

Becoming Neighbors: Learning from Scripture and Mister Rogers



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A 5-Week
Lenten
Series:
Wednesdays,
March 4th -
April 1st



Since we can't be together, here is everything you need in order to have your own Lenten devotional at home, including a soup recipe!! How fun it would be if many of us were sharing the same supper from our homes. If you can, purchase the ingredients and make the soup. Then, read the Scripture for the evening together with whoever is in your home! If you are alone, call a friend and do this with them. Then, watch the episode and/or the clips below. Finally, there is a devotion someone can read aloud, followed by questions to discuss. Happy home devotions!!

Theme: Forgiveness

Scripture: John 8:1-11 and Matthew 18:21-22

Episode:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, Episode 1577.

This episode is available on Amazon, free with an Amazon Prime account: <https://www.amazon.com/Mister-Rogers-Neighborhood-Volume-4/dp/B004BZG1FI>

It is also streaming free here: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3t5sqp>

Devotion:

Mister Rogers worked hard to help children understand that everyone makes mistakes. In this episode, there are small mistakes made all throughout the episode, starting with Mister McFeely bringing the wrong videotape (though seeing how books are made is a nice result of that mistake). While small mistakes might seem just that – small – they can feel much larger in our own minds, and especially in the minds of children. A small mistake can seem huge and it can be difficult to forgive ourselves. When Mister Rogers talks about forgiveness, it seems like he's thinking just as much about forgiving ourselves as forgiving others. Both are extremely important, of course.

Mister Rogers reportedly once said this (I couldn't find the citation!): "Forgiveness is a strange thing. It can sometimes be easier to forgive our enemies than our friends. It can be hardest of all to forgive people we love. Like all of life's important coping skills, the ability to forgive and the capacity to let go of resentments most likely take root very early in our lives." This idea that it is harder to forgive those we love than our enemies might explain why it is also hard to forgive ourselves. But Mister Rogers makes it clear that we all make mistakes, and we are all worthy of forgiveness.

Of course, Jesus also made that clear. Jesus talked about and exhibited forgiveness throughout his ministry. In the reading from John's gospel, we hear about a woman caught in adultery and the response from those in charge was to follow the law and stone her to death. Jesus then says, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." This quote is perhaps so well-known that we miss just how surprising it would have been. We know, of course, that just as everyone makes mistakes, everyone sins. We all mess up, all the time. We don't know this woman's life story, but for Jesus it doesn't seem to matter how she ended up in the situation she was in. He says to her after all her accusers leave, "Neither do I condemn you." This is a wonderful summary of the gospel message. This is how God sees us. Even in our sin, God does not condemn us.

It is because we know we are forgiven that we can also forgive others. In the Matthew reading, we hear Jesus tell Peter that if someone sins against him, he should be ready to forgive seventy-seven times. This, of course, is not meant to be a literal number. Some translations suggest it is seventy times seven. Either way, it is meant to be so many that we don't even count. God forgives us infinitely, and we are called to forgive each other in the same way. This is difficult, of course. But it is easier when we know we have been forgiven!

Questions:

1. In this episode, forgiving yourself and accepting yourself seem to be synonymous. Audrey Duck has a hard time with unrealistically high expectations. When have you felt overwhelmed by others' expectations of you? When have you had a hard time accepting yourself, mistakes and all?
2. What is the hardest thing you've ever had to forgive in yourself? How did you do it? Or did you?
3. What is the hardest thing you've ever had to forgive in someone else? How did you do it? Or did you?
4. King Friday doesn't seem like a leader who is willing to admit he makes mistakes. Have you ever had a hard time admitting to your mistakes? Name examples.
5. Jesus calls us not to judge others while we are sinful ourselves. When have you judged others unfairly? What are some ways we can resist judging others?
6. Can you imagine forgiving someone seventy-seven (or seventy times seven) times? Can you imagine being forgiven that many times? What is either one like?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for accepting and forgiving us, even when we make mistakes and even when we sin against each other and you. Help us to work to accept ourselves for who we are. Help us to work to forgive others as you have forgiven us. Finally, help us to know the peace that comes through that forgiveness, and to spread it in our world. Amen.

Tex-Mex Chicken Soup

Yield

Serves 8 (serving size: 1 cup)

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cups shredded rotisserie chicken (or any cooked chicken)
- 2 cups frozen whole-kernel corn
- 4 cups lower-sodium chicken broth
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 3 ounces queso fresco, crumbled
- 8 lime wedges

How to Make It

Heat a Dutch oven over medium-high heat.

Add oil, onion, and next 3 ingredients; sauté 3 minutes.

Add chili powder and next 4 ingredients; sauté 30 seconds.

Add chicken and next 4 ingredients; bring to a boil.

Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 6 minutes.

Top evenly with cilantro and queso. Serve with lime.