

LESSON EIGHT



Forgiveness

One of the greatest opportunities in leadership is forgiveness.

Forgiveness offers as much to the forgiver as it does the forgiven. In this lesson we emphasize both of these aspects of forgiveness. We begin with a focus on the burden of not forgiving and close with the leadership lesson that trust is built through true forgiveness. It is important that forgiveness is presented as an opportunity and not a tool. Forgiving someone as a means to gain influence is not forgiveness.

You will need at least one large bottle or jug of water. I use two one gallon jugs of water with handles. You can vary the amount of water so the weight of the jug is suitable for the age of your players.

Keep your water jugs hidden in a bag throughout practice so the players are surprised when you take them out.

Coach: I have a question for you today. Can anyone tell me what “forgiveness” is?

Affirm and expand on all appropriate answers. Pay attention to the general understanding as it relates to “forgetting” or “dismissing” something bad.

Coach: Those are good answers. I have an idea to help us all understand what forgiveness is. But, first I need two volunteers to run a “Zig Zag” race to get our minds focused. Who wants to race?

Pick two players to run the race and name one Zig and the other Zag. The race should be no longer than 20 yards. I will usually throw a ball out in the field (or court) and ask the runners to run around it and back. Ask Zig and Zag to line up and get ready to start the race. Have the water jugs nearby.

Coach: Are you ready? On your mark! Get set! Oops! I forgot to tell you something about Zag. Zag had a problem today with one of his friends. His friend said something really mean to him, laughed at him and walked away. Isn't that mean? So, Zag has been really mad about it all day. Right now Zag is still thinking about it and wishing he said something back. Zag's even thinking if he should say something mean tomorrow or maybe not even speak to his friend.

Pull out the water jugs.

Coach: Zag is going to run the race carrying these!

Give the player the water jugs and quickly start the race.

Coach: GO!

Encourage the kids to cheer during the race.

Coach: Great job runners! Zag, it was hard to run the race carrying all that extra weight wasn't it? The water jugs represent all of the anger and frustration that Zag is still holding on to towards his friend. OK Zag, put down the jugs. When we forgive and let go of the things that bother us, we don't forget about those things and pretend they don't exist. You see, the jugs are still there. The only difference is that Zag has decided not to carry the jugs any more. Zag

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has decided to forgive his friend. Forgiving the person that said the bad things today doesn't mean forgetting it happened or pretending it didn't hurt. In fact, forgiving starts by admitting it did happen and that it did hurt. Then, you can accept it, forgive and no longer be mad at the person that did it. Being mad at someone doesn't help you, and it doesn't help them. What should a person do after he or she did something wrong?

The answer you are looking for is "apologize."

Coach: That's right, apologize or say you are sorry. It's funny though; a lot of times when someone apologizes to us we say, "forget about it," or "it's no big deal." But, is that really true? Is it really "no big deal?" The next time someone does something wrong to you, and he or she apologizes I want you to say, "I forgive you." And, when you say it, I want you to picture yourself putting down the jugs of water. You will feel better and earn the trust and respect of the people around you. Good leaders don't have to forget, but they always forgive.

Take a few moments to assess comprehension and answer questions. Then, move on to a summary statement or prayer that references and reinforces this lesson.

Reaffirm the APIVEO commitment with the team cheer.

Coach: Ok, are you ready? I want to make the ground shake!

Start the cheer in a normal tone and get louder each time you ask the question.

Coach: Always play for who?

Team: Each other!

Coach: (louder) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (louder) EACH OTHER!

Coach: (really loud!) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (screaming loud!) EACH OTHER!

Coach: Stand up with authority and yell "[TEAM NAME] ROCK!

Following the cheer, I will always talk to each player after every practice to thank them for "bringing it" to practice. This only takes 10-15 seconds per player, but is worth its weight in gold. There are a few players that will be headed for the parking lot before the cheer is done, so you must be intentional and act fast. I typically get right in front of the player and, then, get on one knee, look him/her in the eye and mention something positive about his/her performance in practice and how glad I am that he/she is part of our team. You need to be quick to respect the parent's time, but you also need to be sincere.

Be intentional and remember, Always Play 4 Each Other!™