? Because she chose to forgive someone. When she did that, a weight was lifted and it set her free.

Another friend I had became very ill with depression when his dad rejected him. He hadn't known his dad and found his dad. But then his dad didn't act very well so my friend cut him out of his life. My friend was upset and I said 'you need to forgive your dad' but my friend wouldn't do that. My friend got angry, ended up in hospital, lost his job and was on strong medication and signed off work. Not forgiving his dad meant he carried a heavy load that it was hard for him to handle. It is totally understandable that he found it hard as it's a very tough thing – but forgiving would help my friend.

## Amber Guyger and Brandt Jean

In 2018 a police officer called Amber Guyger in Dallas shot dead a man called Botham Jean in his own home. She had mistakenly entered his home thinking it was her own apartment and shot Botham Jean dead. In court in October 2019, she was given a 10 year sentence.

But in Court, the brother of Botham Jean, called Brandt Jean made a speech to Amber Guyger. Instead of hating her, he did something that the Judge said he had never seen in Court in his whole career. Brandt Jean told Amber that he forgave her, that he loved her, that he wanted the best for her. Then (with Amber Guyger in tears and also the Judge), Brandt asked and got permission to give Amber a hug, which he did for quite a while.

Direct Link of Brandt Jean to Amber Guyger 'I forgive you' (ABC News) – [https://youtu.be/NkoE\\_GQsbNA](https://youtu.be/NkoE_GQsbNA)

As a Christian, I believe that in a way, we're all a bit like Amber. We all mess up and do wrong. But the great news is that Jesus said 'look, you deserve to go to prison, but I'm going to serve that time for you.' Jesus took that punishment so that we could be forgiven. Brandt Jean was acting like a true Christian when he forgave Amber Guyger. And he's not the only one. Across the world over 4000 Christians are killed for their faith every year. Almost always they forgive the attackers.

Even if you don't believe in God, you can make a difference in your life and other people's lives by forgiving someone and then keeping on forgiving. Go on. Do yourself and others a favour. I also believe that God will help you to forgive, if you ask him – just say 'God, help me to forgive...' and then name the person. Try it, you've got nothing to lose and maybe lots to gain!