

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34

It's Not Fair!

Jeremiah 31:34

No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,"
declares the Lord.
"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

John and Eric decided to make a trade. John will give Eric a cool pen he found. Eric will give John his brand-new bike. Do you think that is a fair trade? A pen for a bike? Definitely not! Eric's parents asked him why he made this trade. Eric simply said, "My friend really needed a bike."

You might do something similar for one of your friends. But would you be that nice to someone who hates you? Would you give one of your favorite toys to a person who is always mean to you?

In the Bible passage you just read, God tells us about a trade that he makes with us. And it is not fair. God says that he will forgive people who hate him. In return, he will not receive anything. "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

When you do bad, you deserve to be punished. That's fair. But instead of being fair, God punished someone who never sinned and who never did anything bad. God punished Jesus in our place. That's why God is able to say about you, "I forgive your wickedness."

You can look at the world around you and see the effects of sin. People are treated unfairly. Bad things happen. The truth is people deserve much worse than this. Sinners deserve death. But instead of remembering your sin, God instead remembers Jesus.

Why does God make this trade? He answers, "Because you are my people. I love you." Because God loves you and me so much, he sent Jesus to make this trade. Not once did Jesus ever say, "It's not fair!" He, too, loves us enough to be punished in our place.

Whenever you are afraid that you haven't done enough to make God happy, remember God's trade. It's not fair! God doesn't want it to be. He loves you too much. He wants you to trust him above everything else. Don't ever trade that precious truth!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What does it mean to forgive? Share a time that you showed forgiveness or asked someone to forgive you.
- Jesus willingly took the punishment for our sins. Is that fair? Why did he allow himself to be punished?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How do you know that God forgives you? Describe how that makes you feel.
- How should God treat us because of our sins? How can we treat others knowing that God forgives us?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Imagine that you are not forgiven for your sins. Describe how you feel if that were true.
- Why is it so difficult for us to demonstrate the same love to others which God has shown to us?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for giving me the forgiveness I do not deserve. Increase my trust in you. Amen.