

adult



Lesson 4 / March 24, 2019

Accepted and Forgiven

By Carol Wilde

for use as

STEP 1



Lesson 4

Focus:

No one is beyond God's acceptance and forgiveness.

Lesson 4

Bible Basis:

Luke 19:1-10

Lesson 4

Memory Verse:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." —Luke 19:10

Students will realize what it means that God can accept and forgive anyone.

OPENING ACTIVITY: *Make the Effort!*

After students arrive, have them consider this question: "If you knew that someone you've always wanted to meet would be coming to your town, what would you do to see or perhaps hear him or her? What would you pay? Would you rearrange your schedule even if the time was very inconvenient for you?"

This week, we meet someone who never thought he would be worthy of receiving God's acceptance and forgiveness, but he still made the effort to see and know Jesus.

OPENING STORY: [Read aloud or pass out copies for students to read]

KEVIN KEMP: A MAN OF GOD IN PRISON

Kevin Kemp was an up and coming musician in the L.A. nightclub scene.

"I was seduced by the lifestyle," Kevin told The 700 Club. "I started selling dope and making money. Eventually I became my own best customer and started smoking up my product and my profits. It was downhill from there."

His drug lifestyle caused led him to make a terrible decision—to break into a home and rob the man who lived there. Kevin kept watch outside while the others attacked the man inside. "I'm looking through the window, and there was an altercation in the house. I saw him go down. We left."

That night, Kevin went back to check on the man they robbed, but when he got there, he found him dead. Kevin called the police but fled the scene. Eventually, police brought him in for questioning.

"They asked me what happened... 'I don't know. I wasn't there.'... 'Your story's not adding up... You need to tell us something... You need to tell us more than you're telling us.' "

Finally, Kevin confessed to the murder. Even though he didn't actually kill the man, he felt responsible, since he planned the robbery.

"I felt like I set him up. If it had not been for that, nothing ever would have happened. He would still be here if it wasn't for me."

Kevin was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to 15 years to life in prison. He said, "I'm going to spend the rest of my life incarcerated. How am I going to do it?"

Brenda, Kevin's girlfriend, was devastated. They had two children, and now she would have to raise them alone. She recalls, "I didn't think he would ever see the light of day. I was really worried about his survival, the kids growing up, especially my son, without his dad being here."

Kevin says, "She came and told me that, 'If you dedicate your life to me and your son, I will do as much of this time with you as I can.'"

Brenda and Kevin were married in a prison waiting room. Life inside was rough for the first-time offender. "I felt really bad about myself. Really like worthless."

But as he dealt with life behind bars, a stranger visited him, who told him that God could forgive his crime and change his life. "I remember telling him, 'Man, I blew it. It's over.' I knew the Ten Commandments: 'Thou shalt not kill.' I said, 'I'm done.'"

But the man told him about Jesus. " 'God will forgive you for that. God will forgive you.' He convinced me that God will forgive us for anything if we repent and confess it to Him. So, he led me through the sinner's prayer."

Kevin started going to the chaplain's Bible studies. "Initially it was to get out of the cell, and then I started to really come to know God through reading the Word. Jesus means everything to me. Jesus is my example, my strength, my hope. That's what I live for. I live to breathe. I live to please God."

Kevin earned a college degree, and eventually started helping the chaplain. As he connected with Christians inside, back home his family was falling apart.

Brenda said, "I had to ask myself, 'Who am I? What is it that I want? Why am I really doing this? Am I doing this for myself? For the kids, for Kevin?' So, it just came to that cross in the road. I really loved my husband, but I just felt I couldn't do it anymore."

After seven years, they divorced, but Kevin refused to let go. "I always had in the back of my mind I would marry her again," Kevin says. "After I went through my little pity party, I would marry her again when I got out."

After serving 19 years, Kevin was released on good behavior: "I became a man in there. I became a man of God in prison. If you can really get a grip on God, really trust Him and know that He can change lives, we can make it."

He kept his promise to Brenda. "We talked and decided to start dating again. We decided to start right this time. We're going to do it God's way. We did that," Kevin says. "We dated for six months before we got married."

Brenda says, “It’s beautiful now. We’re back together. We’re fellowshiping at the same church together.”

Kevin also started a gospel music group called Redemption. Most of the band members are former prisoners. “The music is really secondary. It’s about becoming men of God and understanding discipleship. That’s what God’s been giving me lately. Men need to be discipled.”

Despite spending almost half of his life behind bars, Kevin is grateful for a second chance. “He saved my life. When I went to prison, I got rescued. I didn’t get arrested. Jesus rescued me.”

Now have your students form small groups to discuss their answers to these questions.

- **When have you felt that God came looking for you?**
- **How did you respond when you heard that God loves you, looks for you, and wants to restore your relationship with Him?**
- **If you have not heard that before, how do you react now?**
- **Why would we *not* accept Jesus’ invitation to “rescue” us?**

(When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher’s Guide*.)

News Source:

Rod Thomas, CBN, <http://www1.cbn.com/700club/kevin-kemp-man-god-prison>

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LOVE YOU—LOOKING FOR YOU

When I come home after being gone for hours, my old dog doesn't meet me at the door anymore. He's gone deaf and doesn't hear me open the door, set down my bags, and call out his name. Instead, I look for him under the bed, in the closet, and everywhere else he might be. Along the way, I may find a mess he left after eating or waiting too long to go outside. But I don't give up until I find him, let him know that I'm home, and no matter what...I love him!

When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus would walk through his town, he just had to see Jesus. Zacchaeus really "wanted to see who Jesus was," and he made quite an effort to see Him. The extraordinary encounter between a despised sinner and the Son of God changed everything for Zacchaeus—and for us who have heard his story.

From Jesus' perspective as the Son of God, all the people in the crowd that day—and in the world as well—were sinners in need of forgiveness. No one ranked higher in God's eyes, and only those who truly sought to know Him would receive God's eternal forgiveness, paid for by Jesus' death and sacrifice on our behalf. That's because "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That includes each one of us today as well.

Have students return to the groups they had in Step 1 to discuss the following question.

- **Who do you know that would benefit from knowing how deeply God loves them? Perhaps it's you as you are going through a rough time in your life and need to remember how precious you are to Him.**

End the discussion time with a brief prayer, thanking God for His great love for us, and for calling us to receive His forgiveness. Ask God to continue to work in your hearts, guiding you to live as His beloved, and reaching out to all who remain lost.

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THE BIBLE IN THE NEWS

The History Channel will present a new series on the life of Jesus beginning March 25:

<https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/history-channel-announces-new-show-called-jesus-his-life.html>