

Supplies: at least 2 balloons (if possible, use 12", if not possible use 9"); a sewing needle - the bigger the better; 3 balloons per student (do not need to be a specific size); rope or cones to mark a line for teams to stand behind; another rope or cones to mark an area for balloons to be stored in.

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: What's something that you have too much of?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.

READ Matthew 18:23-35 Servant not receiving forgiveness

23 "For this reason the kingdom of God may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began settling accounts, it became clear that one servant owed him ten million dollars. That servant was brought to the king; 25 and, because he could not pay, the king ordered him to be sold into slavery, together with his wife and children and all his possessions in order for a payment to be made. 26 But the servant fell on his knees before the king, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." 27 And out of pity for him, the king released him and forgave him 10 million dollars – the servant did not have to repay the king. 28 But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred dollars; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." 29 Then his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." 30 But the first servant refused to offer mercy or forgiveness; he went and threw the other servant into prison until he could pay back the money. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and distressed, and they went and reported to the king all that had taken place. 32 Then the king summoned the first servant and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, just like I had mercy on you?" 34 And in anger the king imprisoned the servant until he could pay his entire debt.

what is mercy and forgiveness?

ASK

- How much does the first servant owe the king? (10 million dollars)
- What does the servant ask of the king? (have patience with me)
- What does the king do? (forgives what the servant owes)

- After that, what does the first servant go do? (tries to get money from another servant)
- Does the first servant forgive the second servant? (no)
- What does the first servant do to the second servant? (puts him in jail)
- What do you think about the first servant's actions, here?
- After the other servants tell the king about the first servant, what does the king do? (puts the first servant in jail, just like the first servant did to the second servant)

TELL

- The first servant does not share the forgiveness that he receives.
- There are lots of things that we receive from God (name some of those things? Life, each other, nature).
- When we do not share what we receive, that becomes an unhealthy way to live.
- We're going to do a demonstration now that helps us think about this.

EXPLAIN

- I have here a balloon with no air in it.
- We're going to pretend that the balloon is a person and that the air being blown into it are the gifts that God gives to us.
- [blow air into balloon.]
- Look at how much God gives us.
- But what happens if we get too much? (it/we explode!)
- [blow air into balloon until it bursts]

- Now, let's do that again.
- This time we're going to pretend the same thing: Pretend the balloon is a person and the air is God's gifts.
- [blow air into the balloon until its filled up]
- Now what happens when something difficult happens, like someone owing us money, but we can't get that money? Let's pretend this sewing needle is a difficult thing.
- [pull out sewing needle],
- What happens when we put the sewing needle into the balloon? (it explodes!)
- [put needle into the bottom of the balloon – it'll pop]

- Ok, let's do this one more time.
- This time we're going to fill the balloon up with air.
- [blow air into the balloon and fill it up]
- And we're still pretending that the balloon is a person and the air is God's gifts.
- Now what happens if we share those gifts?
- [let out half the air]
- Now when something difficult happens, like a sewing needle entering our lives...
- [push sewing needle through the bottom (opposite of where you blew the balloon up) of the balloon, where the color of the balloon is darker...it will not pop]
- What happens? (we don't explode!)

TELL

- So what we can see is that when we receive a lot but then do not share it, it is unhealthy for us.
- That's not how we are made to live.
- We are made to share the gifts God gives us.
- And when we do share the gifts God has given us, then we don't experience all the grabbing and imprisoning that we see happen in this story.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- We're now going to have a relay race.
- First, everybody gets to blow up three balloons.
- Put the balloons over here.
- Now we're going to split up into two teams.
- One line here and one line here (parallel to each other)
- The way this relay race works is that one person from each team is to run to the pile of balloons, take as many balloons as you think you can safely hold and then run back to the line.
- Once you cross the line, then the next person goes to the pile and does the same thing.
- If you drop a balloon while returning, you will have to take back to the pile all the balloons in your hand and that fell on the floor. Then you return to your line without any balloons and then let the next person go.
- After all the balloons are gone, we'll add up to see which team has the most balloons.
- Any questions?
- Let's play!

(Do two or three rounds)

ASK/TELL

- OK, I need everyone to go back to their seats and sit down.
- So did anyone take too many balloons?
- How did you know if you took too many? (because people dropped them)
- Why do you think we wanted to take so much? (to win!)
- But as we found out, taking so much didn't actually help us win, did it?
- Instead, we had to share the responsibility with our team of gathering the balloons and moving them back to the line.
- And this is the good news for today's lesson – we are to share the gifts that God has given us, because when we don't, then our balloons pop or our balloons fall on the ground and we lose the relay race.

CLOSING PRAYER