

# FORGIVEN!

## THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Can I really be forgiven for all my sins, even the really bad ones?

## BIG IDEA

Jesus' sacrificial act on the cross as both 100% human and 100% divine is enough to erase our guilt and provides us full forgiveness for all our sins—past, present and future.

## SCRIPTURE USED

**Luke 23:34:** *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

**1 John 1:8-9:** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**Romans 8:1-2:** *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

**Colossians 2:13-14:** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

## OPENER

### You will need:

- A small clear, shallow dish: a glass pie plate works well
- Some water
- A healthy amount of regular table pepper
- A very small amount of soap (not to be seen by students)

Before you begin, preferably out of sight of the students, place soap on one of your fingers and then do not let it rub off until it is used in the illustration! Gather your students close enough to observe the pie plate, preferably from the

top. Show them the water, and then tap only a very small amount of pepper into the dish: This is us, and we are not perfect because of the fall, but God loves us no matter what. Unfortunately, sin (the pepper) keeps entering the picture: it wasn't just a one time thing! Ask your students to contribute sin ideas for pepper sprinkles into the dish, but where it is possible, push them to go beyond simply listing the usual offenders down to what actually causes us to sin: pride, a misunderstanding of my identity in Christ, a lack of selflessness, not being as passionate about the Gospel as I should be, etc. Leaders, this is a great exercise to mentally prepare for ahead of time—examining the root of your own sin, so you can dialogue with your students about sin on more than just a surface level when you are with them. Then, as you list the sins, tap a little bit of pepper into the water. Then, remind them that the forgiveness that God offers us in Jesus Christ is COMPLETE. It restores us, and we can be clean again. Tell your students to watch the water in the center of the dish, and then dip the soapy finger (Christ's offering, God's forgiveness) into the dish. The pepper is repelled to the rim of the dish: Christ pushes it off us and even though sin is always around us in this world, like the clean water in the center of the dish, we do not have to live with the pepper in our lives. Read, slowly Romans 8:1-2. Be sure to practice before you begin, but this is generally a very successful (and easy!) visual presentation.

### **ASK**

- **Before you push the pepper out to the rim ask students how the "sin"—the pepper, in this illustration—can be easily removed?**
- **Do you think you live like you are clean water? What would that look like to others?**
- **How do you, in your own words, explain the way that we can live a "clean water / forgiven" life in a world where sin surrounds us?**

### **EXPLAIN**

There is nothing, *NOTHING* left in the water, and yet often times we doubt that we have been fully restored to clean, to clear, to forgiven / redeemed / renewed.

What we know about guilt and the inability to except forgiveness is that it ultimately disables everyone. It keeps people from being who they were made to be in the image of God and through the freedom Christ offers. A psychologist once observed that many individuals in mental institutions could walk away cured if they could only let go of their guilt.

We were not made for the burden and the weight of guilt; it literally handicaps us. But, what we know about our Heavenly Father is that He is a great enabler. Think about Moses, Gideon, reluctant Jonah, Peter, Paul—and so many other Scriptural examples of individuals God specially equipped and "activated" for His service.