

How Can I Be Forgiven?

Intro: There is a lot of guilt and shame going around these days. Oh sure, people will try to shrug off these feelings, they'll try to rationalize their actions, and even try to "make up for it" by doing volunteer work or going out of their way to be "nice." But none of these eliminate the deep-seated turmoil and emotional unrest of past misdeeds, unkind words, and unfortunate events. One of the cries of the unforgiven is, "How could God forgive me?" Others ask, "How can I find release from my past?" This week's *Articulations* takes a look at what the Scriptures teach about forgiveness and how to receive God's grace. When you're finished this study, you'll have the opportunity to put your thoughts into words so that when a friend confides in desperation that they can't find the peace they desperately need, you'll be able to articulate clearly how they can find God's forgiveness.

What the Bible Teaches: Break into Groups of Four, read the following Bible verses, and discuss the questions. You may want to jot down notes and thoughts on the back of this page.

How do these Scriptures answer the question, "Why do I feel so bad?"

John 16:7-8; Romans 7:18-21; Ezekiel 18:4

How does the Bible answer the question, "Why would God forgive me?"

Luke 19:10; John 3:17; Matthew 18:14

How does the Bible say that people can be forgiven?

1 John 1:8-9; Acts 2:38; Luke 6:36-38; Matthew 6:14-15; John 20:22-23

What I Believe: Take ten minutes for silent reflection and thought. Ask yourself what you believe about how people can be forgiven. Use the back of this page to formulate a response to the question:

"How Can I Be Forgiven?"

Write your final response here: _____

Articulations: Pair up with one other person and share your response with one another. Take five minutes each. Try to *not* look at your written statement; instead, try to tell your beliefs from your heart. This will prepare you to share whenever you are asked about what you believe.

Therefore: Jesus said His followers should Go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). One of the first steps in making disciples is being ready and able to share the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15), in other words, knowing what we believe, why, and then being able to share it. Sharing your faith is important. This week, find someone—it can be *anyone*—and articulate your belief about this issue. If you have an unchurched/unreached friend whom you can share with, all the better (you can always say you have a homework assignment from church and you'd like to share it with them). Be ready to talk about your experience next week over the meal at your House Church.