

Activity sheet 1a: What can you forgive?

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| A mobile phone is stolen | A practical joke (which everybody found funny... except for the victim) | An accident playing hockey gives somebody a black eye for a week |
| A boyfriend / girlfriend cheats on their partner with their best friend | Somebody is bullied throughout their time at school | Mugging at knife point |
| Somebody jumps a very long queue | Somebody lies to their good friend | Somebody gossips about their 'best friend' behind their back |
| A 3 year old is abused by a relative | Parents split up 'for the good of the children' | Somebody is beaten to death because of their skin colour |
| Somebody borrows a CD and returns it, scratched | A favourite pet is run over on purpose | A favourite pet gets is accidentally run over |

Cut out the cards and place them on the corresponding statement on the board below.

What can you forgive?

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Yep – easy to forgive this!</p> | <p>Maybe after a while... when I'm over it</p> |
| <p><i>TOTALLY UNFORGIVABLE!</i></p> | |
| <p>I'd want to, although I'm not sure I could</p> | <p>No way – never!</p> |

Activity sheet 2: Discussion - To forgive or not to forgive?

1. One evening, while hanging out with your boy/girlfriend, you find a text on their phone from somebody else. It's obvious they have been cheating on you. What do you do?

2. One boring Saturday afternoon, you call all your friends to see if they're free to go out later. All of them say they're busy with family commitments. On Monday at school, you discover that actually they all went out without you. What do you do?

3. You've been in hospital with an embarrassing medical problem for a while. The only person you told was your best friend. When you get back to school, you find that everybody knows why you were away and is determined to make as many jokes at your expense as possible. What do you do?

Activity sheet 3

What does the Bible teach about treating those around us?

1. Jesus said: If someone hits you on the right cheek,
 - a. do to them also: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
 - b. turn to him the other cheek also**
 - c. turn and head in the other direction

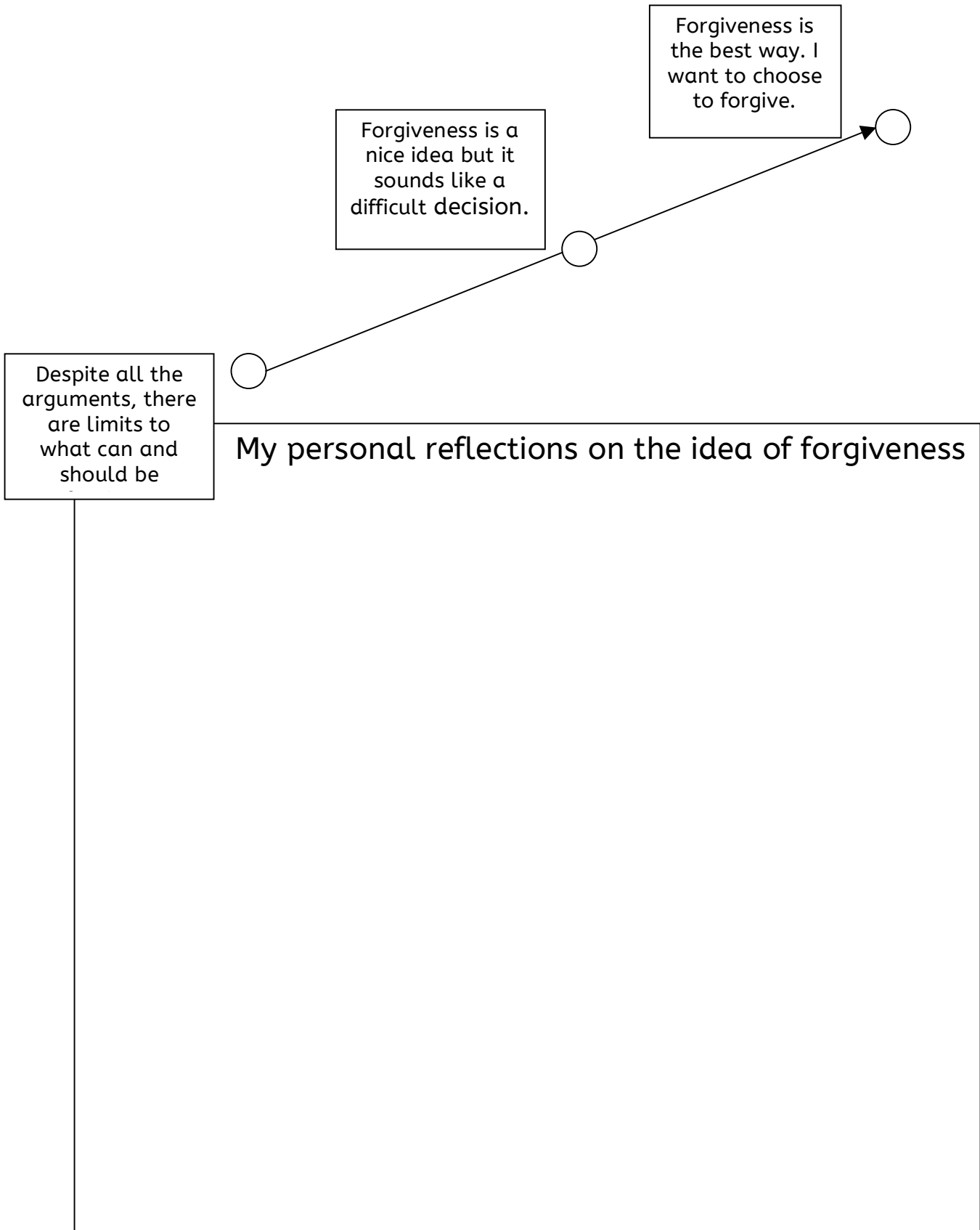
2. Jesus said: 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy':
 - a. But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**
 - b. This keeps the balance of the universe
 - c. For only by living in this way can evil be overcome

3. St Paul writes: "Bless...
 - a. ...those who bless you – for this is right in the eyes of the Lord.
 - b. ...the little children
 - c. ...those who persecute you**

4. St Paul writes: "If your enemy is hungry,
 - a. rejoice, for he deserves it
 - b. feed him***
 - c. this is God's perfect justice for him

St Paul goes on to say that this will be like heaping burning coals on his head. Will this offer a little satisfaction for people wanting revenge?

Mark on the scale below your thoughts about forgiveness.



Teacher's notes

Discussion about forgiveness can be very difficult, especially when someone or someone you love has suffered greatly by the hand of another. So it is always important to tackle the subject with tact and care.

Forgiveness can be hard but forgiveness can often lead to an amazing sense of freedom for the person who offers it.

Common objections to forgiveness and what the Bible teaches

*1. There are some things that **shouldn't** be forgiven. After all, if you forgive people then they 'get away with it'.*

A common objection from students is that the person being forgiven 'gets away with it' and that if the victim then goes as far as to repay them with good, the guilty party will abuse them further. It is important to remember that forgiveness does not necessarily mean that the guilty go unpunished.

The Bible teaches that God cares about the oppressed, loves justice and ordains systems of justice to deal with injustice. For this reason, he ordained the law and gave systems and people in authority to take appropriate action when there has been hurt. Jesus' teaching focuses on attitudes within people's hearts: that people should not **retaliate** with revenge.

*2. There are some things that **cannot** be forgiven. The damage caused is too much.*

- Christians believe that forgiveness is always possible – even though it is difficult

For Christians, Jesus is the model of perfect forgiveness. He experienced many of the things that we would consider to be 'unforgivable', being beaten and tortured to death, though he was innocent. He spoke about the need to forgive everything and put this into practice on the cross. For Christians, his example is an inspiration that all things can be forgiven.

But that doesn't change the fact that forgiveness is a hard and ongoing choice to make. Christians believe that God will help them as they choose to forgive others, through His Holy Spirit working in them to make them more like Him. As with all aspects of faith, the path to forgiveness is not one that Christians believe they will walk alone.